



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE FRANCIS TO THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 6 May 2013*

Dear Friends of the Swiss Guard,

I am delighted to welcome you and I extend my cordial greetings to each one of you, to your families, to your friends, to the Authorities and to those who wanted to take part in these days of festivity. To all of you, dear Guards, I renew my most sincere thanks for your valuable and generous service to the Pope and the Church. Every day I personally appreciate the dedication, the professionalism and the love with which you carry out your duties. And for this I thank you! I thank in a special way your families, who have benevolently accepted your decision to live this service in the Vatican and support you with their love and their prayer.

On this date you commemorate the sacrifice the Swiss Guards made in their strenuous defence of the Pope during the “Sack of Rome”. Today you are not called to this heroic act but to another kind of sacrifice, also demanding: to put your youthful energy at the service of the Church and the Pope. And to do this you need to be strong, motivated by love and sustained by faith in Christ. This year your celebration falls within the Year of Faith, which the Church is living throughout the world. I am certain that the decision to spend years of your life in the service of the Pope is not foreign to your faith. Rather, the deeper motivations that have impelled you to come to Rome have their origins precisely in your faith. This is a faith that you learned at home, was cultivated in your parishes, and which also manifests the affection that Swiss Catholics have for the Church. Remember it well, the faith that God gave you on the day of Baptism is the most precious treasure that you have! And there your mission to serve the Pope and the Church finds its source in the faith.

During your stay in Rome, you are called to bear witness to your faith with joy and kindness. How

important it is for the many people who pass by Vatican City! But it is also important for those who work here at the Holy See, and that goes for me too! Your presence is a sign of the power and beauty of the Gospel, that in every age calls young people to follow it. And I would like to invite you to live out your time in the “Eternal City” with a spirit of sincere brotherhood, helping one another to lead a good Christian life, one that corresponds to your faith and to your mission in the Church. Take care of one another, support one another when one of you is having a hard time. Be ready to listen, be close at hand. Pray for one another, and put into the practice the mutual help and communion that you draw from Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

Your specifically ecclesial experience in the Swiss Guard Corps represents a privileged opportunity to deepen your understanding of Christ and of his Gospel and to follow him, almost breathing in, here in Rome, the Catholicity of the Church. Today when some of you swear your fidelity to carry out your service in the Guard, the others will renew the oath in their hearts, know that your service is also a testimony to Christ, who calls you to be authentic human beings and true Christians, be the protagonist of your own existence. Deeply united to him you will know how to face in a mature way the obstacles and the challenges of life, in the firm conviction that, as the Liturgy of the Easter Vigil reminds us, the Risen Lord is the “eternal King who has conquered the darkness of the world”. Only he is the Truth, the Way and the Life.

Dear Swiss Guards, do not forget that the Lord walks with you. This is a good thought that does the soul good: do not forget that the Lord is always working with us, he is always at your side to support you, especially in moments of difficulty and trial. My heartfelt wish for you is that you may always feel the joy and the consolation of his luminous and merciful presence.

I entrust each one of you and your valuable service to the motherly intercession of the Virgin Mary and your Holy Patrons; and from my heart I impart to you, to your families and to all those present my Blessing, as a sign of my great affection and special gratitude.