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Audience with the Pontifical Swiss Guard

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the Pontifical Swiss Guard, on the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony.

The following is the address delivered to them by the Pope during the audience:

Address of the Holy Father

Dear officers and members of the Swiss Guard!
Dear brothers and sisters!

I welcome you with joy, and I welcome every one of you to the Apostolic Palace, which you know well since here too you carry out your valuable work. I greet and thank Colonel Christoph Graf, the chaplain Fr. Kolomban Reichlin, the officers, the non-commissioned officers and all the members of the Corps and their families. A special thought goes out to the new Guards, as well as their parents, relatives and friends, who have gathered here to share in the celebration of the Oath. This occasion is, once again, a welcome opportunity to express my appreciation for the willingness and commitment with which, through your activity, you bear witness to fidelity to the Successor of Peter.

The Pontifical Swiss Guard is a large family, a lively and fraternal community, both in times of service and in times off duty. And just as the family is a place of growth, where one learns many things useful for life, so it is in the Guard: it is an environment of human and Christian formation for all. The young people are enriched by the experience of the older ones who, in turn, can be edified and learn from the openness of the young people, from their enthusiasm that leads them to explore constantly, moved by a positive curiosity. To you recruits in particular I say: do not lose the courage and passion for discovering new things!

I like to think that the decision to place some years of your lives at the disposal of the Pope and the Holy See is not unrelated to your personal journey of faith. Your mission here in the Vatican is an avenue that the Lord has

opened up for you to live out your Baptism and give joyful witness to your faith in Christ. A faith that you learned in your family, cultivated in your parish, and that manifests the intensity of the bond of Swiss Catholics to the Church of Rome. You are also called to bear witness to this faith in your various places of service. In the faces of those you approach every day, be they members of the Roman Curia or pilgrims and tourists, you see many invitations to recognize and share God's love for each one. May every situation, every encounter be an opportunity to put the Gospel of Christ into practice, to learn from the Lord and to live fraternal love in his name and by his Spirit.

I encourage you to make good use of the time available to you to learn how to recognize the inspiring and joyful presence of the Risen Lord in your lives, through reading Holy Scripture, meditating on spiritual texts - even during some quieter guard duty -, celebrating the Sunday Eucharist and partaking in the Sacraments. May the beauty and history of the various buildings and works of art in this special place help you always to renew your wonder at the beauty of God and the beauty of his mystery.

Dear Swiss Guards, do not forget that the Lord walks with you: he is always by your side in calm moments and in those of difficult. I hope you will feel the consolation of his closeness, his luminous closeness, his merciful closeness. I reiterate my gratitude to the entire Corps for your diligent and generous collaboration, of which I am a witness every day. I entrust all of you here present, and your co-nationals, to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary and of the patron Saint Nicholas of Flüe. I bless you from my heart, and I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you.
