

30/07/2024  
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PRESS RELEASE  
GERMAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE



*The spoken word prevails!*

**Welcoming statement**  
**by Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ (Luxembourg),**  
**President of CIM,**  
**at the Papal Audience on the occasion of the**  
**XIII International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers**  
**on St. Peter's Square on 30 July 2024**

Holy Father!

Almost 50,000 altar servers have come to Rome today, and are looking forward to being able to meet You on their pilgrimage. Our pilgrimage is being held under the motto “with you”, and this refers first and foremost to Christ! It is He whom we encounter in a special way in the altar service. But “with you” also means approaching one another.

The special bond with Christ leads to the creation of real friendship, in other words a bond is forged between us. We know, dear Pope Francis, that this is not enough!

It is an inspiration for us to be a real friend to all people with the aid of Christ. We are however no real friend until we hold out our hands to those in our society who are in difficulties: the poor, the discriminated, the suppressed, the homeless, the unemployed, the refugees or those who have lost their home. Friendship with Christ obliges us to maintain a friendship with the weakest members of our society!

We are however also aware that it is not always easy to do justice to this aspiration. For this reason, Holy Father, we need Your prayers, Your support and Your instruction so that we can do our service at the altar and towards people with joy and love.

*Editor*  
Dr Beate Gilles  
General Secretary of the German  
Bishops' Conference

*Editorial*  
Matthias Kopp (responsible)  
Director of the  
Communications Office

Kaiserstraße 161  
53113 Bonn  
Tel. +49 (0) 228 103 214  
Fax +49 (0) 228 103 254  
Mail [pressestelle@dbk.de](mailto:pressestelle@dbk.de)

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