



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE MEMBERS OF THE GENDARMERIE CORPS
OF VATICAN CITY STATE**

Saturday, 31 December 2005

Dear Friends,

I am particularly pleased to meet today with all of you who form the Gendarmerie Corps of Vatican City State. It is a pleasant opportunity to become better acquainted with you and to express to you my sentiments of esteem and gratitude.

I greet first of all Cardinal Edmund Casimir Szoka, President of the Pontifical Commission for Vatican City State, as well as Mons. Giulio Viviani, your chaplain. I greet and thank Commander Camillo Cibin, Inspector General, who has expressed your common sentiments. I then extend my greeting to each one of you.

This visit is taking place on the last day of 2005, a truly special year for the Church. The illness, death and funeral celebrations of beloved Pope John Paul II, the period of the Vacant See, the Conclave and my election as Bishop of Rome are events that made an extraordinary impression on those who live here in the Vatican, as well as on the faithful throughout the world.

For you, as I well know, it has been an extremely busy period. You have carried out your work with dedication and a spirit of sacrifice, in accordance with the best traditions of the Gendarmerie Corps.

Thank you, dear friends, for all that you do with self-denial and faithfulness every day, together with the Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps, to serve the Pope and his collaborators, helping to guarantee to Vatican City serenity and order, welcoming the pilgrims who come to visit the tombs of the Apostles or to meet the Successor of Peter, and seeking to solve any problems that may arise on every occasion, especially during liturgical celebrations, at audiences in the Vatican and

during the Apostolic Visits of the Pope in Rome and elsewhere in the world.

Yours is a delicate and ever more necessary activity, which requires dedication, prudence and great availability. Thank you for your service!

Dear Gendarmes, in presenting the Birth of the Redeemer, the liturgy of this Christmas season points out to us the shepherds who, while they kept vigilant watch over their flocks, welcomed the proclamation of the Angels and hastened to adore him in the Bethlehem Grotto.

We are all invited to seek and contemplate, like them, the Saviour who became man for us and for our salvation. On the alert and ever ready for action: these are the spiritual attitudes that also fittingly apply to your work, which involves you by day and by night.

May you also always be vigilant in the purely spiritual context. Jesus addresses this exhortation to all his disciples so that, without letting themselves be attracted by the various enticements of the world, they may walk without flagging on the path of the Gospel and never lose the precious gift of the faith.

For this reason it is indispensable to pray always, preserving interior union with the Lord. He alone gives meaning and value to our existence. May he, therefore, support you at every moment and repay you for the sacrifices your service entails.

In a few hours a New Year will begin, which I hope will be serene and rich in blessings for each one of you and for your families. I assure you of my prayers for this and warmly impart the Apostolic Blessing to you, entrusting to the Lord all the Gendarmes in active service and those who have retired, your relatives and your loved ones.

Through the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church, and of St Michael the Archangel, your Patron, may the Baby Jesus, whom we contemplate in the Crib, grant you a New Year illumined by his joy and his love.

Thank you! May your work go well. Happy New Year!

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