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More Mozart

by John L. Allen Jr.

All Things Catholic

I noted last week that *L'Avvenire*, the official newspaper of the Italian bishops' conference, recently quoted Cardinal Christoph Schönborn of Vienna to the effect that Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was not a Mason.

"There's no foundation for his frequently mentioned membership in the Masons," *L'Avvenire* cited Schönborn as saying.

The statement was puzzling, since it's a matter of established historical fact that Mozart was initiated into a Masonic lodge in Vienna at the age of 28, and eventually became a Master Mason.

Speaking from Vienna, Schönborn spokesperson Erich Leitenberger told me this week the cardinal was misquoted. Schönborn's comment came in a brief interview shortly before a Mass in Chieti, Italy, Leitenberger said, and was misunderstood.

"The cardinal told me that the young lady from *L'Avvenire* obviously did not understand what he explained to her," Leitenberger told *NCR*.

"He said that all historians are of the opinion that Mozart was a Mason, there is much evidence for this. But at the same time it is necessary to understand that Freemasonry in the 18th century was a completely different thing from Freemasonry in the 19th or 20th centuries. There was no problem to be a deeply convinced Catholic and a Mason -- as is illustrated by the examples of many priests, abbots, etc. [who were Masons] in the late 18th century."

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