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P R E S S R E L A S E

Statement

**of Bishop Dr. Ladislav Nemet SVD (Zrenjanin/Serbien),
President of Coetus Internationalis Ministrantium – CIM,**

**at the Opening Press Conference of the XII. International Pilgrimage of altar servers
on 30 July 2018 in Rome**

Good afternoon to all of you!

Thank you very much for accepting our invitation to this press conference. The 12th International Pilgrimage of altar boys and girls is truly an international event. We have here representatives of 19 different countries and much more nationalities. It is somehow unfortunate that in many languages we do not have this subtle distinction between nationality as citizenship and nationality as cultural and ethnic identity.

In the sense of these my words we have here altar boys and girls coming from 19 different countries but much more nationalities. And still we are here under one common denomination: CIM – International Association of Altar Boys and Girls. Thirty years ago it was much easier to say something like this, today, after borders even in Europe are slowly but steadily being closed down, it is a courageous statement and a consequence of a belief that we Christians, and among them we Catholics, we can stay together and give a testimony of our living community in the Church and indeed, in the whole world.

The programmes and prayers of this pilgrimage reflect this internationality: we have different languages, we have songs, dances, prayers coming from different nations, but we have one single motto and a logo.

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These communalities will be presented by other members of our team. I hope our colorful pilgrimage will be truly enriching for all the participants. I think this is a main value of every international gathering, being of religious or secular character: we consciously appreciate each other's gifts and uniqueness. Although we try to emphasize our own culture and faith, still we do not do it at the cost of others, through exclusion or demonization of others. We bridge over our diversities, bringing them into a harmony of Christian coexistence. We do not build walls and fences between different groups or nations.

We hope that our Pilgrimage will awake in the altar boys and girls coming from 19 different countries, among them for the first time from the United States of America, Caribbean countries like Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis, a sense of common belongings to a single family of God' children.

Thank you.