



The Holy See

***SPEECH OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE SWISS GUARDS
AFTER THE ANNUAL SWEARING-IN
CEREMONY FOR NEW RECRUITS***

Saturday, 27 June 1998

Dear Colonel,

Dear Chaplain,

Dear Friends of the Swiss Guard,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Before the swearing-in ceremony of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, I am pleased to welcome you to the home of Peter's Successor. I extend my warm thanks to Colonel Roland Buchs, who has very devotedly filled in during a difficult period. At this time I would like to express my cordial sentiments to the new Commandant, Colonel Pius Segmüller, and the Vice-Commandant, Lieutenant Colonel Elmar Theodor Mäder, who have agreed to serve in the Swiss Guard Corps and who will soon be taking up their duties. I also thank the Swiss authorities for facilitating these appointments. I offer my best wishes to the officers, to the non-commissioned officers and to all the members of this illustrious corps, who carry out their mission of service to the Holy See with courage, fidelity and loyalty.

Today we cannot forget those who have recently left us in a tragedy which continues to be a source of suffering for us all, but is also a call to remain faithful to the Lord and to be attentive to those around us. The great family of the Swiss Guard must continue its mission: its history and its generosity are a testimony in the sight of Catholics and of all nations.

2. I extend a welcome to all the parents, relatives and friends who have come here and are taking part in the swearing-in ceremony in order to assure the young recruits of their love and affection. I thank these people for their presence, a sign of the bond between Swiss Catholics and the Church, and even more, the See of Peter.

Dear young men, during your service you will be experiencing an extraordinary time, for you will be participating in the Great Jubilee of Year 2000. This period will be a special opportunity for preparing your future as men and as Christians.

Your wish today to serve the Church and to devote several years of your life to protecting the Pope expresses your willingness to walk at Jesus Christ's side every day of your life and to remain watchful in prayer and brotherhood. Despite the sometimes heavy burdens of your service, I would like you to be able to strengthen your faith and your love for the Church. You should support one another with trust and listen to your brothers; this is a duty each of you has towards his comrades.

3. Today's swearing-in ceremony is another opportunity for me to express my deepest gratitude to all the members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps for their fidelity to the Successor of Peter and for their attention to maintaining order and security within the walls of Vatican City, as well as at Castel Gandolfo and everywhere the Pope may be. I know, dear friends, what pains you take to welcome with kindness and courtesy the pilgrims who are becoming more and more numerous as the third millennium approaches; in this way you bear an important witness to the welcoming heart of the Vatican and the Church. I ask the Lord to reward you for your valuable service and to fill your relatives with his heavenly favours.

With these sentiments, I cordially impart a special Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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