



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE 33 NEW RECRUITS
OF THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD**

Thursday, 6 May 2004

*Dear Colonel,
Dear Chaplain,
My Dear Guards,
Dear Relatives and Friends of the Swiss Guard,*

1. Once again the swearing-in of the new recruits of the Swiss Guard offers me a pleasant opportunity to welcome you all to the Apostolic Palace. I greet the new Guards in particular, as well as their parents, relatives and friends with whom I would like to share this important moment in the lives of these young men. Dear Guardsmen, your willing service and your commitment, your deep faith and the noble virtues that live on in your beloved Homeland of Switzerland, bear an eloquent witness to your fidelity to the Successor of Peter. Be assured of the high esteem in which I hold the sometimes very demanding service that you carry out here in the Vatican with your strong and valuable personal commitment. The multitudes of people who visit St Peter's and Vatican City every year are also impressed by your disinterested service. Consequently, this meeting with you and your esteemed relatives fills me with sincere joy.

2. Your mission of service to the Pope and the Church, dear new recruits of the Swiss Guard, springs from your Baptism. In your proper place, you must witness to your faith in Christ, who died and rose; every important moment in our lives, such as today for you, is an opportunity to rediscover Christ's truth more deeply, to believe in him and to live the fraternal love that he revealed and taught to us. May the faces of all those whom you will meet in your humble service, the members of the Curia and the pilgrims who come every day, be as many appeals to accept the true meaning of our lives: to discover and help others discover God's love for each person!

I am particularly grateful to your families who have come to be with you. They have agreed to allow you to come to Rome to carry out this service, and they support you with their love and prayers. The oath you are about to swear, dear young men, extends and honours the memory of your predecessors who gave their lives on 6 May 1527, defending Pope Clement VII. The Pope knows this well and today assures you of his profound gratitude.

3. Dear Pontifical Swiss Guards, thank you for the service you carry out for the Successor of Peter and his collaborators here in the Vatican. It is a demanding and perhaps burdensome commitment, but God will reward you for it. Always be faithful to your mission, carefully cultivating the ideal of love for Christ and the Church that your families and the Christian communities of Switzerland strive constantly to foster. As you know, next 5 and 6 June I shall be in Berne to take part, please God, in the meeting with young Swiss Catholics, and I will also meet the members of the Association of Former Swiss Guards. I am counting on the prayers and spiritual support of you all.

I renew my most cordial good wishes to you for today's festivities, and assure you that I will always remember you in my prayers.

4. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and Mother of God, and your Patrons, Sts Martin and Sebastian, as well as the Patron Saint of your homeland, Br. Klaus of Flüe, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you, to your families and your friends, as well as to all those who have come to Rome for the swearing-in ceremony.