



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE SWISS GUARD RECRUITS AND THEIR RELATIVES
ON THE OCCASION OF THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY***

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 6 May 2011*

*Dear Mr Commandant,
Reverend Chaplain,
Dear Officials and Members of the Swiss Guard,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,*

I am particularly glad to meet you on the occasion of your anniversary and I would especially like to address a cordial greeting to the new recruits. In following the example of many of their compatriots, they have chosen to dedicate a few years of their youth to serving the Successor of Peter. The presence of your parents, relatives and friends who have come to Rome to take part in these days of festivity, not only expresses the ties of many Swiss Catholics to the Holy See, but also the teaching, moral education and good example through which parents have handed down to their sons the Christian faith and sense of disinterested service.

This day is an opportunity to take a look at the glorious past of the Pontifical Swiss Guard. I am thinking in particular of the event — recalled several times, because it is a fundamental part of your history — of the famous “Sack of Rome” which saw the Swiss Guard courageously defending the Pope, to the point of giving their lives for him. Reference to the “Sack of Rome” should make us reflect that the threat of a more dangerous form of sacking also exists, which we might describe as spiritual.

In the contemporary social context many young people in fact run the risk of falling into a gradual impoverishment of the soul, because they follow superficial ideals and perspectives which only fulfil material needs and requirements. Your stay in Rome is a good opportunity for you to make

the most of the many possibilities that this city offers you, giving your life an ever more solid and profound meaning.

Rome is rich in history, culture and faith; therefore take the opportunities that are given to you to broaden your cultural, linguistic, and especially spiritual horizon. The period you spend in the “Eternal City” will be a wonderful interlude in your life: live it with a spirit of sincere brotherhood, helping each other to lead an exemplary Christian life which corresponds with your faith and with your special mission in the Church.

While some of you will swear to carry out your service faithfully in the Pontifical Swiss Guard and others renew this oath in their hearts, think of the luminous face of Christ who calls you to be authentic, true Christians, protagonists of your lives.

His Passion, death and Resurrection are an eloquent appeal to face the difficulties and challenges of life by showing maturity, knowing well, as the liturgy of the Easter Vigil reminded us, that the Risen Lord is the eternal King “who has conquered! ... Darkness vanishes for ever”. He alone is the Truth, the Way and the Life. He must become more and more every day the parametre of our life and our behaviour. Imitate him, the One who chose full and total faithfulness to the mission of salvation entrusted to him by the Father, as a measure and reference point in life.

Dear young men, the Lord is walking with you, he supports you, encourages you to follow him with the same faithfulness: I warmly hope that you will always feel the joy and consolation of his luminous and fortifying presence.

This meeting gives me the opportunity to express to the new recruits my deep gratitude for their decision to make themselves available, for a certain period, to the Successor of Peter and thereby to guarantee the necessary order and security within Vatican City.

I willingly take this opportunity to extend the expression of my gratitude also to the Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps as a whole, called as it is, among its different tasks, to welcome pilgrims and visitors to the Vatican with courtesy and kindness. This work of surveillance, which you carry out with diligence, love and solicitude, is assuredly both important and delicate. It requires at the same time great patience, perseverance and the willingness to listen.

Dear friends, your service is particularly useful for the tranquillity and security of daily life and of the spiritual and religious events in Vatican City. May your significant presence at the heart of Christendom, the destination of a never ending flow of the faithful who come to meet the Successor of Peter and to visit the tombs of the Apostles, inspire increasingly in each one of you the resolve to intensify the spiritual dimension of life, as well as the commitment to deepen your Christian faith, joyfully witnessing to it by your consistent behaviour. I assure you of my fervent prayers and I cordially impart the Apostolic Blessing to each one of you and to all those around

you in this special circumstance.

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