



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE "YUNUS EMRE ORATORIO" PERFORMED BY THE
ORCHESTRA AND CHOIR
OF THE ANKARA STATE OPERA AND BALLETT**

*Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace of Castel Gandolfo
Wednesday, 4 September 1991*

Dear Friends,

I am deeply grateful to the Soloists and Choir of Ankara State Opera and the Orchestra of Ankara State Opera and Ballet, under the expert direction of Dr Hikmet Simsek, for this delightful performance of *The Yunus Emre Oratorio*. My thanks go also to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and to all who have made this inspiring evening possible. I welcome all of you, members of the Diplomatic Corps and other distinguished guests, on whom the special significance of this musical event cannot be lost.

The music of the late Turkish composer, Ahmet Adnan Saygun, provides a rich and lovely setting for the mystical poems of Yunus Emre. This year, declared by UNESCO "The Yunus Emre Year" to commemorate the seven hundredth and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of the great Turkish Muslim mystic, offers us an opportunity to reflect on the major themes of his poetry. Yunus Emre was filled with an awareness of the loving presence of God in the midst of creation. He sang of the universal brotherhood of all human beings and of the power of love to transform human life into a hymn of praise to God. He saw in the wonders of the natural world the signs which lead to an ever deeper knowledge of God and a desire to reverence and thank him.

These themes have lost none of their importance today. In a society too often closed to life's transcendent dimension, we need to be reminded of God's loving presence and nearness. A world too often torn by strife is in need of devout believers who, by word and deed, encourage understanding and union among all the members of the human family. We need to learn anew a

respectful attitude towards nature, and extend our commitment to use its benefits with care and responsibility. Christians find much in Yunus Emre's God-centred poems to remind them of the striking spirituality of Saint Francis of Assisi, a near contemporary of his.

The *Oratorio* therefore has been a moment of profound encounter, of mutual understanding and friendship. May you continue to proclaim the glory of God through your artistry. May the thoughts and sentiments inspired by this performance accompany us all in our work for a better world and for peace among its inhabitants. May Almighty God bless you and reward you.

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