



XIII International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers to Rome 2024

Figures, facts and information

The XIII International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers to Rome will be taking place from 29 July to 3 August 2024 under the motto “with you” (from “Fear not, I am with you” *Isa 41:10*), at the invitation of Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium (CIM).

Participating (arch)bishoprics and countries

Young pilgrims have registered from a total of at least 88 (arch)bishoprics and roughly 20 countries, including Austria, Belgium, Croatia, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Switzerland and Ukraine. The 50,000 pilgrims, among them 35,000 altar servers from Germany, will be accompanied by an estimated more than 12,000 voluntary group leaders and more than 2,000 full-time pastors, priests, pastoral workers and others (figure extrapolated from the numbers provided by individual German dioceses).

Information on the German pilgrim groups

Some 360,000 young people in Germany currently give their time as altar servers. The individual bishoprics plan and organise their own pilgrimages for the altar servers, in collaboration with their respective altar service pastoral workers. They take responsibility for organising travel and accommodation, as well as for the relevant parts of the programme within the week of pilgrimage (diocesan worship, spiritual programme in Rome and her churches, pilgrim trails, visits relating to history, culture and spirituality, for instance on early Christianity, in some cases trips before or after the pilgrimage, such as to Assisi, excursions, recreation, etc.). 26 German (arch)bishoprics are attending the pilgrimage. The group of German pilgrims is made up of some 35,000 altar servers aged between 13 and 27 (the focus being on the age group between 14 and 18). Another 24 members of the German Bishops' Conference are in Rome in addition to the President of the Commission for Youth Ministry of the German Bishops' Conference, Auxiliary Bishop Johannes Wübbe. A total of roughly 35 bishops will be travelling to Rome.

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What else is in store for the altar servers?

A new feature of this pilgrimage is the German Pilgrims' Centre in Rome. It is located in the auditorium at Via della Conciliazione 4, and offers space for more than 2,000 altar servers. As well as refreshments and the opportunity to rest, the Centre will be organising a cultural programme with drama, music and film, amongst other things. The Centre will also be providing vocational pastoral care services. The programme and the opening hours are available by accessing the webpage ministranten.de/romwallfahrt-2024, and by scanning the QR-code that you will find in the pilgrims' programme.

A Special Audience with Pope Francis

The **band Syndikath**, which calls the bishopric of Limburg its home, and which performs Christian pop music, will be underpinning the Audience with its music. Syndikath play both cover versions and their own titles. You can find more information by clicking on www.syndikath.com. The performers playing at the Audience will be: Clara Vogel (vocals), Sarah Krebs (vocals, violin, saxophone), André Vaccaro (guitar), Johannes Walter (vocals, keyboard), Thomas Klima (bass) and Hendrik Lieser (vocals, drums).

A **choir of nations**, consisting of 500 pilgrims from all the pilgrim nations, will provide musical support to the band, and will represent and lend a voice to the 50,000 pilgrims in the Square as a symbol of the global community of altar servers. Altar service not only brings the peoples together, but also people with and without restrictions. A part of the choir will therefore be performing the pilgrims' anthem "with you" in sign language. The choir will be led by Constanze Huber from Vienna.

Inclusive services

The pilgrimage will give particular consideration to the special needs of children and young people with restrictions. There is a sign language version for deaf and dumb pilgrims, as well as a film of the pilgrims' anthem. The pilgrims' programme provides information on attending the pilgrimage with people with physical restrictions, so that the community of pilgrims and altar service are accessible for all children and young people.

The logo, anthem and pilgrim badge

The **logo** takes up the symbol of the two keys from the Papal coat of arms and the motto of the pilgrimage. The keys refer to St. Peter and his tomb in Rome – the destination of the pilgrimage and a symbol of the dimension of altar service within the universal church. A ring attaches these keys with fobs. The logo is coloured blue, yellow and white. These are the colours of the resurrection and of Mary the Mother of God, and thus the colours of the whole Church. Variants on the logo have been created in the colours of the respective countries and bishoprics attending, for the participating countries and (arch)bishoprics. The motto will be printed on them in the respective national language.

The **CIM's** common **pilgrims' symbol** is a keyring. The pilgrims will be given two different national variants of the keyring, and are invited to swap them and get to know people from different dioceses and countries.

The national pilgrims' symbol is the **pilgrims' scarf**. The respective colour scheme indicates the national contingent to which the group belongs. There are three different German pilgrims' scarves, and these have been designed using the colours of the German national flag: black, red and gold/yellow. These include different versions which can be swapped. The material is made from 100 percent recycled plastic, and has a mild cooling effect.

The **anthem** takes up the motto of the pilgrimage, and its lyrics combine the many cultures and languages coming together in Rome during this pilgrimage. The pilgrims' anthem "with you" takes up the Biblical text (*Isa 41:10*) from which the motto is derived. The song has been translated into all the languages of the countries taking part in the pilgrimage. The pilgrims' anthem and the logo have resulted from international competitions in which young people, including from Germany, have taken part. The pilgrims' anthem was composed by musician Matthias Gahr from the bishopric of Würzburg.

Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium (CIM)

Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium (CIM) was founded in 1960/1961 with major input from Germany, amongst other places in Altenberg near Cologne. As well as pastoral and liturgical concerns, it aspired to engage in a peace initiative by and for altar servers. The first joint pilgrimage to Rome was held in 1961, and has been held for young people aged from 13 and for young adults roughly every four years since then. A one-off event was held in 2014, involving a separate pilgrimage only for altar servers from Germany, attended by more than 50,000 people, followed in 2015 by the XI international pilgrimage with altar servers from more than 22 countries, and in 2018 by the XII international pilgrimage with more than 60,000 altar servers from 19 countries.