



## **Start of the XIII International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers to Rome**

**“WITH YOU we will carry the joy of this pilgrimage  
out into the whole world.”**

The XIII International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers of Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium (CIM) to Rome began today (29 July 2024). Roughly 50,000 young people and young adults from some 20 countries and at least 88 (arch)bishoprics will be spending a week in Rome under the motto “with you” (*Isa 41:10*), among them 35,000 altar servers from Germany. During the week-long pilgrimage, they will experience spirituality, community and fellowship beyond international borders, and they will meet Pope Francis during an Audience.

At the opening press conference in Rome, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ (Archbishop of Luxembourg), President of CIM, stressed that the motto of the pilgrimage “with you” (taken from the Book of Isaiah) lent comfort and encouragement, as it confirmed to us that God not only accompanies us, but also strengthens and supports us, regardless of the challenges that needed to be overcome. “This pilgrimage to Rome enables us to experience the diversity and unity of our global community of altar servers. The daily reports of war, suffering and injustice show us clearly that this is no matter of course. So it is all the more significant to see that we all come from different countries, speak different languages, and pray in different languages, but we have one service and one responsibility. This unites the altar servers, so that each of them is also a peace-maker.” He warmly thanked all the pilgrims for their service, their witness and their willingness to enter into a full commitment. “It is a true witness of faith for me to be able to experience Rome at this time”, as Cardinal Hollerich said.

Auxiliary Bishop Johannes Wübbe (Osnabrück), President of the Commission for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference, stated: “The altar servers are also a shining testimony in a time in which it is often difficult for young people to be actively present in the Church. Through their service in the liturgy, they shoulder a particular responsibility, and they stand at the altar as representatives of the whole congregation. Their enthusiasm and commitment are infectious and inspiring.” He was in no doubt that a highlight of the pilgrimage would be tomorrow's Audience with Pope Francis. The joyful

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anticipation of this meeting could be felt among everyone. Auxiliary Bishop Wübbe wished to the altar servers that they would experience being part of a large, worldwide community. “The tangible joy and enthusiasm of the participants is always a major highlight. We will shape the Church WITH YOU; God’s love is shown WITH YOU; we will take the joy of this pilgrimage out into the whole world WITH YOU”.

Secretary-General of CIM, Tobias Knell, said: “After six years have now passed, a total of 13 (inter)national contingents with roughly 50,000 pilgrims from some 20 different countries will be coming together here in Rome under the motto “with you”. The joy of these young people can be felt in the whole city.” He found it unbelievably lovely to see how many full-timers and volunteers had taken up a commitment to this pilgrimage, going far beyond the normal call of duty for 50,000 young people. “St. Augustine said “Only if you yourself are burning can you light a fire in others.” Without these people who are burning for the altar servers, this pilgrimage would not be possible!”.

Three altar servers also attended the press conference: Mia Rothermel and Philipp Bader from the Bishopric of Augsburg, as well as Tóbiás Kiss, a Hungarian altar server from Romania. They all said that they were looking forward to the meeting with Pope Francis, and to the programme with the respective groups.

#### Information:

Photographs from the altar servers’ pilgrimage are available free of charge in print quality in the German Bishops’ Conference’s database ([DBK-Mediendatenbank](#)). Please quote the copyright information © Deutsche Bischofskonferenz/Maximilian von Lachner. The selection of photographs will be continually expanded during the pilgrimage.

The preliminary programme of the Papal Audience on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024 will be broadcast live on the Internet from 4 p.m. onwards at [www.vaticannews.va/de](#) and on the [YouTube channel](#). The Special Audience with Pope Francis from 5:45 onwards will be broadcast with a commentary. A link to the livestream will also be retrievable at [www.dbk.de](#).

The statements by Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ, Auxiliary Bishop Johannes Wübbe and Tobias Knell are attached as PDF files, and are available at [www.dbk.de](#).

All documents are also available in English and Italian at [www.dbk.de/documents-documenti/pilgrimage-pellegrinaggio](#).

You will find more information on the altar servers’ pilgrimage at [www.dbk.de](#) on the topical page [Internationale Ministrantenwallfahrt 2024 nach Rom](#), and on the website [ministranten.de/romwallfahrt-2024](#).