



## The Pontifical Anthem or Papal Anthem

The Pontifical Anthem or Papal Anthem is the official anthem of the Pope, the Holy See and the Vatican City State. It is played at solemn occasions of the State and ceremonies in which the Pope or one of his representatives, such as a nuncio, is present. When the Vatican's flag is ceremonially raised, only the first eight bars are played.

The music was composed in 1869 by Charles Gounod, for the celebration on April 11, 1869 of Pope Pius IX's silver jubilee of priestly ordination. The purely instrumental piece in three parts, originally called *Marche pontificale* (French for "Pontifical March"), became extremely popular from its first performance.

On October 16, 1949, Pope Pius XII decided that it would become the papal anthem, replacing Viktorin Hallmayer's *Marcia trionfale* (1857), which, being still the papal anthem when the Vatican City State was founded in 1929, had been treated also as the new state's anthem. Gounod's *Marche Pontificale* was first performed in this new role during a ceremony on Christmas Eve of 1949, one day before the opening of the Holy Year 1950. The old anthem too was played for a last time, almost as a token of respect.

At that time, Antonio Allegra (1905-1969), who was then one of the organists of St. Peter's Basilica, wrote Italian lyrics for Gounod's music. Other lyrics have been composed for the music in various languages and by different authors. Some of these versions are not directly related to the papacy, e.g. Rudy Villanueva's Cebuano prayer, *Yutang Tabonon* ("Beloved Land"), for protection for the Philippines nation. In 1991, Raffaello Lavagna of Savona (born 1918) wrote Latin lyrics for a four-voice choir, on an arrangement by Alberico Vitalini.

While the Papal Anthem serves as the official anthem for the Vatican State, the Vatican stresses that it "is not to be understood as a national anthem"; it is a composition whose words and music "speak to the heart of many throughout the world who see in Rome the See of Peter."

Latin lyrics: CHORUS O felix Roma o Roma nobilis: Sedes es Petri, qui Romae effudit sanguinem, Petri cui claves datae sunt regni caelorum. Pontifex, Tu successor es Petri; Pontifex, Tu magister es tuos confirmans fratres; Pontifex, Tu qui Servus servorum Dei, hominumque piscator, pastor es gregis, ligans caelum et terram. Pontifex, Tu Christi es Vicarius super terram, rupes inter fluctus, Tu es pharus in tenebris; Tu pacis es vindex, Tu es unitatis custos, vigil libertatis defensor; in Te potestas. VOX ACUTA, VOX ALTERA AB ACUTA Tu Pontifex, firma es petra, et super petram hanc aedificata est Ecclesia Dei. VOX MEDIA, VOX GRAVIS Pontifex, Tu Christi es Vicarius super terram, rupes inter fluctus, Tu es pharus in tenebris; Tu pacis es vindex, Tu es unitatis custos, vigil libertatis defensor; in Te potestas. CHORUS O felix Roma O Roma nobilis.

English translation: CHOIR O happy Rome - O noble Rome You are the seat of Peter, whose blood was shed in Rome, Peter, to whom the keys of the kingdom of heaven were given. Pontiff, You are the successor of Peter; Pontiff, You are the teacher, you confirm your brethren; Pontiff, You who are the Servant of the servants of God, and fisher of men, are the shepherd of the flock, linking heaven and earth. Pontiff, You are the vicar of Christ on earth, a rock amidst the waves, You are a beacon in the darkness; You are the defender of peace, You are the guardian of unity, watchful defender of liberty; in You is the authority. SOPRANOS, ALTOS Pontiff, you are the unshakable rock, and on this rock was built the Church of God. TENORS, BASSES Pontiff, You are the vicar of Christ on earth, a rock amidst the waves, You are a beacon in the darkness; You are the defender of peace, You are the guardian of unity, watchful defender of liberty; in You is the authority. CHOIR O happy Rome - O noble Rome.