



Päpstliche Schweizergarde  
Garde Suisse Pontificale  
Guardia Svizzera Pontificia  
Guardia Svizra Papala

# Annual report Jahresbericht Rapport annuel Rapporto annuale





#### **COVER PICTURE**

##### **Guards at the swearing-in ceremony**

This is the first time that the Pontifical Swiss Guard has produced an annual report of this kind. The aim is to provide both an account of the activities performed in the past year, and a glimpse behind the walls of the barracks, the preparations for service, the lives of the guards and their families, and the running of this unique corps.

# Annual report

## Jahresbericht

## Rapport annuel

## Rapporto annuale

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# 2024

## The year of preparation



### DEAR MEMBER OF THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD, DEAR EX-GUARDS, DEAR FRIENDS

2024 was dominated by preparations for the Jubilee Year titled "Pilgrims of Hope", which the Pope officially launched on December 24th, 2024. For the Pontifical Swiss Guard, this presented numerous challenges, from recruitment and the ongoing training of personnel to the tireless service that our guardsmen provide on a daily basis.

In 2024, the focus was on the continuous training of guards. Thanks to a sound and fruitful collaboration with the Swiss Armed Forces, the Swiss Police Institute, the various cantonal police corps in Switzerland and other partners, we achieved a commendable level of training for the members of the corps, enabling us to ensure that the various duties assigned to us are also handled smoothly throughout the Jubilee Year.

"Thanks to a sound and fruitful collaboration with various partners, we achieved a commendable level of training for the members of the corps."

With this annual report, the Pontifical Swiss Guard provides an insight into its activities for the first time. The aim of this new medium is to convey the progress and developments made with the goal of improving our work in the service of the Holy Father.

Our service is provided seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The responsibilities assigned to the Pontifical Swiss Guard range from protecting the Pope and his residence to guarding the entrances to the Vatican City. The corps also provides military ceremonial duties at ceremonies and receptions. In 2024, the Pope undertook a host of activities, including receptions for over fifty heads of state as well as the Apostolic Journeys, which took the Holy Father to seven countries. During these journeys, the Pontifical Swiss Guard accompanied the Pope, prepared for his arrival and ensured his personal safety for all his engagements. These journeys emphasised the great

dedication and flexibility of the guards involved, which are essential qualities for successful missions.

Recruitment remains a crucial challenge for the Pontifical Swiss Guard. To meet this need, it amplified its presence in Switzerland with initiatives to recruit future guards. At the same time, it increased its presence on social networks and teamed up with international media companies to produce documentary films with the goal of raising its profile. However, constant recruitment remains a perennial task.

**“Our service is provided seven days a week, 24 hours a day.”**

As far as the welfare of the guards is concerned, through the various foundations of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, we maintained standards for the guards' families and made gradual progress with projects such as the new barracks, which will provide suitable conditions for the members of our corps. Finally, this year also featured numerous cultural trips and pilgrimages which, thanks to our generous donors, made it possible to broaden the guards' spiritual horizons a little more.

With over 500 years of history, the Pontifical Swiss Guard embodies great dedication, discipline and professionalism in the service of the Pope and the Holy See. The initiatives taken in 2024 reflect our ongoing commitment to meeting the challenges of the future while successfully continuing our core mission.

**Colonel Christoph Graf**  
Commander of the Pontifical Swiss Guard

**“Recruitment remains a crucial challenge for the Pontifical Swiss Guard.”**





Personnel  
matters

## Personnel situation

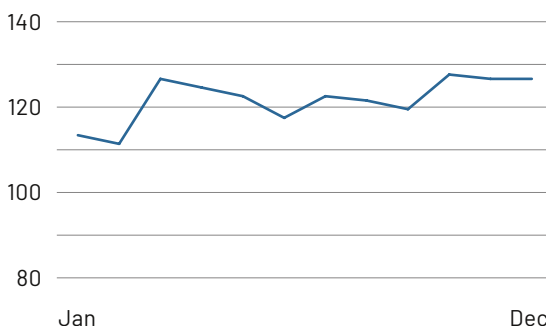
# Stable number of personnel

135 men is the target number of personnel in the Pontifical Swiss Guard. Achieving this level was a major challenge last year. With 19 recruits at training school in January, 11 recruits in June and 8 recruits in September, we at least came close to this figure.

