



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE GENDARMERIE AND THE FIRE BRIGADE
OF THE VATICAN CITY STATE***

Clementine Hall

Friday, 11 January 2013

Mr Commandant,

Dear Officials, Commissioners and Inspectors,

Dear Gendarmes and Firemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you today to the Apostolic Palace and to spend this moment with all of you who serve the Successor of Peter, offering your valuable service in Vatican City State, day and night. I greet you with deep cordiality, starting with Dr Domenico Giani, your Commandant whom I thank for his words expressing your sentiments, outlining the intentions that motivate your commitment.

I address my grateful thoughts to Cardinal Giuseppe Bertello and to Bishop Giuseppe Sciacca, respectively President and Secretary General of the Governorate, who never let the Gendarme Corps or the Fire Brigade go without the necessary support. I warmly greet Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, my Secretary of State, and thank him for coming to this meeting. I address a word of appreciation also to Fr Gioele Schiavella and Fr Sergio Pellini, for their ministry on behalf of the spiritual development of the whole of the Gendarme Corps.

I offer a very affectionate greeting to each one of you, dear Gendarmes! This occasion gives me the opportunity to express to you my deep esteem, my warm encouragement and especially my profound gratitude for the generous service you carry out with discretion, competence, and efficiency and not without sacrifice. Almost every day I have the opportunity to meet some of you on duty at various posts and to note personally your professional cooperation to guarantee the surveillance of the Pope, as well as the necessary order and safety of those who live in the State

or who are taking part in the celebrations and meetings held at the Vatican.

The various duties that the Gendarme Corps is required to carry out include that of offering a courteous and kind welcome to the pilgrims and visitors to the Vatican who come from Rome, from Italy and from every part of the world. The duty of vigilance and inspection, that you carry out diligently and painstakingly, is certainly both considerable and sensitive: at times it demands much patience, perseverance and the readiness to listen. It is a service particularly useful to the peacefulness and safety of the daily events and religious celebrations in Vatican City.

May you be able to see in every pilgrim or visitor the face of a brother or sister whom God sets on your path; so welcome these pilgrims with courtesy and help them, feeling that they belong to the great human family. As I wrote in my [Message for the recent celebration of the World Day of Peace](#): “The attainment of peace depends above all on recognizing that we are, in God, one human family. This family is structured, as the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* taught, by interpersonal relations and institutions supported and animated by a communitarian ‘we’.... Peace is an order enlivened and integrated by love, in such a way that we feel the needs of others as our own” (n. 3).

Your service will be all the more effective for the Holy See and enriching to you the more it can be performed in a peaceful and harmonious context. In this regard may the Gendarmes who have guaranteed their service in the Corps and the senior officers always seek to promote a trusting relationship that can support and encourage all the members of the Vatican Gendarmerie, even in difficult periods.

Dear friends, Gendarmes and Firemen, may your special presence in the heart of Christendom, where crowds of the faithful gather ceaselessly to meet the Successor of Peter and to visit the tombs of the Apostles, always inspire in each one of you the resolution to intensify the spiritual dimension of your life, as well as your commitment to deepen your Christian faith, witnessing to it courageously in every milieu with a consistent lifestyle. To this end, the [Year of Faith](#) we are celebrating can be of help to you: it is a privileged opportunity to rediscover how much joy there is in believing and in communicating to others that the salvific and liberating encounter with God fulfils man’s deepest aspirations, his yearning for peace, brotherhood and love.

In the past few days the liturgy has invited us to contemplate Jesus who became man and came to dwell among us. He is the light that illuminates and gives meaning to our existence; he is the Redeemer who brings peace to the world. Let us contemplate the Virgin Most Holy while she holds him in her arms, as a tender caring mother, to give him to all men and women, and let us welcome him with trust and joy! Like Mary, let us too look attentively at the great things that God works every day of history and cherish them in our hearts. In this way let us learn to recognize in the routine of daily life the constant interventions of divine Providence which guides all things with wisdom and love.

Dear friends, I renew to you all my most sincere and affectionate thanks for your collaboration; may this generous and appreciated service be abundantly rewarded by the Lord. I address my prayers to him that he may help you carry out your profession ever faithful to those ideals that it calls for. The firmer the moral principles that inspire you, the more authoritative your interventions will be. Continue to act with this spirit always! May your heavenly patrons, St Michael the Archangel and St Barbara protect and sustain you in the proper aspirations you nourish. May my constant good wishes be a comfort and encouragement to you; and may my special Apostolic Blessing, which I wholeheartedly impart to you and to your families, go with you.