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Holy Mass for the Vatican Gendarmerie Corps, in the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens

This afternoon, at 17.00, at the Lourdes Grotto in the Vatican Gardens, the Holy Father Francis presided over the Eucharistic celebration for the Vatican Gendarmerie Corps, on the occasion of the feast day of Saint Michael Archangel, patron and protector of the Italian State Police and the Vatican Gendarmerie Corps, celebrated on 29 September.

The following is the text of the impromptu homily delivered by the Pope during the Holy Mass:

Homily of the Holy Father

The spirit of this celebration is interesting. It is interesting to see it as a renewal, to see it as resuming... what? Our vocation, yours as gendarmes, service. Today the Word of God speaks to us of exactly this: "Rekindle", it says, rekindle the gift, rekindle your vocation (cf. *2 Tim* 1:6); nurture, make it grow (cf. *Lk* 17:6). That is, this is a celebration to pray that the Lord rekindles the vocation of each one of us, today yours as gendarmes, and make it grow.

When something is not rekindled, it is extinguished; when something does not grow, it does not move, it stagnates. Still water is the first to stagnate. Therefore, in life we must always look forward; it is necessary to grow, to revive, to restart, to return to the dream of the vocation. Almost all of you, each one – I want to think carefully – entered the Gendarmerie for a vocation, a desire to do something good, as a service, as growth. And then, as it happens also to us priests, to everyone, you get used to it; and when one grows accustomed to something, instead of growing, one starts to go downwards, to sink, to sink... And this is where something very bad arises in our life as priests, which is a life of service: one becomes lukewarm. One grows accustomed. And the same happens to you too. If you do not rekindle your vocation, if you do not make it grow every day, that vocation of service which is so beautiful, in the end – this is not a curse, no, it happens to everyone – in the end things that do not grow, stagnate. Therefore, I was pleased, when I read the Readings. This will be an invitation to renewal: to be better every day, to take a step forward every day in the vocation to which we have been called.

And Paul says to the disciple: “Rekindle” (cf. v.6), “guard” (v. 14), take charge of the gift you have been given, take charge of your vocation – I say it to you, gendarmes – not with a spirit of timidity, not with the spirit that drags you down, no, with a spirit of faith, charity and strength (cf. v. 7). Three things that are important. Faith. Our life, if we do not live it in the light of faith, it is better to go and do another job. My life, the life of all priests, the life of gendarmes. Because you go forward with a spirit of faith; it is important to live this faith in service, a true service. Then with charity and strength. It is difficult, in jobs like ours, to have that charity of service every day: there is impatience, anger at things that go wrong, the injustices we see but cannot correct. And this can extinguish charity, and it gives us that spirit of timidity, of lowering the level. No. The Lord asks of us a spirit of strength, to rekindle with strength, charity and strength, not with timidity, as Paul says to the disciple. This is what I wish for you: not to have the timidity that drags you down. One thing is fear of God, that, yes. But timidity no. Go forward, bravely, and get things done. “And if I make a mistake?” Ask for forgiveness and move forward, because the mistake is not definitive. We all make mistakes, all of us! Let someone here who does not make mistakes raise his hand, so I can make him come and preach. We all make mistakes. And do not be afraid of this, but go with strength in service, and always go forward. To rekindle your vocation of service, as gendarmes, of the gendarmerie, is a good thing. It is true that many times you have to carry out tasks that are not pleasant: restoring order here, turning away those people there... Many things. But you do so out of love and in order to find a greater harmony, you do so out of service. Return to the roots of your vocation. Service. To serve, then, without timidity, with charity, with strength, with “dreams”; always serve in this way.

And then, in the end, what should I do? Produce the bill for my service? One can do this, there is a salary, it is small, they complain but it is there, but this is not the reward, this is not the attitude, the pride. The attitude is that phrase which is so beautiful: “We are unprofitable servants” (*Lk 17:10*). This stems from humility. I did what I had to do, I made my vocation grow, I made it go forward.

Today I ask Saint Michael Archangel, for all you gendarmes, for the grace to be able to rekindle your vocation, to revive with strength the gift you have received, because every vocation is a gift. And to revive it with authenticity, with the desire to go forward. To revive the gift you have received, with a spirit of charity, of strength of service, and not of timidity, but sure of yourselves. And in this way, by living a vocation fully in this way, the various problems you will find in life will dissolve by themselves. Problems dissolve when there is the strength to go forward.

Today, in a special way, I pray to Saint Michael to give you the grace, the grace to go forward in service: service with strength, with charity, without duplicity, clear and direct. And if I make a mistake? I make a mistake, I get up, and I move on. But all in fullness, everything with joy. May the Lord grant you this grace of renewing the vocation you have, renewing your service. And let us all ask for this, accompanying our brother gendarmes. Thank you.