However, by the time the recruits had commenced service after some two months of training, the number of personnel had fallen again. These ups and downs continued throughout the year. In 2024, there were between 115 and 129 personnel. It must be kept in mind that although recruits are counted as part of the personnel from the outset, they cannot be deployed until they have completed their training. Consequently, some of the guards listed cannot be on duty during January/February, June/July and September/October.

Thanks to our marketing measures and fewer departures in the second half of the year, we are optimistic about the Jubilee Year 2025 and can prepare to take on the extra duties at full capacity.

Number of personnel 2024



# 85

halberdiers and recruits  
(average)

# 39

NCOs

# 11

officers

# 38

new arrivals

# 26

departures

# 126

average number of  
personnel



Col  
Christoph Graf  
Commander

Fr Kolumban  
Chaplain



Lt Col  
Loïc Rossier  
Vice-Commander



Maj  
Dominik Tännler  
Head of Operations



Capt  
Christian Kühne  
Head of Personnel & Communication



Capt  
Lorenz Keusch  
Head of Logistics & IT



Sgt Maj  
Guillaume Favre  
Head of Training



Lt  
Simone Granata  
Squadron I



Lt  
Heinz Eggli  
Squadron II



Lt  
Anton Kappler  
Squadron III



OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

MILITARY STAFF OF THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD







# Training and deployment

## Professional training

# Increasing efficiency

Following the attacks in major European cities such as Paris, Brussels, Berlin and London in 2015, the security situation in Europe has changed. Security requirements have grown over the last ten years, and the resources and deployment tactics have changed considerably. In turn, the deployment and training requirements of the Pontifical Swiss Guard have altered, too.

In the course of 2024, considerable efforts were once again made at all levels to strengthen the operational, linguistic and technical skills of the guards. The courses covered a wide range of skills, from operational readiness to management training, with a particular focus on the quality of teaching through the use of new technical resources. This led to a significant increase in total teaching hours and a wide-ranging expansion of the courses, with a suitable balance between specialised, language and management training. The challenge here was to optimize coordination of training with periods of service in order to avoid overlaps. With an increasingly tight schedule, this was not an easy task.

### RECRUIT TRAINING SCHOOL

One of the requirements for service in the Guard is the completion of basic military training in Switzerland. At the Swiss Army training school, the young men gain the military skills that will enable them to join the Swiss Guard. If they are accepted, they undertake to serve for at least 26 months and undergo further basic training with the Swiss Guard.

Once again, there were three training school sessions in 2024, each lasting two months (starting in Janu-

ary, June and September). The first part takes place in the Vatican, focusing on service skills such as knowing the most important figures in the Vatican, the locations, the various regulations of the Swiss Guard and mastering the drill.

Language training in the official language of the Vatican, Italian, is crucial. Five teachers delivered the training in 2024. The guards completed 3,750 hours of lessons across the year. 24 A2 diplomas, 25 B1 diplomas and 3 B2 diplomas were awarded. For the first time, prospective guards were able to undertake a placement in Assisi to improve their language skills before starting their service. Three people took advantage of this opportunity. The placement is paid for by the Swiss Guard if the candidates pass their final examination.

The second part of the training school session took place in Ticino. At the Swiss Armed Forces Special Forces training center in Isonne, the trainee guards have been trained in the use of weapons (pistols and irritant sprays, known as pepper spray) and self-defence by instructors from the Ticino Cantonal Police since 2016. Other subjects are police tactics, psychology, basic law, first aid and firefighting.





## ITALIAN LESSONS IN NUMBERS

3,750

teaching hours

25

B1 diplomas

24

A2 diplomas

3

B2 diplomas

### ONGOING AND ADVANCED TRAINING

The guards have a training day once a month to enhance and refresh their tactical and service knowledge. Further training sessions are added as required, led by the Guard's own instructors.

