

Press release

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Subtle hint of orange in papal sea of flowers

On Sunday 8 April the sea of flowers in Saint Peter's Square will, as usual, be dominated by the papal colours of yellow and white. Touches of orange in the form of roses will add a subtle hint of Holland to the final picture. Pope Benedict XVI will give the 'Urbi et Orbi' blessing in the presence of tens of thousands of believers following the customary Easter Mass. Millions of people watch the ceremony on television and appreciate the traditional floral decorations contributed by the Netherlands.

White and yellow

In the papal standard the colours yellow and white represent the silver and gold keys of St. Peter, which in turn represent earthly and heavenly power. The Dutch arrangers incorporate the yellow and white of the papal standard in the floral decorations in St. Peter's Square. In contemporary colour symbolism yellow and white are both strongly associated with Easter. Yellow also stands for light, splendour and glory; white for happiness, tenderness and love. Although the colours are the same every year, the decorations themselves have changed with time. Head designer Charles van der Voort can dip into the huge assortment of Dutch bulbs, flowers and shrubs in white and yellow to create new designs for the altar decorations each year. The entire gamut of products from the Dutch floricultural industry is at his disposal when it comes to choosing more colours to decorate the larger spaces offered by the stairs and balcony.

22 years of variety

The Dutch gift of floral decorations for St. Peter's Square has grown to become a valued tradition. It originated in 1985 in Utrecht. That was the year in which Pope John Paul II visited the Netherlands. Nic van der Voort, a designer from Leiden, took the opportunity to decorate the platform at the exhibition centre in honour of the occasion. This was greatly appreciated and was followed by an invitation to provide the decorations as a backdrop to the canonisation of the Dutch Priest Titus Brandsma later that same year in Rome. It was on this occasion that the idea was born to provide an annual floral tribute at Easter. Since that time the Dutch contribution has grown steadily. Over the years ten terraces have been created beside and in front of the altar, which are decorated with Dutch products. The number of designers who donate their time to this pursuit has grown to twenty.

Proud sector

The sea of flowers in St. Peter's Square needs to be carefully planned well beforehand. Charles van der Voort receives help in his task from people and organisations throughout the floricultural sector. They pool their expertise and craftsmanship to perfect each Easter's floral tribute. Both pride and craftsmanship are the forces that drive them. Together with all those present in St. Peter's Square, the whole world enjoys the magnificence of the floral decorations from the Netherlands. If this year Pope Benedict XVI continues the tradition of saying "Bedankt voor de bloemen" (thank you for the flowers) in Dutch, the feeling of pride will encompass all the visitors from the Netherlands as well as the Dutch television viewers. Just for a moment the Easter celebration will have a subtle hint of Holland.

Note for the editorial staff:

In the appendix you will find details of the products made available by the Dutch floricultural sector and used to decorate St. Peter's Square in Rome.

For more information:

The Flower Council of Holland: Hermine Warringa
Schipholweg 1, 2316 XB Leiden, tel: 0031 (0)71-565 95 65

International Flower Bulb Centre: Jos Eijking
Weeresteinstraat 10, 2181 GA Hillegom, tel: 0031 (0)252-62 89 60

Plant Publicity Holland: Cocky Nieuwveld
Goudse Rijkweg 1, 2771 AE Boskoop, The Netherlands, tel: 0031 (0)172-21 75 50

Floral tribute from the Netherlands

In St. Peter's Square, Rome,
During the Urbi et Orbi blessing on 8 April 2007

The distribution shown below applies per garden.

Terraces 1 to 4

Acer
Azalea mollis
Rhododendron
Japanese azalea
Prunus
Conifer
Erica white
Almond white
Pieris white
+ a wide selection of tulips, narcissi and hyacinths

Terraces 5 and 6

Laburnum
Acer
Japanese azalea
Rhododendron
Prunus
Rhododendron short
Pieris
Almond
Broom
Conifer
Erica
Broom
+ a wide selection of tulips, narcissi and hyacinths

Terraces 7 and 8

Birch
Acer
Prunus
Azalea mollis
Japanese azalea
Conifer
Broom
Laburnum
+ a wide selection of tulips, narcissi and hyacinths

Press release⁴

Terraces 9 and 10

Birch

Prunus

Laburnum

Acer

Rhododendron

Azalea mollis

Pieris

Conifer

Erica

+ a wide selection of tulips, narcissi and hyacinths

Stairs

Decorated with yellow and white pansies

Altar

4 x behind the altar, white flower arrangements

10 x in front of the altar, mixed white flower arrangements

Including: lilies, carnations, roses, Ornithogalum, asters, apple blossom, Amaryllis and tulips.

Balcony

On the balcony a strip including hyacinths, tulips, Gerberas, iris and broom.

