



SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
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Audience with participants in the Fourth International Meeting of Choirs in the Vatican

This morning, in the Paul VI Hall, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the participants in the Fourth International Meeting of Choirs, promoted by the Choir of the diocese of Rome on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of its founding. The meeting, organized by *Nova Opera* with the patronage of the Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Pontifical Institute of Sacred Music, is taking place in the Vatican from 7 to 9 June 2024.

The following is the Pope's address to those present at the meeting:

Address of the Holy Father

Good morning!

Have you seen that the spontaneity of children speaks louder than the best of speeches? Children are like that, they express themselves as they are. We must take care of children because they are the future, they are hope, and they are also witnesses to spontaneity, innocence and promise. Indeed, that is why Jesus said that he wanted children to come close. When the apostles said to them, "Go away!", the Lord said, "No, no, let the children come!". Children are the privileged ones. For this reason, Jesus said: "it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs". We must learn from the spontaneity that they have just displayed. Moreover, they did not come enticed by pieces of candy – afterwards they realized there was candy – instead they came because they wanted to come. That is how they are. Let us not forget the lesson they have taught us today. Thank you!

I extend a warm welcome to all of you, and I particularly thank Monsignor Marco Frisina and *Nova Opera* for promoting this initiative, which takes place on the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the Choir of the Diocese of Rome. This anniversary encourages all of you to continue the precious service you provide, both in Rome and in many other parts of the world.

Your fourth International Meeting brings together parish and diocesan choirs, *scholæ cantorum*, chapel choirs, directors and musicians. You have come together in the Vatican to explore more deeply the significance of music in service to the liturgy. It is very good to see you here, coming as you do from many different places yet all united by faith and a passion for music. You are an eloquent sign of unity. For this reason, I want to draw your attention to three essential aspects of your service: *harmony*, *communion*, and *joy*.

First: *harmony*. Music creates harmony, thereby reaching everyone, consoling those who suffer, rekindling enthusiasm in the downhearted, and bringing forth wonderful values such as beauty and poetry, which reflect God's harmonious light. Music, indeed, is a universal and immediate language that requires no translation or elaborate explanation. Both experts and ordinary people can appreciate it, each grasping different aspects to varying degrees, yet all drawing from the same richness. Moreover, music educates us how to listen, to pay attention and study; it elevates emotions, feelings, and thoughts, guiding people beyond the whirlwind of haste, noise, and a merely material vision of life, and helping them to contemplate themselves and the reality around them better. Thus, it grants to those who cultivate it a wise and serene outlook, which makes it easier to overcome divisions and rivalry and so to be in *harmony*, much like the instruments of an orchestra or the voices of a choir. It encourages us to be vigilant about "off-key notes" and to correct "dissonance", which are useful for the dynamics of compositions as long as they are integrated into a wise harmonic fabric.

Second: *communion*. Choral singing is done together, not alone. This also speaks to us about the Church and the world in which we live. Our journey together can be likened to the performance of a great "concert", where each person offers their contribution according to their abilities, playing or singing their "part", and so discovering their unique richness from the symphony of communion. In a choir or orchestra, each member relies on the others, and the success of the performance depends on the commitment of each individual. All must give their best according to their role, respecting and listening in harmony with those around them, without seeking personal prominence. This mirrors the life of the Church and our own lives, where we are all called to fulfil our role for the benefit of the entire community, so that a song of praise to God may rise from all over the world (cf. *Ps* 47:1).

Finally: *joy*. You are custodians of a centuries-old treasure of art, beauty, and spirituality. Do not let the mentality of the world taint it with self-interest, ambition, jealousy, or division, for such things, as you know, can infiltrate the life of choirs as well as communities, making them places that are no longer joyful but sad and burdensome, even leading to their disintegration. To this end, it will be good for you to maintain the lofty spiritual tenor of your vocation through prayer and meditation on the word of God, participating in the liturgies you animate not only with your voices but also with your minds and hearts, and by enthusiastically living your daily lives accordingly, so that your music may increasingly be a joyful self-offering to God, who with his love attracts, enlightens, and transforms everything (cf. *1 Cor* 13:1-13). In this way, you will fulfil the exhortation of Saint Augustine: "Let us praise the Lord with our lives and our tongues, with hearts and mouths, with our voices and our behaviour" (*Sermo* 256).

Dear sisters and brothers, I thank you for your visit, and especially for your service to the Church's prayer and evangelization. I accompany you with my blessing and I ask you please, while you sing, to pray for me. Thank you!
