



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II AT THE END OF THE CONCERT AT PAUL VI HALL

Thursday, 18 May 2000 Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!

*Dear Brothers and Sisters!*1. Thank you for this concert you have offered me in honour of my 80th birthday. It concludes a day which for me has been one of heartfelt gratitude to the Lord for the priceless gift of life and for the many graces with which he has enriched it. With affection, I turn in the first place to the organizers and musicians who with this presentation have wished to express to me their sentiments of esteem and good wishes. I sincerely thank the conductor, Maestro Gilbert Levine, who has interpreted with deep sensitivity the score of "*The Creation*", the masterpiece of Joseph Haydn, and has directed with artistic intensity the soloists, players and choir of the Philharmonia Orchestra. I thank the musicians and singers, as well as those who have contributed to the success of the concert. I extend my respectful greeting to the authorities and ecclesiastics who are here. I would particularly like to greet the dignitaries from the Jewish Community and the representatives of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, who have courteously wished to join all those who are close to me on this day with their prayers and much appreciated good wishes.2. The splendid performance of the first two parts of the Oratorio by Joseph Haydn has enabled us to contemplate with joy and emotion the biblical account of creation through the evocative power of the words of the Sacred Text and of poetry, through the medium of the mysterious and universal language of music. Involved in the same story, we were thus able to share in the joy expressed by the choruses of praise to the Lord, and we all felt like children of the same Creator God. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God / and the firmament proclaims his handiwork". What a powerful reminder of God's transcendence and the sacredness and grandeur of creation! Through the transparency of the sounds and the beauty of the text, this solemn musical fresco has presented the dawn of creation. The narration unfolds through the rhythm of the six days which marked the appearance of light - when "chaos withdraws and order is born" -, of the heavens and the earth, of things and living creatures. However, in offering us this powerful and beautiful version of the biblical account, Joseph Haydn's artistic genius emphasizes that creation culminates in the appearance of man: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them. Then the Lord breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living being". The conclusion can only be a hymn of praise: "The magnificent work is accomplished. Let us sing praise to the Lord! For he alone is the Most High".3. Brothers and sisters! Thank you for having offered us this extraordinary experience of spiritual and aesthetic meditation on the mystery of creation, on which the certainty of our common origin is based. I hope that through art and music there will always be deep concern for man and respect for nature in our day as well. Moreover, may this reflection on our common origin help each person to rediscover the profound bonds of brotherhood which stem from our being all children of the one God, Creator of heaven and earth. I entrust you, the sponsors, organizers, artists and performers at this event to his fatherly love and ask his

