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Audience with the new recruits of the Pontifical Swiss Guard

This morning the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the new recruits of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, accompanied by their parents, who will give their oath this afternoon in the San Damaso Courtyard.

The following are the words the Pope addressed to them during the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear officers and members of the Swiss Guard!

Dear family members!

On the occasion of the swearing in of the recruits I am pleased to welcome you to the house of the Successor of Peter. I greet Colonel Christoph Graf, who leads the Swiss Guard Corps with great dedication, the chaplain, the officers, NCOs and all the members of the Corps. I welcome the parents who join in this celebration: their presence testifies to the attachment of many Swiss Catholics to the Church, and in particular to the See of Peter.

The places where the new recruits are called to serve are steeped in history; since the creation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, many young men have fulfilled with commitment and fidelity that particular mission which the Corps continues to carry out today. Some have even gone so far as to sacrifice their lives to defend the Pope.

As you well know, the functions of the Swiss Guard, although military in nature, constitute a special service to the Supreme Pontiff and the Apostolic See for the benefit of the whole Church. It is therefore a cause for great appreciation that young people choose to devote several years of their lives generously serving the Successor of Peter and the ecclesial community. The Lord sometimes calls some of you to follow him on the path of the priesthood or the consecrated life, finding available ground cultivated precisely during your time of service in the

Guard. Others follow the marital vocation and form their own families. With you I thank the Lord, the source of all good, for the various gifts and vocations which he has entrusted to you, and I pray that those who are now beginning their service may also respond fully to Christ's call, following him with faithful generosity.

This occasion gives me the opportunity to thank publicly all the members of the Swiss Guard for their diligent service. I greatly appreciate your ability to combine professional and spiritual aspects, thus expressing your devotion and fidelity to the Apostolic See. For their part, pilgrims and tourists who come to Rome have the opportunity to experience the courtesy and helpfulness of the guards at the various entrances to Vatican City. Never forget these qualities, which are a beautiful testimony and a sign of the welcome of the Church.

I offer my sincere good wishes to the young recruits and I hope that they will have fruitful spiritual and human experiences both in the Vatican and in the city of Rome. May these years that you will spend here be an opportunity to deepen your faith and to acquire an even stronger love for the Church. I accompany you with my prayers and I thank you for choosing to place some years of your life at the disposal of the Successor of Peter. You too, please pray for me.

With these sentiments, I wish you a happy celebration, and I wholeheartedly impart the Apostolic Blessing to those of you present here and to the entire Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps.
