



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II TO THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD

Tuesday, 6 May 2003

*Dear Commandant of the Swiss Guard,
Dear Chaplain,
Dear Friends of the Swiss Guard,
Dear Young Guards,*

1. I welcome you with joy on the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony of the new recruits of the Pontifical Swiss Guard. I greet your new Commandant, Colonel Elmar Theodor Mäder, and the new Vice-Commandant, Lieutenant-Colonel Jean Daniel Pitteloud, who have generously accepted this service. I also thank the Swiss Authorities who are always represented at this celebration, and I warmly greet the families and relatives of the young recruits who have come to surround them with their affection and friendship. I express my heartfelt gratitude to all the members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard for their loyalty to the Successor of Peter and for the quality of the work they carry out, watching over the order and security in Vatican territory, but also courteously responding to the requests of numerous pilgrims who every day ask their help.

2. Dear Young Guards, this afternoon you will swear to serve the Pope and especially to keep watch over his safety and that of his residence. For my part, every year I am a grateful witness of this commitment, as well as of the fidelity and generosity of these young Swiss men in guaranteeing the service with which they show the attachment of the Catholics of your country to the Church and to the Holy See. I am profoundly grateful to you and invite you to meditate on the example of your predecessors, some of whom even gave their lives to carry out the mission entrusted to them to defend the Successor of Peter.

3. In addressing all the faithful of the Church at the beginning of the third millennium, I urged them (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, n. 1) "to put out into the deep" (cf. Lk 5: 4). I likewise encourage you,

dear Guards, to draw more deeply from the riches of Christian life. God offers you the opportunity to discover a new country.

However, the Lord also gives you the possibility to welcome pilgrims from most parts of the world, who come from different walks of life to pray at the tombs of the Apostles. So open your hearts to the encounter with others! These encounters help you to grow in humanity and to understand one another better as brothers. Try to live a good and sincere friendship among yourselves, helping one another in difficulty and sharing your joys with others. Always be open to the call of the Lord in order to discern what he expects of you, today and in the future! Make your years of service with the Pontifical Swiss Guard a true time of Christian formation. May these years help you to become even better servants of the Lord! These are the good hopes that I address to each one of you and which I entrust to the intercession of Mary, our Mother in Heaven.

I cordially impart to you all my Apostolic Blessing.