



The Holy See

MEETING OF POPE FRANCIS

WITH THE GERMAN ALTAR SERVERS Tuesday, 5 August 2014 [Video](#)

HOMILY OF THE HOLY FATHER DURING THE CELEBRATION OF VESPERS

The words of St Paul that we just heard, from the Letter to the Galatians, draw our attention. The time has come, Paul says. Now God fulfills his decisive work. That which He has always wanted to say to mankind — and He did through the words of the prophets —, He now manifests with a clear sign. God shows us that He is the good Father. And how does He do this? How does He do it? He does it through the incarnation of his Son, who becomes one of us. Through this actual man called Jesus we are able to understand what God truly intends. He wants free human beings so they always feel protected as children of a good Father.

To fulfil this design, God needs only one human being. He needs one woman, mother, who places the Son in the world. She is the Virgin Mary, whom we honour with this evening's Vespers. Mary was completely free. In her freedom she said "yes". She has done good for ever. In this way she served God and mankind. She served God and men. Let us imitate her example if we want to know what God expects from us his children.

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS POSED BY THE YOUNG SERVERS

Vielen Dank für Ihren Besuch! [Thank you very much for your visit!]

I would like to offer you a few points for reflection, bearing in mind the questions your representatives, these four, put to me....

You wonder *what you can do in order to exercise greater leadership in the Church and what the Christian community expects from altar servers*. First of all let us remember that the world needs people who witness to others that God loves us, that He is our Father. In society, all individuals have the duty to serve the common good, offering what is necessary for life: food, clothing,

medical care, education, information, justice.... We disciples of the Lord have a further mission: that of being “channels” that pass on Jesus’ love. And in this mission you, teenagers and young people, play a special role: you are called to speak about Jesus to your peers, not only within the parish community or your association, but most of all beyond it. This is a commitment especially reserved to you, because with your courage, your enthusiasm, spontaneity and ease of getting together, you are more easily able to reach the mind and heart of those who have distanced themselves from the Lord. So many teenagers and young people your age have an immense need of someone who through their own life tells them that Jesus knows us, that Jesus loves us, that Jesus forgives us, shares our difficulties with us and supports us with his grace.

But in order to speak to others about Jesus it is necessary to know and love Him, to experience Him in prayer, in listening to his word. Your liturgical service facilitates this, it allows you to be close to Jesus, the Word and Bread of Life. Let me give you some advice: the Gospel which you hear in the liturgy, read it again to yourself, in silence, and apply it to your life; and with Christ’s love, received in Holy Communion, you can put it into practice. The Lord calls each one of you to work in his field; He calls you to be joyous leaders in his Church, ready to communicate to your friends what He has communicated to you, especially his mercy.

I understand your difficulty in *balancing your commitment as altar servers with the various activities* necessary to your human and cultural development. A little organization, planning is necessary in order to balance things ... but you are German, so this comes naturally to you! Our life is made of time and time is God’s gift, and it is therefore important to make use of it by performing good and fruitful actions. Perhaps many teenagers and young people waste too much time in futile activities: *chatting* on the Internet or on mobile phones, watching “soap operas” on TV, technological progress that should simplify and improve the quality of life, but sometimes distract you from what is really important. Among the many things to do in our daily *routine*, one of the priorities, should be reminding ourselves of our Creator who allows us to live, who loves us, who accompanies us on our journey.

This is exactly the reason God created us in his image, we have even received the great gift of *freedom* from Him. If it is not exercised well, however, freedom can lead us far away from God, it can cause us to lose the dignity that he has bestowed on us. This is why bearings, directions and even rules are necessary, as much in society as in the Church, to help us to do God’s will, thus living according to our dignity as men and as children of God. When not shaped by the Gospel, freedom can be transformed into slavery: the slavery of sin. Our ancestors, Adam and Eve, moving away from the divine will fell into sin, that is, into the misuse of freedom. Dear boys and girls, do not misuse your freedom! Do not squander the great dignity of being children of God that has been given to you! If you follow Jesus and his Gospel, your freedom will begin to bud and blossom like a plant in flower, and will bear good and abundant fruit! You will find authentic joy, because He wants us to be completely happy and fulfilled men and women. Only by adhering to God’s will may we do good and be the light of the world and the salt of the earth!

May the Virgin Mary, who is known as “the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38), be your model in serving God; may she, our Mother, help you to be, in the Church and in society, protagonists of goodness and workers of peace, teenagers and young people full of hope and courage.