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Swearing-in of new recruits to the Swiss Guard

Vatican City, 6 May 2016 – The swearing-in ceremony for new Swiss Guards is held on May 6 to commemorate the death of 147 Swiss soldiers who fell defending the Pope during the Sack of Rome (1527). This afternoon, in the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace, 23 new recruits pronounced their solemn oath, and tomorrow they and their families will be received in audience by the Holy Father.

The day began with the opening Mass celebrated in St. Peter's Basilica by Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin, who in his homily invited the future guard to be witnesses to Christ in today's world, in spite of many difficulties. "Be witnesses of Christ also in your country, Switzerland", he said, "in a world that yearns for light and life but often does not have the courage to accept it, among young people like you who hunger for meaning and fullness, so that you can show them the value of great and beautiful things, even if this commitment and effort is accompanied by some hardship."

"Dear guards", the Cardinal continued, "do not wait; begin today to bear witness and, with your faithfulness in daily service to the Holy Father, with your fraternity and the good relations between you, with your example of faith, that the Lord is alive, compassionate and merciful, that He wishes to be close to men, that He wants to bring peace, happiness and true fulfilment to heal all wounds."

"Look to your patron saints today, at the time of your oath, with your right hand raised to heaven, and invoke them to help you accomplish what you promise. Their hearts were filled with the joy of the Lord, that no-one can take away. Thus Saints Martin, Sebastian and Nicholas de Flue knew how to be true instruments in the hands of God, wherever the Lord led them and to whatever He asked of them as soldiers or bishop, as guards and martyrs, as fathers, hermits or advisers of peace. Therefore, let us ask by the intercession of Mary Most Holy, of the holy apostles Peter and Paul and the patron saints of the Guard, to be docile instruments of God and to show to the men and women of our world that you are true witnesses of Christ," concluded the cardinal.

The Pontifical Swiss Guard performs security services (entry control, security service and bodyguard service), and services of honour (audiences, receptions, Masses), but the primary mission of the Corps is to monitor continuously the security of the Holy Father and his residence. Their complementary tasks include accompanying the Pope on his travels and protecting the College of Cardinals when the Apostolic See is vacant.