



On October 11, 2008 the Valentin-Rathgeber-Society Oberelsbach e.V. celebrated a festive Baroque Vesper in the Catholic Pilgrimage Church St. Kilian in Oberelsbach. The *Vespera solemnis Opus II/2* of Valentin Rathgeber took centre stage. The rather diversified vesper service lasted about 80 minutes. Not due to traditionalistic reasons was a vesper celebrated like before Vatican II but to place the sacred music of Rathgeber in a liturgical context for which it is written. In that context this music has a certain effect. Thus, a performance within a concert was deliberately not intended. Reverend Andreas Bosl of Oberelsbach was readily prepared to take part in this project.

A small ensemble close to the practise at Rathgeber's time was purposely assembled. The singing quartet consisted of Edith Eyring (Soprano), Sonja Rahm (Alto), Mathias Hüttner (Tenor) and Paul Back (Bass). The singing quartet was lively accompanied by members of the Thuringian-Bavarian Chamber Orchestra and the clarinet players Katharina Fell and Janna Olfen. Berthold Gaß was conductor.

Whereas the vesper was shortened and converted after Vatican II, the original sequence of texts and songs was observed. Contrary to actual vesper services the vesper of Rathgeber's time consisted of five psalms. The hymn was sung not at the beginning of the vesper but at the end. The distinct texts and antiphons of the Baroque Vesper were taken from the feast of St. Francis whose octave was celebrated with this vesper.



Reverend Bosl presided the vesper. He masterly cantillated the tonal antiphonies always answered by the singing quartet. Afterwards Erasmus Gass, the organ player, modulated to the distinct psalm compositions of Rathgeber, a practise already common at Rathgeber's time. Between the psalms Mrs. Christl Kess read well-chosen texts on the different psalms that not only informed but also gave spiritual stimulus for the community. Reverend Bosl delivered an excellent and concise sermon on St. Francis before the Magnificat, the Canticle of Mary. Afterwards Reverend Bosl awards the Golden Insignia of the Diocese of Wuerzburg to Berthold and Erasmus Gass to honor them for 30 years of playing the organ in the Catholic Pilgrimage Church Oberelsbach.

All in all, this project to launch a vesper like in Rathgeber's time which was initiated by the Valentin-Rathgeber-Society was a great success. We can only hope that this was not the only event of that kind.