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Audience with the Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps on the occasion of the swearing-in of new recruits

This morning, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the Holy Father Francis received in audience the Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps, on the occasion of the swearing-in of the new Guards, accompanied by their family members.

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

Address of the Holy Father

Dear members and relatives of the Swiss Guard,

Distinguished Authorities,

Dear brothers and sisters, dear children, good morning and welcome to you all!

I greet the Commander, the Officials and all the members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, together with their family members who have come for the celebration. I gratefully greet the civil and military authorities.

This day always comes as an eagerly awaited and welcome occasion for me to publicly express my thanks for the presence and service of the Swiss Guard. First of all, for your presence: a presence that stands out for its quality, for its kind, attentive, indeed scrupulous style. And then of course for your daily service, always generous and diligent.

My gratitude affectionately extends also the families of these young men, because, if they are here, if they are well-educated, it is first and foremost due to the environment in which they grew up.

I warmly express my appreciation to the Commander, Mr. Christoph Graf, and his staff, among whom I particularly thank the Chaplain, a fine Benedictine!

Dear Guards, I am glad that your Superiors have told me about several positive aspects, which I am pleased to share at this time.

There is an excellent Corps spirit among you, a positive and respectful atmosphere in the barracks, courteous behaviour towards the Superiors and guests, despite sometimes long periods of intense and tiring service, due to the fact that you are somewhat reduced in number. You demonstrate a high level of motivation and will to serve, and also – this pleases me greatly – good relations among yourselves: you go on excursions together, you spend holidays together, you often go out in company. And this is very good!

Indeed, relationship is the key experience for us Christians: Jesus revealed to us and bore witness that God is love, He is in Himself relationship, and in this mystery, we find the purpose and fulfilment of our existence. Good relationships are the high road to our human and Christian growth and maturation. Much of what characterizes our personality we have learnt through relationships with parents, brothers and sisters, schoolmates, teachers, friends, work colleagues, and so on.

This is why life in the extended family of the Swiss Guard, for at least two years of service, is such an important and formative time for you. It is not only a period of work, but a time of life and relationship, of intense communion in diversified company. This diversity and intensity of communion and relationships between you and your daily barracks environment is an essential and qualifying aspect for you.

From this perspective, the new barracks, currently in the planning phase, should make an important contribution to the reunification of Guards and their families, who are currently forced to live somewhat spread out due to lack of space, and thus also to the support and strengthening of this bond and the sense of family within the Corps.

Again, with regard to the relational dimension, I urge you to actively cultivate community life. Today, the habit of spending free time alone with the computer or mobile phone is widespread among young people. Therefore, I also say to you, young Guards: go against the tide! Please go against the tide! It is better to use your free time for communal activities, to get to know Rome, for moments of fraternity in which to tell and share, for sport... These experiences build you up inside and will accompany you throughout your life.

Dear friends, I wish you a good celebration and I entrust you to the protection of the Virgin Mary and your patron Saints. I know you pray for me, I know: I thank you warmly and I ask you, please, to continue to do so. Thank you all!
