



EVENING PROCESSION SERMONS, LIGHTS AND PRAYERS

Even for high-ranking church officials, it is unusual for an entire town to listen to their sermon. After the evening service on **Ascension Day**, the spiritual guest of honour – often a bishop or abbot – speaks on the present-day significance of venerating the Holy Blood. Their words, hymns, and the following prayers and rosary decades are broadcast throughout the town centre by loudspeakers. The relic of the Holy Blood is accompanied by a **sea of lights** as people carry candles with colourful wind shields up to the **Kreuzberg** above the cemetery. Here, the evening procession concludes with a prayer service. Many faithful then return to the Basilica for silent or communal prayer.

FROM NEAR AND FAR PROMINENT GUESTS AND VISITORS

Thousands of people from near and far line the streets of Weingarten during the procession. For the occasion, the town welcomes a **prominent figure from politics or society, alongside the religious guest of honour**. From the town hall balcony, they follow the procession of riders together with local representatives from Parliament, the Mayor, and other invited guests.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE MAIN BLUTFREITAG CELEBRATIONS

ASCENSION DAY

8.30 pm Special sermon by the church's guest of honour

Candlelight procession to the Kreuzberg with a joint prayer service for the pilgrims

BLUTFREITAG (THE DAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY)

7.00 am Handover of the relic of the Holy Blood to the Blutreiter (Blood Rider) at the entrance to the church; the procession in the Abteistraße starts at the same time

11.15 am Return of the relic of the Holy Blood to the outer courtyard of the Abbey with a blessing

11.30 am Ceremonial service with the guest of honour



You can find the order of events with all services and events here

Blutfreitag is Weingarten's annual religious and social highlight that is jointly organised by the town and the Catholic Church.

Publisher and editor: Stadt Weingarten.

Picture credits: Front: Reinhard Jaubek, P.1, P.2, P.3, P.4: Stadt Weingarten.

Text: M. Waggerhauser

Tourist information

Münsterplatz 1, 88250 Weingarten

Tel. (0751) 405-232

akt@stadt-weingarten.de

www.stadt-weingarten.de

@weingarten.erleben



BLUTFREITAG IN WEINGARTEN





RELIGIOUS EVENT DEEP SPIRITUALITY

There's definitely an element of folklore involved when around **2,000 horse riders** (including women since 2022) dressed in black frock coats and top hats ride down Münsterplatz to the town hall on their well-groomed and decorated horses with flags and banners, and almost as many **marching bands** in traditional costumes accompany around a hundred local groups.

However, this is only one part of the procession. **In the fields** outside the town, the riders – including clerics and altar girls and boys – are alone with their horses, praying the Rosary. The origins of the procession can clearly be seen here **and at the four altars that have been set up**. The blood relic is said to take God's blessing out into nature with a plea to preserve creation and ensure a rich harvest.

On Blutfreitag in Weingarten,
a living tradition continues, sustained by the
enduring faith of the people.

A LONG HISTORY THE RELIC OF THE HOLY BLOOD

According to tradition, the **relic** kept in a golden cross holds **drops of Christ's blood** mingled with earth. These were gathered by the soldier who pierced Christ's side with a lance after the crucifixion. Longinus, as he later became known, converted to Christianity. In the 11th century, the rediscovered relic was shared between the city of Mantua, the pope, and the emperor.

In 1094, Weingarten Abbey received the emperor's part of the blood relic from Judith of Flanders, the wife of Guelph IV. The **Baroque Basilica** – built in its honour – currently displays the relic **at its main altar**.

Today, strong ties with the city of Mantua endure. Delegations take part in the partner town's festivities to honour the Holy Blood.



UNBROKEN TRADITION THE MONASTERY

The Benedictine family monastery of the House of Guelph on the Martinsberg in Weingarten stood as **a landmark in the region** from its foundation in 1056 until secularisation in 1803. The Beuron Benedictines re-established the monastery in 1922. Before the last monks left in 2010, the priests each took turns carrying the relic as the Holy Blood rider. Today, the pastor of the Basilica community usually carries the relic on horseback. Monastery documents dating back to 1529 mention an already existing horseback procession. It is said that up to 7,000 riders took part during the Baroque period. Unlike other such rides, **the local population continued the tradition** after the German Enlightenment in the 19th century, despite pilgrimages being discouraged or even prohibited at the time.

Blutfreitag remains a living expression
of popular devotion.