The Swiss Guard has also been able to count on loyal cooperation with the Swiss Armed Forces for many years. This cooperation has enabled us to continuously improve the quality of our training, meet current needs and prepare for future challenges.

We are in close contact with the Conference of Cantonal Police Commanders of Switzerland and the Swiss Police Institute (SPI) in Neuchâtel in order to utilise our strengths in advanced training. The Guard can count on the following support:

- In addition to the cooperation with the Ticino Cantonal Police in basic training, there has been a collaboration with the Lucerne Police and the



## Advanced training

### TEST FOR VIRTUAL POLICE TRAINING

The Guard's judgement is in demand. At the invitation of the Swiss Armed Forces, a delegation from the Swiss Guard took part in the Zurich City Police field test for the virtual training of police corps in January 2024. The Guard's progress report was hugely valuable to the Armed Forces and the providers. In addition, the event provided an opportunity to exchange ideas with the police and Armed Forces training partners. The commander, who had also travelled to the event, took advantage of this. The test runs also allowed a comparison with the police corps and demonstrated the high level of training of the Guard.

Valais Cantonal Police in the areas of tactics, media relations and recruitment since 2019. The Guard regularly organises training courses with Zurich's protection and rescue services to keep it up to date with the latest developments in first aid.

- Anyone who has been with the Guard for more than two years can train to become a security and surveillance specialist with a Federal Diploma of Higher Education. The examination is organised by the Association of Swiss Security Service Companies (VSSU). The Swiss Guard is also a member of this association. In 2024, five guards obtained the Federal Diploma of Higher Education.
- The self-defence instructors have an advanced training session twice a month, during which they also learn new techniques. They are trained and certified by the SPI. The SPI also assists with leadership courses for officers. In the foreseeable future, guards will also have the opportunity to train as police security assistants. A pilot phase for delivery of this project is currently in the planning

### SQUAD

10 training days per section.

Specific training courses

- 5 Federal Diplomas of Higher Education as a security specialist
- 2 one-week refresher courses in Isonne
- 2 two-day communication courses
- 1 one-day etiquette seminar
- 2 days basic life support certification and sanitary refresher courses

### SPECIALISTS

Certifications and courses

- 1 day Glock certification (pistol)
- 1 three-week refresher course with the military police protection unit (2 officers)
- 1 two-week course for drivers of special vehicles (armoured cars, 2 officers)
- 1 one-week SPI course for heads of the operations center
- 1 one-week course for brass band leaders

### OFFICERS

SPI courses

- 1 training course for public safety assistant examination experts (2 participants)
- 2 leadership courses I (2 participants)
- 2 leadership courses II (3 participants)

Swiss Armed Forces courses

- Leadership and communication:  
4 LCC standard courses (12 participants)
- 2 personal protection courses  
(10 participants)

SPI certifications

- 2 participants on leadership course I
- 1 participant on leadership course II



stage.

- During training on personal protection, the Guard can benefit from the experience of the Swiss Army's military police. They assist with training modules in this area. However, our officers also volunteer for refresher courses in the army's military police protection unit, where they can learn many new things.
- For advanced leadership and communications training, the Guard works with the Swiss Armed Forces' Leadership and Communication Training Command (LCC).
- In 2024, the Guard once again received support with firing practice from the Italian authorities: 20 training courses were completed on Carabinieri premises, as well as 6 training sessions with the Italian army.

#### CERTIFICATES OBTAINED

5

Federal Diplomas of  
Higher Education as a  
security specialist

2

SPI leadership  
course II certificates

1

SPI leadership  
course I certificates

Versatile deployments

# A corps in great demand

Regular duties, such as protection of the Pope and his residence and guarding the main entrances to the Vatican around the clock (365 days a year) are covered daily by around 60 guards. By contrast, additional personnel must be deployed for extraordinary duties.

These deployments can vary greatly depending on the occasion and location. For example, a further 29 guards are required when a new ambassador is accredited. They are drawn from personnel who have already been assigned a regular duty but are free at the time, and by the standby personnel, who are not on duty.

