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Audience with the Carabinieri of the Company of Rome Saint Peter's

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Carabinieri of the Company of Saint Peter's.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear Carabinieri!

I am pleased to welcome you and to address my cordial welcome to each one of you. I greet the Commander General of the Carabinieri, whom I thank for his words, the Commander of the "Saint Peter's" Company, the other commanders and officials, and all of you present here.

I wish to express my gratitude for the service you provide to the Holy See, collaborating with the other Italian and Vatican forces for public security and order. Your esteemed work around Vatican City favours the peaceful running of events which, throughout the year, attract pilgrims and tourists from all over the world. It is an activity that requires, on the one hand, the enforcement of instructions that are given and, on the other, a patient willingness to meet people's needs. That patience that you have with all those who ask you questions, even priests! Thank you for this.

The professionalism and sense of responsibility that you demonstrate in the territory express and strengthen the sense of solidarity within the social community. In your work, around the Vatican as in other areas of the city, you are called to pay special attention towards fragile and disadvantaged people, especially the elderly, who are indeed the root of our culture, the living memory of our culture. This is facilitated by the relationship of trust and devotion to the common good that is usually established between carabinieri and the people. This is curious, it is true. When people meet a carabinieri, they are aware of being able to count on his or her help. And this is all the more meritorious when it happens in a hidden way, through those small but significant gestures of your daily

service. If even your superiors do not see these hidden acts, you know that God sees them and does not forget them!

Your mission is expressed in dedication to neighbour, and you undertake every day to merit the trust and esteem the people place in you. This demands constant willingness, prudence, a spirit of sacrifice and a sense of duty. I encourage you everywhere to be promoters of responsible citizenship, to help people to be good citizens, to be guardians of the right to life, through commitment to safety and security. In carrying out your profession, always be aware that every person is loved by God, is His creature, and as such deserves respect. May the Lord's grace nourishes day by day the spirit with which you dedicate yourselves to your work, encouraging you to live it with an extra degree of attention and dedication.

I renew to all of you my gratitude for your vigilant and discreet presence around the Vatican. May the Lord reward you! Every morning when I arrive here in my study in the Library, I pray to Our Lady and then I go to the window to look at the square, to look at the city and there, at the end of the square, I see you. Every morning I greet you with my heart and thank you. I hope that your faith, the tradition of fidelity and generosity of which you are heirs, the ideals of the *Arma dei Carabinieri* will help you to find ever new reasons for the realization of your service. May every one of you live positive experiences in your professional, personal and family life.

I invoke on you and on your daily work the gifts of the Holy Spirit. I entrust you to the maternal protection of Our Lady, whom you venerate with the title *Virgo fidelis*. You turn to her with confidence, especially in moments of tiredness and difficulty, certain that, as a very tender Mother, she will know how to present your needs and expectations to her Son Jesus. She is a mother, and like all mothers, she knows how to keep, how to protect, how to help. From my heart I bless you, together with your families. And I ask you please to pray for me. Thank you!
