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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.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Mr. Commander,

Reverend Chaplain,

Dear officers and members of the Swiss Guard!

I am pleased to meet you on this festive day of yours. I extend a cordial greeting to the new recruits who, following the example of many of their fellow countrymen, have chosen to devote a period of their youth to the service of the Successor of Peter. The presence of your family members expresses the devotion of Swiss Catholics to the Holy See, as well as the moral education and good example with which their parents have passed on to their children the Christian faith and the sense of generous service to their neighbour. My grateful greeting also goes to the representatives of the Foundation for the Pontifical Swiss Guard.

Today offers me the opportunity to remember the illustrious past of your Corps. My thoughts turn, in particular, to the "Sack of Rome", in which the Swiss Guards courageously defended the Pope, to the point of giving their lives. The memory of that event may evoke in you the danger of spiritual "plundering". In today's social context, many young people run the risk of being denuded of their souls when they follow ideals and lifestyles that respond only to material desires or needs.

My wish is that your stay in Rome will be a favourable time to make the most of the positive things this city has to offer. It is rich in history, culture and faith, so take advantage of the opportunities offered to you to enhance your cultural, linguistic and spiritual background. The time you will spend here is a unique moment in your life: may you live it in a spirit of fraternity, helping each other to lead a life rich in meaning and joyfully Christian.

The oath you will take the day after tomorrow is also a declaration of fidelity to your baptismal vocation, that is, to Christ, who calls you to be men and Christians, agents of your existence. With His help and with the power of the Holy Spirit, you will serenely face the obstacles and challenges of life. Do not forget that the Lord is always by your side: I sincerely hope that you will always be aware of His consoling presence.

I wish to take this opportunity to renew the expression of my gratitude to the entire Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps. And I thank you not only for what you do - which is a lot! - but also for how you do it. Saint Teresa of Calcutta said that at the end of our lives we will not be judged for how many things we have done, but for how much love we have put into those things.

I assure you of my prayer for all your good intentions; and you too, please pray for me. To all of you, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing.
