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Audience of the Holy Father with the Sardinia Grenadiers Brigade engaged in Operation “Strade Sicure” (“Safe Streets”)

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Paul VI Hall, the soldiers of the Sardinia Grenadiers Brigade engaged in Operation “Strade Sicure” (“Safe Streets”).

The following is the Pope’s address to those present at the audience:

Greeting of the Holy Father

Dear friends,

I am pleased to receive you and to address my warm welcome to each one of you. I greet the Commander, General Liberato Amodio, whom I thank for his words; I greet the officials and all of you, men and women of the Army who work in the streets of Rome to make them safer, better protected and more livable.

As part of Operation “Safe Streets”, you guard sensitive areas and objectives: institutional and diplomatic sites, airports, railway and underground stations, and places of art, worship and religious interest. In this way, you guarantee a daily presence in the territory of the Capital, which promotes a sense of tranquility in the population. On my part, I wish to express my sincere gratitude for the discreet and important service you render to the Holy See, in cooperation and jointly with the Police Forces, in safeguarding public order.

Your work around Vatican City contributes to ensuring the smooth running of events that, throughout the course of the year, attract tourists and pilgrims from all around the world. It is an activity that requires availability, patience, a spirit of sacrifice and a sense of duty. I am aware that this type of work can be somewhat exhausting – I am thinking of the summer, I am thinking of the winter cold – but it is very useful for the community as a which is grateful and appreciative of you.

This commits you every day to living up to the trust and esteem that people place in you. Therefore, I encourage you to be, both at work and in your personal and social life, promoters of solidarity, helping people to be good citizens. The professionalism and sense of responsibility, which you bear witness to on the ground, express and strengthen a sense of belonging to the social body, and also a sense of the State and the common good. In the fulfilment of your mission, may you always be accompanied by the knowledge that every person is loved by God, is his creature, and as such deserves respect. May the grace of the Lord nourish day by day the spirit with which you dedicate yourselves to your work, motivating you to live it with extra care and dedication.

In recent years, the deployment of Italian Army personnel in the urban context has become a living and reliable reality. It is characterized by proximity to the people – this is very important, people comment “I asked and they explained everything” – cooperation in preventing and countering crime, and support for activities related to particular emergency situations. The various units that have succeeded one another have rendered a major service to the country, contributing to the creation of a safer environment. Your Sardinia Grenadiers Brigade is about to end its task and give way to another military contingent. I renew my gratitude to you all; and I like to think that your stay in Rome may have been a positive experience for human and professional growth, as well as a fruitful time from a spiritual point of view.

Every time I leave and return to the Vatican, on apostolic journeys, or visits to a parish or community, I see you and give thanks to God for your dedication and presence. I accompany you on your journey with my affection and closeness. I entrust you to the maternal protection of Our Lady: you can always turn to her with confidence, especially in moments of fatigue and difficulty, confident that, as a most tender Mother, she will know how to present to her Son Jesus the needs and expectations of each one of you. She is a mother, and like all mothers she knows how to guard, how to protect, how to help, how to be close. From my heart I bless you, together with your families. And I ask you, please, to pray for me. Thank you!
