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PRESS RELEASE
GERMAN BISHOPS'
CONFERENCE



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Statement
by Auxiliary Bishop Johannes Wübbe (Osnabrück),
President of the Commission for Youth Ministry
of the German Bishops' Conference,

Press conference at the start
of the XIII International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers
in Rome on 29 July 2024

Members of the Press,

it fills me with great enthusiasm to not only observe the tangible anticipation of the past few weeks, but also to be infected by it. I want to welcome the more than 35,000 altar servers from Germany to the XIII international pilgrimage to Rome.

The motto of this year's pilgrimage "with you" is a wonderful expression of what we have been able to experience here: community, fellowship and a profound faith which unites us. This pilgrimage offers our altar servers a special opportunity to look beyond their own church towers and realise that they are part of a worldwide community. Our altar servers are a beacon of hope for the whole Church in Germany. With their diverse commitment, they are present everywhere the Church is lived. They are joyous witnesses of the Gospel, despite any questions and doubts that they might have. We are proud of the courageous example that these young people give, and we can learn a lot from them.

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.

There is no doubt that a highlight of the pilgrimage will be tomorrow's Audience with Pope Francis. The joyful anticipation of this meeting can be felt among everyone, and it will be an unforgettable moment for us all.

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I would like to sincerely thank the CIM, headed by Cardinal Hollerich, and the Office for Youth Ministry (afj), for the intensive preparations that have taken place in the past few years. We would not have expected, in the midst of the COVID pandemic several years ago, that there would be so much interest, and that we would be able to finally embark on a pilgrimage together once again, after six long years. It is the first time for almost all of the altar servers that they are taking part in such a pilgrimage, and hopefully a positive experience that will stay with them through their whole lives.

I would also like to particularly thank the German institutions in Rome: the Anima, where many groups will be worshipping, and the German Pilgrims' Centre, which is operating as headquarters for the pilgrimage.

I would like to wish to the altar servers that they will experience being part of a large, worldwide community. May they enjoy an ice cream in the piazza and experience the atmosphere of the city. The meeting with His Holiness, getting to know young people from all over Europe, worshipping with the whole diocese, and celebrating mass in small groups in the catacombs, are special experiences. And if you still have time, please feel free to visit our Pilgrims' Centre (Via della Concilazione 4), where you can meet pilgrims, and enjoy the cooling effect of the air conditioning and a varied programme. I am looking forward to meeting many young people there. May they experience moments full of joy and laughter which they will carry in their hearts for a long time.

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.