



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PUERI CANTORES

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 30 December 2023*

[[Multimedia](#)]

Dear boys and girls, brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome! Compliments, you sing very well.

I offer my greetings to your President, Mr Jean Henric, the various national Presidents present, those accompanying you, and all of you, the singers who have welcomed me with your beautiful singing and who fill this hall with life by your presence. What you do is very important because your voices help communities to pray, to open their hearts to the Lord, and this is fundamental for the life of the Church. I thank you very much, and I would like to reflect with you on three key words for your service: *joy*, *prayer* and *humility*.

Let's start with *joy*. Singing *is* joy, especially when it is done in choir. The joy you have in singing is a gift that you have received from those who composed the music you perform, from those who teach it to you, and from those who have handed it down to you, sometimes even through the centuries. Think of how many other children and young people have sung the same notes you sing! They were boys and girls just like you, full of life and dreams, who loved playing, and being together, and who, like you, generously devoted time and effort to learning, performing and handing on what they had received. This is the "tradition" of singing, and it is very beautiful: receiving a precious gift and then passing it on enriched by your own joy! As the Bible says: "God loves a cheerful giver" (cf. 2 Cor 9:7). When you put enthusiasm into your singing, you give a great gift to those who hear you. How much we need joy in our world! Today, many people, even young

people, feel unhappy or bored. Singing and music can touch hearts, give beauty and restore zest and hope in their lives. This is what gives us joy!

The second word is *prayer*. You are not just any type of artists, you are not “performers”. You help others to pray by your prayerful singing. So it is important for each of you to keep your heart close to Jesus, not only when you sing, but always, and this is done in prayer, every day. If your heart is full of love for Jesus, it shines through in your voices; it is like an arrow that hits the mark, reaching people’s hearts. Saint Augustine once said that “singing is proper to those who love” (*Sermo* 336, 1: PL 38, 1472) and that those who sing pray twice. It is true: singing is an act of love; when we sing, we pray with words and music, with heart and voice, with devotion and art. Whenever you sing, for example, “Lord have mercy”, or “Holy, Holy, Holy”, or even “the Lord is my Shepherd”, you can feel those words in your heart, because you have encountered God who is always ready to forgive, who is Holy, who is good and attentive to all our needs, who always walks with us. But not only that. By singing and praying together, in harmony, listening to one another, waiting for one another, adding your own voice and movement to those of everyone else, you help the larger community to do the same. You teach how good it is to walk together.

Finally, *humility*. Singing is a school of humility, because the singer, even in solo parts, is always part of a choir, and each is at the service of all, even the director. Your singing, is all the more humble because it is at the service of God: while it helps others to encounter the Lord, it is also able to step aside at the right moment, to leave room for silence, so that everyone can listen quietly to the words that only Jesus wants to say to each one of us. Singers who try to draw attention to themselves, or to stand out from others, are not good singers; indeed, they often risk spoiling everyone’s work, and this can be heard immediately. So, do not try to stand out, seek to sing as one, with the unity that comes from humility; in this way your singing can express true friendship, with God and with one another.

Let me say one last thing. There are many of you here, yet when you were singing just now, you seemed to be one and this is truly beautiful! That did not happen by chance; it was because you studied the parts, you rehearsed, and you worked hard. This too is an important message for everyone. Singing together well requires effort, just as living together well requires effort. With the harmony of your performances, the light in your eyes and the beauty of your voices, you help us to understand that the effort is worth it!

Dear children, how much do we learn from music! And all the more so sacred music, whose soul is the word of God. You are fortunate to have received this gift, and so too are those who listen to you when you share it with them. Thank you for what you do for others! Continue to do it with passion, with the help of your teachers. I bless you from my heart. And, please, remember to pray for me. Thank you. May the new year bring you many blessings!

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