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Press release

500 Years after the « Sacco di Roma »: Remembering History and Looking towards the Future

The year 2027 will mark the 500th anniversary of the *Sacco di Roma* (May 6, 1527). With the commemorative year « 500 Years of the Sacco di Roma », the Pontifical Swiss Guard pays tribute to the 189 guardsmen who faithfully fulfilled their mission to protect the Pope, with most of them sacrificing their own lives. This dedication of the guardsmen demonstrates how the values of loyalty, reliability, professionalism and solidarity continue to shape the Swiss Guard, both today and into the future.

On May 6th 1527, Swiss Guards defended Pope Clement VII with extraordinary courage and unwavering loyalty during the Sack of Rome. 147 guardsmen lost their lives, while their 42 comrades escorted the Pope safely to Castel Sant'Angelo. This event continues to shape the identity of the Pontifical Swiss Guard to this day. Since 1911, the swearing-in of new guardsmen, held every year on May 6th, has always served as a reminder of this event.

In 2027, the Pontifical Swiss Guard will mark the 500th anniversary of the Sacco di Roma with a commemorative year. Under the guiding theme «**Values that endure: loyalty, reliability, professionalism and solidarity**», the commemorative year connects historical remembrance with communicating the Swiss Guard's purpose today. « The Sacco di Roma of 1527 is one of the most defining events in our history. The commemorative year recalls the willingness to sacrifice and marks the loyalty of our predecessors. At the same time, we want to show that the values of that time are still present today and shape the mission of our guardsmen in the service to the Pope. It is a year of dignified remembrance, encounter and gratitude », says Colonel Christoph Graf, Commander of the Pontifical Swiss Guard.

The commemorative year at a glance

The opening event will start with a symposium of well-known historians in Brig on 23 January 2027. The core focus will be on the scholarly examination of the Sacco di Roma. A historical analysis will address the political, military and religious circumstances of the events of the time and their consequences, as well as questions of remembrance, responsibility and myth. as well as the presentation of a publication on the historical event and its significance for the history of the Swiss Guard.

From 16 to 19 April 2027, the Pontifical Swiss Guard will take part in the Zurich Sechseläuten at the invitation of the Central Committee of the Zurich Guilds. Among other things, this will highlight the historical connection between the city of Zurich and the then commander of the Guard, Kaspar Röst, who was born in Zurich and led the Guard during the Sacco di Roma in 1527 and lost his life.



Päpstliche Schweizergarde
Garde Suisse Pontificale
Guardia Svizzera Pontificia
Guardia Svizra Papala

The commemorative year will culminate in celebrations at the Vatican from May 5th to May 7th 2027. The program includes Vespers and the unveiling of a new memorial plaque for the fallen guardsmen, Holy Mass in St Peter's Basilica, the swearing-in of the new guardsmen at St Peter's Square, a light-art projection by Swiss light artist Gerry Hofstetter, as well as further events with representatives of the Church, politics, society and family members of present guardsmen.

On 4 September 2027, the national pilgrimage of former Swiss Guards will take place in Einsiedeln. In addition to the religious celebrations, the premiere of a film about the commemorative year and another light-art projection are planned.

Remembering History, Looking to the Future

With the commemorative year, the Pontifical Swiss Guard aims not only to remember a defining historical event, the people in uniform and the values that have shaped the service of the Swiss Guard for centuries are equally at the center. The commemorative year also aims to deepen understanding of the Swiss Guard's mission today, encourage young Swiss men to serve at the Vatican, and highlight Switzerland's enduring connection to the institution and its rich tradition.

The complete program of the commemorative year and further background information on the "Sacco di Roma" are available on our website:

<https://schweizergarde.ch/commemorazione/>

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