

Sua Santità  
Papa Benedetto XVI  
Palazzo Apostolico  
00120 CITTA' DEL VATICANO  
Staat der Vatikanstadt

## **Holy Father,**

On the occasion of your visit to Regensburg in 2006, you consecrated the "Pope Benedict Organ" in the Basilica Unserer Lieben Frau zur Alten Kapelle, declaring, to the delight of friends of church music the world over, that music and singing is more than a decorative flourish added to the worship service. "Celebratory church music, with its choir, organ, orchestra, and popular song, is not just a beautifying ingredient added to frame the liturgy, but rather, it is an important medium for active participation in the act of worship." You expressed the notion that celebratory church music could lead many people to discover more joy in their faith.

On the 17th of January, 2007, following the general audience in Rome, you bestowed your blessing on the organ register "Voix humaine", which had been dedicated to your predecessor Pope John Paul II for the Basilika Minor in Saarbrücken, and you spoke of the special importance of church music for the vitality of the parishes and thus for the future of our faith.

In 2009 on the eve of St. Cecilia's Feast, you invited numerous artists to the Sistine Chapel, beginning a new chapter in the relations between the church and the arts. "I receive you here with great joy in this festive place that is so rich in art and history. To each of you I extend a warm welcome and thank you for accepting my invitation. With this meeting I would like to lend expression and renewal to the friendship between the church and the world of art, a friendship that has grown ever closer through the ages. Since its beginnings, Christianity has recognized the value of art and has made wise use of the various forms of artistic expression to convey the eternal message of redemption. This friendship must be cultivated and nourished continuously, so that it is authentic and fruitful, adapted to different historical epochs, and attentive to social and cultural differences. This is the reason for our coming together today".

Such radiant signs of hope unfortunately cast some dark shadows at the same time--in this case on the troubled future of sacred music. It is under constant threat, on the one hand, from the current financial situation, and on the other hand it is often drowned out in the liturgy by spiritually poor substitutes, its voice becoming increasingly inaudible. The numbers of church musicians who are able to preserve the great traditions of sacred music are in alarming decline. This is why *musica sacra* is in need of a sign of the conviction that church music holds the most fascinating keys to the understanding of God and his love for our world, not only in the form of written argumentation, but also through sound.

The most brilliant figure in the art of building symphonic organs, Aristide Cavaille-Coll, a sort of "Michelangelo" of his guild, opened our eyes to this profound truth through the sound of his organs. The legacy of his minutely planned monumental organ intended for St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, proposed by Pope Pius IX and handed down to us in all its many details, remained unfulfilled due only to political considerations of the time. Today, located in the dome of St. Peter's, we still have an exact 1:10 scale model of this pioneering project for church music.

"Only those who have roots can bear fruit. And only those who look back can move forward". What a living testimony it would be to the unique importance of church music as a symbol of the eternal divine-musical breath now and in the future, to realize this instrument in our time.

Through our initiative we have been able to find private sponsors who have agreed to cover the costs of such a project. Its realization would be the new beginning, manifest to all the senses, of a renaissance between church and art, a service in the vineyard of our shared faith.

A favorable examination of our "sonorous plan" for the future of *musica sacra* on the part of Your Holiness would be the decisive step towards its possible realization.

With utmost respect, accompanied by the harmonious greetings of mighty organ notes sent from countless supporters

Bernhard Leonardy