



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE SWISS GUARDS AND THEIR RELATIVES
PRIOR TO THE SWEARING-IN CEREMONY**

Clementine Hall

Monday, 5 May 2008

Dear Commandant,

Dear Swiss Guards and Relatives,

On the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony which will take place tomorrow, I am pleased to be able to meet you all together, to offer my best wishes to the new recruits and to renew the expression of my affection and gratitude to the entire Corps of the Pontifical Swiss Guard. I greet in particular the Commandant and the Chaplain and I assure them of my prayers for their demanding service; I also gladly extend my thoughts to the Swiss Authorities and to your numerous relatives, who, with their presence, gladden your little quarters in the Vatican, dear Guards. I am especially glad to welcome so many children, who are the most beautiful flowers of your families and recall Jesus' special love for little ones.

Two years ago, in 2006, the fifth centenary of your Corps' foundation was celebrated with important events. It was a favourable occasion for seeing your history in perspective, noting the profound changes in the social context in which, in the course of the centuries, the Holy See was required to live and work in accordance with the mandate that Christ entrusted to the Apostle Peter. It was precisely what did not change that stood out against the background of this impressive development: namely the identity of your small but qualified Corps, destined to watch over the safety of the Roman Pontiff at his Residence. Five centuries later, the spirit of faith that impels young Swiss men to leave their beautiful Country to come to serve the Pope in the Vatican has remained unchanged. They have equal love for the Catholic Church, to which you bear witness in person rather than with your words, and thanks to your characteristic uniform you are easy to recognize at the entrances to the Vatican and at Papal Audiences. Your historical uniforms speak to pilgrims and tourists from every part of the world of something that in spite of all does not

change, in other words they speak of your commitment to serve God by serving the "Servant of his servants".

I am addressing you, the new halberdiers, in particular. Above all may you assimilate the Christian and ecclesial spirit which is the foundation and driving force of all the activities you will carry out. Never cease to develop your prayer and your spiritual life, making the most of your Chaplain's valuable presence in order to do so. Be open, simple and loyal. May you also appreciate the differences of personality and character among yourselves because, beneath the uniform each one of you is a unique person called by God to serve his Kingdom of love and peace. As you know, the Swiss Guard is also a school of life and during their experience in the Vatican many of your predecessors discovered their vocation: to Christian marriage, to the priesthood or to the consecrated life. It is a cause of praise to God but also of appreciation for your Corps.

Dear friends, I thank you all for the generosity and dedication with which you work at the Pope's service. May the Lord reward you and endow you with abundant heavenly favours. I entrust you to the motherly protection of Mary Most Holy, whom we venerate with special devotion in this month of May. I warmly impart my Apostolic Blessing to each one of you, to the Authorities, to the important Figures present, to your relatives and to all your loved ones.

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