



A Greeting from the President of Iceland Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson

A thousand years ago one of the great women in Icelandic history, Guðríður Þorbjarnardóttir, arrived in Rome with news of a new continent west of the ocean where she had not only voyaged but also lived for a while. She was the first person in history to visit both Rome and America and the most remarkable female explorer of all time – and crossed the Atlantic 500 years before Christopher Columbus.

Iceland has long been renowned for its strong women and once again they are venturing abroad. A group selected from Iceland's leading female voice choirs will sing in St. Peter's in Rome, paying tribute to the thousand years of history and culture that join us together.

The choir conductor, Margrét J. Pálmadóttir, is a worthy successor to the intrepid explorer who saw both Rome and America before all others, because she too has been a true pioneer in Icelandic music and choral work. Margrét has blazed trails, revived old works in fresh arrangements, and achieved so much in many fields. She has established a number of choirs, trained and disciplined them, and made women's choirs into an influential branch of the arts – adding a new dimension to our music.

In Iceland Margrét J. Pálmadóttir has really become a cultural institution in her own right, and it is our good fortune that she has devoted her energies to the arts. Now she has been honoured with a special invitation to Rome and we congratulate her and her choir members.

When women from three Icelandic choirs – Vox Feminae, the Reykjavík Gospel Sisters and Domus Vox – begin their song in Rome, their voices will bring greetings from the island in the north where the Almighty is still creating a new world, where the forces of nature and the rhythms of ever-changing light present us every day with a wondrous experience.

Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson
President of Iceland