



The Holy See

MEETING OF POPE FRANCIS

WITH THE GERMAN ALTAR SERVERS *Saint Peter's Square*

Tuesday, 4 August 2015 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

Dear Altar Servers, Good evening!

1. I thank you all for coming in such great numbers, defying the heat of the Roman sun in August. I thank Bishop Nemet, your President, for his words of introduction and greeting. You have come from a variety of countries on a pilgrimage to Rome, the city where the Apostles Peter and Paul were martyred. It is important to realize that being close to Jesus and knowing him in the Eucharist through your service at the altar, enables you to open yourselves to others, to journey together, to set demanding goals and to find the strength to achieve them. It is a source of real joy to recognize that we are small and weak, all the while knowing that, with Jesus' help, we can be strengthened and take up the challenge of life's great journey in his company.

The prophet Isaiah also discovered this truth, which is to say that God purified his intentions, forgave his sins, healed his heart and made him ready to take up the important task of bringing God's word to his people. In so doing, he became an instrument of the presence of divine mercy. Isaiah found that, by entrusting himself to the hands of the Lord, his whole existence was be transformed.

2. The biblical verse we have just heard speaks to us precisely of this. Isaiah has a vision through which he perceives the glory of the Lord, but at the same time, it shows that, although the Lord reveals himself, he still remains far off. Isaiah is astonished to discover that it is God who makes the first move — do not forget this: it is always God who makes the first move in our life — to discover, that it is God who approaches him first. Isaiah notices that divine action was not hindered by his imperfections; it was God's goodness alone that enabled him to take up the mission, transforming him into a totally new person and therefore one able to respond to the call of the Lord, saying, "Here am I! Send me" (Is 6:8).

3. You are more fortunate today than the prophet Isaiah. In the Eucharist and in the other sacraments, you experience the intimate closeness of Jesus, the sweetness and power of his presence. You do not meet Jesus sitting on an inaccessibly high throne, but in the Bread and

Wine of the Eucharist. His word does not shake the doorposts, but rather caresses the strings of the heart. Like Isaiah, each of you sees that God, although making himself close to us in Jesus and bending lovingly down to you, always remains immeasurably greater, beyond our ability to understand him in his deepest being. Like Isaiah, you too have experienced that it is always God who takes the initiative, because it is he who created you and willed you into being. It is he who, in your baptism, has made you into a new creation; he is always patiently waiting for your response to his initiative, offering forgiveness to whoever asks him with humility.

4. If we do not resist him, Jesus will touch our lips with the flame of his merciful love, as he did the prophet Isaiah. This will make us worthy to receive him and to take him to our brothers and sisters. Like Isaiah, we too are invited not to stay closed within ourselves, protecting our faith in a cellar to which we withdraw in difficult moments. Rather, we are called to share the joy of knowing we are chosen and saved by God's mercy, the joy of being witnesses to the fact that faith gives new direction to our steps, that it makes us free and strong so as to be ready and prepared for the mission.

5. How beautiful it is to discover that faith brings us out of ourselves, out of our isolation. Precisely because we are filled with the joy of being friends with Jesus Christ, faith draws us towards others, making us natural missionaries! Missionary altar servers: this is how Jesus wants you to be!

Dear altar boys and altar girls, the closer you are to the altar, the more you will remember to speak with Jesus in daily prayer; the more you will be nourished by the Word and the Body of the Lord, the better able you will be to go out to others, bringing them the gift that you have received, giving in your turn, with enthusiasm, the joy you have received.

Thank you for serving at the Lord's altar and for making of this service a real school of faith and charity toward your neighbour. Thank you also for having begun to respond to the Lord, like the prophet Isaiah, "Here am I! Send me" (Is 6:8).