

Pope sees 'echo of Grace' in Mozart as example of true meaning of joy

On March 16, Pope John Paul II met with participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-Believers. They were gathered in Rome for a three-day meeting on March 13-16 on the topic, "The Search for Happiness and Christian Faith." During the audience, which took place in the Hall of the Consistory, the Pope gave the speech printed below.

According to an article in Corriere della Sera, the Milan daily, of March 18, Pope Wojtyla's words of praise for Mozart in this speech are unprecedented from a Pontiff. Although John Paul II had traveled to Salzburg, Vienna in June 1988, at that time he had merely mentioned the city's most illustrious son without even an adjective. Corriere's reporter Bruno Bartolini wrote that the Vatican "foreign minister," Jean-Louis Tauran, a great music lover, is thought to have suggested the tribute to Mozart to the Pope. Tauran, a Lebanese, was also the organizer of the historic March 14 meeting between John Paul II and an ecumenical delegation of Palestinian religious leaders, both Muslim and Christian, which was reported in EIR's last issue.

The Pope's speech has been translated by EIR's editorial staff from the French text provided by the Vatican press office.

Messrs. Cardinals, Dear brethren in the episcopate, Dear friends,

1) It is with joy that I receive you this morning and wish you a wholehearted welcome. Members and consultants of the Pontifical Council for the Dialogue with Non-Believers, you have come together in Plenary Assembly, presided over by Cardinal Paul Poupard, to reflect upon a theme of never-ending timeliness, with profound pastoral repercussions today: man's aspiration to happiness, as an anchoring point for the faith. This anthropological approach to faith and, at the opposite pole, to non-belief, is one of the possible keys to better responding to the dissatisfactions and anxieties, the fears and threats that weigh upon mankind today, and from which it seeks to free itself, in order to open wide the gates of happiness in the joyful light of Christ Risen, "that liveth . . . and have the keys of hell and death" (Rev. 1, 18), He who alone carries the definitive response to human anguish and despair.

I thank you for having proposed this theme of happiness

to the Church's reflection as a landmark on the pathway of faith.

2) How does the quest for happiness present itself today, what characteristics does it reveal?

As it emerges from the results of the inquiry published for the past three years in your review *Atheism and Faith*, the aspiration to happiness is identified among the traditional populations of the Third World with a harmonious integration into the familial and ethnic group, and an elementary material well-being. In contrast, it is characterized by individualism in the societies of abundance, marked by secularization and religious indifference. Your attention is especially drawn to these societies because they are the most afflicted by non-belief; freedom is often conceived there as a capacity for absolute self-determination, exempt from any law. For many, happiness is no longer attached to the accomplishment of moral duty, nor the search for a personal relationship to God. In this sense, we may speak of a rupture between happiness and morality. To seek happiness in virtue becomes an alien ideal, and even strange, for a number of our contemporaries. What takes priority, is the interest in one's body, its health, its beauty, its youth. It is the image of a happiness enclosed within the vicious circle of desire and its gratification. It is true that compassion, benevolence toward others and true generosity, even among those who are distant from the faith, are also characteristics of these societies.

This culture is often identified as narcissistic. The myth invented by Greek antiquity shows how the ancients, already, had an awareness of the sterility of a love closed in upon itself. Not to love anyone but oneself, is to destroy oneself and perish. "For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it," said Jesus. (Mark 8, 35).

Regard for others, forgetting oneself out of concern for others and their happiness, are these not the most expressive images of the divine mystery? The living and true God, whose countenance Jesus revealed to us, is not a solitary God. Among the divine Persons, everything is gift, sharing, communication, in an eternal respiration of love. All the happiness of God and His joy are the happiness and joy of mutual giving. For man, created in his semblance, there is no true happiness outside of the gift of oneself. "Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's shall save it," said Jesus (Mark 8, 35).

3) Another consideration is imposed. Contrary to the ancients who had such a poignant sense of the tragedy of existence, of man's solitude in the world, of his insufficiency before the ideal of the beautiful and the good, of the ephemeral character of all things, and finally of the inevitability of death, the society of production and consumption refuses to integrate the presence and the experience of evil and death into its idea of happiness. It builds out of this fact an image of happiness which is fragile, artificial, and ultimately false. Any system which does not deeply confront the somber enigma of life has little to say to people, and sooner or later they tire of it. Recent history has made this very evident.

4) The Christian conception of life—and of happiness—has its source in Jesus Christ, God made man, in His earthly life among us, in His death freely accepted, and in His victory over death on Easter morning. "The mystery of man," states the Second Vatican Council, "is only truly clarified in the mystery of the Word Made Flesh" (*Gaudium et spes*, §22). The mystery of human happiness finds its key in Jesus Christ, the archetype of all given existence. Jesus Christ abolished the painful antagonisms between heaven and earth, past and present, between man and God. The present time, still weighed down with the consequences of sin and yet already redeemed by Christ, can be lived as a time of happiness, in the hope of its ultimate fulfillment. This world, where evil and death still prevail, can be loved in joy, because the Kingdom of God, which shall achieve its perfection when the Lord comes again, is already present on this earth (cf. *Gaudium et spes* N. 39. §3)—thus constituting the outline, the image, and the prophecy of the new earth and the new heaven. Corporeal reality can be assumed with all its weight of misery and suffering, and death itself can be accepted without despair, thanks to the promise of resurrection. Everything is saved, even everyday banality, even the most painful trials. Forgiveness of his sins is always offered to the sinner. This is the Christian meaning of happiness, the promise of the Beatitudes, the light of which we seek to propagate "like a lamp that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the daystar arise in your hearts" (II Peter 1, 19).

5) This year, the bicentenary of the death of Mozart recalls our attention to the message of joy which his work conveys, characterized by a feeling of happiness, like a simultaneous experience of death and of resurrection. Many discover, above all in his religious compositions, a veritable song of joy of creation redeemed and reconciled with God, an echo of Grace, the inexhaustible fountain. Sharing the faith must again become a way of sharing joy. Dialogue, which at times becomes an arid exchange of ideas, can rediscover a higher inspiration in the capacity for wonderment before artistic beauty, the reflection of the eternal and ineffable beauty of God.



The young Mozart sharing his compositions with Franz Josef Haydn.

6) Dear friends, this Plenary Assembly on the aspiration to happiness is a threshold crossed in your brief, but already significant history: you have correctly oriented yourselves toward anthropological reflection. Already three years ago, you established it: The atheistic ideologies and worldviews constructed in the 19th century now have only a diminished influence, and the classics of atheism no longer occupy center stage. Yet the ravages of militant atheism have engendered a kind of new pagan religiosity. This is the temptation to self-deification, as old as Genesis; it is the arbitrary rejection of moral law; and it is, ultimately, the tragic experience of evil. Industrialized societies with advanced technology, with their mentalities conditioned by the mass media, are prey to the depreciation of values and the loss of moral meaning. Therein lies a new ground for dialogue with non-believers, a task which is more necessary than ever.

7) An era of dialogue unburdened by the weight of ideologies opens up with the dawning of the new millennium. I would appreciate your sensitizing the Church to this aspect of its mission, by meetings with your collaborators in various parts of the world. Pursue this work with patience and discernment, while invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit and the protection of the Virgin Mary, "cause of our joy."

In this difficult and necessary task, my blessing and my prayers accompany you.