



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARDS
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY**

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 5 May 2007

Distinguished Commandant,

Dear Swiss Guards,

It is a true pleasure for me to meet you on the occasion of the swearing-in of the new Swiss Guards.

First of all, to each one of you, dear new halberdiers, I address my cordial greeting, which I extend to all the Swiss Guards, thanking you for having chosen to dedicate some years of your youth to the service of the Pope and his closest collaborators.

I also thank your Commandant for all that he does so that you can carry out your service in a proper way. I greet your Chaplain and also your families and relatives, the ex-Swiss Guards and the friends who wanted to be present at the solemn swearing-in ceremony of the new Swiss Guards, which is such a meaningful act for the Apostolic See.

I clearly recall the solemn commemorative celebrations of the fifth centenary of the foundation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps which took place last year with many people participating. These celebrations have contributed to making better known the origin, history and value of your Corps and the significant witness of faith and love that you have rendered to the Church for more than 500 years.

Actually, it all began on 22 January 1506 when a troop of 150 men arrived in the Vatican, whom my Predecessor Julius II had requested at the "Ober-alemannischen Eidgenossenschaft".

From that day to our time the history of your Corps of Guards is intimately interwoven with the

events and the life of the Church, and in particular of the Pope. And it is a long history of fidelity and generous service, always given with dedication, sometimes even to the heroic sacrifice of one's life.

Your most appreciated dedication has rightly merited the esteem and trust of all the Pontiffs, who have constantly found help, support and protection in your Corps' guardianship.

Thank you, dear friends, for your silent but efficient presence next to the person of the Pope; thank you for the professionalism and also for the love with which you carry out your mission.

Yes, yours is not only a professional duty; it is also a true mission at the service of Christ and his Church.

In the new Pontifical Swiss Guard Rule, approved by me precisely last year on the occasion of the fifth centenary of its birth, it states that "the Swiss Guards must demonstrate in all circumstances that they are good Christians and exemplar soldiers" (art. 73); and again, "they must avoid whatever contrasts with the faith, Christian morals and duties of their own state. Furthermore, they must always be faithful to the characteristics and traditions of the Corps, with a simple and sober lifestyle" (art. 75).

It is also added that with "the objective of forming a true community, they must personally cultivate and reciprocally exercise a spirit of Christian solidarity, which means to preserve and promote the mutual union of souls" (art. 77). As it is easy to see, it concerns very precise and concrete directives to bring the plan that God has for each one of you to fulfilment, having called you to serve him in such a worthy Institution.

Ultimately, the Lord calls you to holiness, to be his disciples, always ready to listen to his voice, to do his will and to accomplish it in the daily fulfilment of your duties. This will contribute to make you "good Christians" and at the same time "exemplary soldiers", animated by that evangelical spirit which makes each baptized person "yeast" able to ferment the mass and "light" that illuminates and warms the environment where you live and work.

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