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Audience with the Benefactors of the Foundation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard

At 10.00 this morning, in the Consistory Hall of the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the benefactors of the Foundation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard.

The following is the Pope's address to those present during the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters!

I am glad to welcome and greet every one of you, from the two Helvetic foundations created to offer economic, material and technical support to the Pontifical Swiss Guard. I greet the respective presidents, Jean Pierre Roth and Pascal Couchepin, and I thank them for their kind words. You are gathered here on the occasion of the official inauguration of your new central offices, having generously contributed to their realisation. I am grateful to you for your visit, which takes place on the day on which you celebrate your patron, Saint Nicholas of Flüe, on the sixth centenary of his birth. At the same time, I wish to express to you my gratitude for your care in relation to the worthy Swiss Guard Corps and for the fruitful collaboration established between its Command and with the competent Vatican authorities.

In carrying out your activity, you express the community and fraternal spirit – to which President Couchepin referred – typical of the presence of Catholics in society. This attitude is rooted in the Gospel call to love one's neighbour (cf. *Mk* 12: 31) and promotes the overcoming of differences and social tensions between various groups. Therefore, through your work you bear concrete witness to Gospel ideals and, in the fabric of Swiss society, you are an example of fraternity and sharing.

Love for one's neighbour corresponds to the mandate and example of Christ, if it is based on true love for God. It is thus possible for the Christian, through his devotion, to enable others to experience the provident tenderness of the heavenly Father. To give love to our brothers, it is indeed necessary to draw it from the furnace of divine

charity, through prayer, by listening to the Word of God and from the nourishment of the holy Eucharist. With these spiritual points of reference, it is possible to work in the logic of gratuitousness and service.

I thank you again for all that you do in favour of the many young Swiss people who decide to spend some years of their life in the service of the Church and the Holy See. This is a good opportunity for me to reiterate that their discreet, professional and generous presence is greatly appreciated and useful for the good functioning of the activities of the Vatican.

May the Holy Virgin and Saint Nicholas of Flüe protect you and your families, render you ever greater witnesses of faith and goodness. For those of you present here and for those who support your commendable activities in support of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, I express my hope that your fruitful efforts proceed with joy; and while I ask you, please, to pray for me, I impart to you with affection my apostolic blessing.
