



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 6 May 2017*

[Multimedia]

*Commander,
Reverend Chaplain,
Dear Guards,
Dear Family and Friends of the Pontifical Swiss Guard!*

I am delighted to meet you during this day of celebration and I would like to address a cordial greeting especially to the new recruits who have chosen to spend a few years of their youth at the service of the Successor of Peter. The presence of your parents, relatives and friends, who have come to Rome to take part in these days of celebration, shows both the affection of Swiss Catholics to the Holy See, as well as the Christian education and the good example by which parents have transmitted to their children the faith, the value of belonging to the Christian community, and the significance of ecclesial service.

As every year, you remember the painful, and at the same time legendary, “Sack of Rome”, in which the Swiss Guards distinguished themselves in their courageous and indomitable defence of the Pope, to the point of sacrificing their lives. Today you are not called to this heroic offering of physical life, but to another no less arduous sacrifice: namely, to serve the power of the faith. This is a powerful barrier to resist the various forces and powers of this earth and, above all, those of the one who is “the prince of this world”, the “father of lies” who “prowls around like a lion seeking to devour”, according to the words of the Apostle Peter (cf. 1 Pet 5:8). You are called to be strong and brave, supported by faith in Christ and his word of salvation. Your presence in the Church, your important Vatican service, is an opportunity to grow as brave “soldiers of Christ”. Pilgrims and tourists who have the chance to meet you are edified, discovering in you, together with the

characteristics of composure, precision and professionalism, also generous Christian witness and holiness of life. May this be your first concern.

I would like to invite you to live the time you spend in the “Eternal City” with sincere fraternity, supporting one another in leading an exemplary Christian life that is motivated and supported by your faith. I am certain that your strongest motivation to come to Rome to carry out this service was given to you by your faith. The source of the singular mission entrusted to you precisely in favour of the Holy See and the Church, in fact, lies in Baptism, enabling you to bear witness to faith in Christ, who died and is risen, there, where Providence has placed you.

Dear Guards, may you feel you are an active part of the great People of God, missionary disciples committed to witnessing to the Gospel in the environment in which you work and in places of leisure time. And this comes about through small, sometimes repetitive daily gestures to which it is important to always give fresh meaning. In this way, a manner of behaviour is formed that, within the Corps, is made of mutual harmony and respectful communion with your superiors, and outwardly expresses itself in hospitality, kindness, and patience.

I also hope you will be able to appreciate this season of your life so as to grasp some of the many opportunities for spiritual and cultural growth that Rome offers you. Saint Philip Neri, whose liturgical memorial we will celebrate towards the end of this month, accompanied his young people in discovering traces of the ancient Christian communities, in the footsteps of the saints. Here is something very interesting: going through Rome in the footsteps of the many saints who have lived in this city. And this will make your Roman period even more unforgettable and abundantly fruitful!

Allow me to take this opportunity to renew to the entire Corps of the Swiss Guard my gratitude for the diligence and concern with which it carries out its own valuable activity at the service of the Pope and the Vatican City State. I ask you to pray for me and as I invoke upon you the protection of the Blessed Virgin and of your patrons, Saint Martin, Saint Sebastian and Saint Nicholas of Flüe — whose sixth centenary of birth is celebrated this year — I impart to you my heartfelt Apostolic Blessing.