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PRESS RELEASE
GERMAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCE



The spoken word prevails!

Greeting

by Bishop László Bőcskei (Diocese of Oradea Mare, Romania)

at the Papal Audience on 30 July 2024 in St. Peter's Square on the occasion of the XIII International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers to Rome

Brothers and sisters in the Lord!

It is with great joy and gratitude that I greet you all, altar servers, pastors and companions, on this wide and broad square on the occasion of the thirteenth International Pilgrimage of Altar Servers. Over the centuries, many important and beautiful events and meetings of our Church have taken place in this square where we all have gathered today. It is also the place from which the Holy Father gives his blessing - *urbi et orbi* - to the city and to the world, Sunday after Sunday. It is with great joy that I welcome you all here!

A very special occasion brings us together for our pilgrimage which is about sharing the joy and beauty of our service with one another. Our work as altar servers reaches its peak when our service to God is also expressed as service to and with one another. Many thanks to all of you who have taken on this service and fulfil this beautiful task with youthful zeal and enthusiasm and who know how to live it in a credible way. I would like to encourage and invite you all in this ministry: be open to one another and above all endeavour to deepen your friendship with Jesus Christ, whom you are striving to serve at the altar and also among people!

Dear altar servers! The altar service includes the vestments, the altar server's clothing. Many of you have also brought this clothing with you, which we know cannot be an ordinary or even a common item of clothing; it is neither a 'uniform'. When the altar servers put on their clothing, they are not just thinking about external order and adornment. It is more than that: The inner purity of the heart and soul is paramount, because only with this attitude and conviction can we approach the altar and serve the Lord in a worthy manner. This inner beauty and dignity - and that is what it really and truly is - is something we wear and show not only at the altar and during church services, but also outside the church in our daily life and work. – During this pilgrimage we would also like to pray

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

dbk.de
facebook.com/dbk.de
twitter.com/dbk_online
youtube.com/c/DeutscheBischofskonferenz
instagram.com/bischofskonferenz

that in the face of the many temptations, we may find the strength and courage to preserve the purity and dignity of our hearts and our faithfulness to the Lord!

I am particularly pleased that your pastors and companions are also here to help you discover the joy of God in your service and in all that is connected with Him and His service. Their service to and for you deserves all respect and gratitude.

Our hearts are filled with inexpressible joy and gratitude at this moment, because the Holy Father, Pope Francis, will soon come into our midst to cheer us up and give us his blessing. The ministry of the altar servers and their prayers are very important to the Holy Father. He will come into our midst to pray with us, especially for all altar servers in the world, and in particular for all those who have to live in life-threatening circumstances and yet serve the Lord Jesus Christ in all faithfulness.

Dear altar servers! Let us show our loyalty to Jesus by consecrating ourselves anew here and now to His service with a pure heart and recommitting ourselves to it! May this be the distinguishing mark of the altar server that others will also recognise and that will inspire them to serve the Lord. The motto of our pilgrimage may be recommended to us all for encouragement and compliance: 'Fear not, I am with you! ... I am your God! I will strengthen you, and help you ...with my right hand.' (*Is* 41:10)