As the target number was never fully reached last year, regular duties were affected by occasional bottlenecks in January and February and from May to October. This meant that additional staff had to be called for regular duty on their days off to fill in.

Extraordinary duties were particularly intensive in March, May, October, November and December. September also presented the Guard with a major challenge, as the Pope embarked on two Apostolic Journeys, accompanied by corresponding units. Furthermore, the ordinary General Assem-

## Official mandate

### The Guard

- protects the Pope and his residence
- accompanies the Pope on his Apostolic Journeys
- guards the official entrances to the Vatican City
- performs regular and ceremonial duties
- protects the College of Cardinals while the Holy See is vacant

## Extraordinary duties

With the Pope in the Vatican and in the *Basilicae maiores*, the highest-ranking Roman Catholic churches:

- 29 receptions of presidents
- 7 receptions of prime ministers
- 24 accreditations of new ambassadors
- 25 general audiences in St. Peter's Square
- 10 general audiences in the Paul VI Audience Hall
- 1 group audience in St. Peter's Square
- 19 group audiences in the the Paul VI Audience Hall
- 75 group audiences in the Antechamber
- 23 Masses in St. Peter's Basilica
- 6 Masses in St. Peter's Square
- 11 events in the major basilicas
- 15 special events

"Bottlenecks mean that additional staff had to be called for regular duty on their days off to fill in."

bly of the Synod of Bishops was also held in the Vatican for three weeks in October, requiring the deployment of another contingent.

December 24th saw the launch of the Jubilee, which will present us with even greater challenges in 2025.

### INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTATION CENTER

The information and documentation center is the link between the Guard and the Vatican institutions. Its job is to process the information received correctly and pass it on promptly in order to ensure that duties are performed smoothly.

Last year, the exchange of information with our direct superiors, dicasteries and other partners was continuously enhanced. With digital processing of all gathered information, this helped to ensure a professional service. Our employees were always up to date with the various events in their area of activity. In view of the Jubilee in 2025, various adjustments were made to the information center in order to cope with the additional workload.





## EQUIPMENT

The halberd and sword are only intended for ceremonial duties. However, behind the scenes, the Guard has very modern equipment. Their service weapon is a Glock 19 Gen 4 pistol commonly used by many police forces. The guards are also equipped with pepper spray. In addition, the Guard has a number of Stgw 90 assault rifles as well as Taser X2 stun guns.



The journeys of the Pope

# Accompanying St. Peter's successor abroad

Pope Francis' international activities were very intensive in 2024. The Holy Father continued his Apostolic Journeys around the world, including a number of high-profile visits within Italy.



Each of these trips focused on key topics reflecting the priorities of Pope Francis' papacy: peacebuilding, intercultural and interfaith dialogue, social justice and support for vulnerable communities.

When travelling, the Pontiff is always accompanied and protected by the Vatican security service, a body consisting of the Pontifical Swiss Guard and the Gendarmerie Corps. Every journey requires detailed reconnaissance and thorough preparation, which is always carried out by an advance team. These preparations are intended to ensure the safety and success of the Pope's Apostolic Journey or pastoral visit. The Pope must be able to exercise his universal apostolic ministry freely and meet the faithful abroad without any difficulties. On these trips, whether within Italy or internationally, it is essential to strike a balanced approach between strict security measures and the Pope's fundamental need to be close to the faithful. All these elements pose challenges for our corps, which is responsible for the Pope's protection both in the Vatican and abroad. The Pontifical Swiss Guard, alongside the Gendarmerie Corps, must guarantee optimum protection while respecting the Pontiff's spontaneity. However, maintaining this balance is a difficult task, especially in a global context typified by social tensions and ever-changing security risks.

- In 2024, the first pastoral visit of Pope Francis took place on April 28th in Venice. On this occasion, the Pope visited the Venice Biennale. He was the first Pontiff to visit this important cultural event.
- On May 18th, Pope Francis visited Verona for the Festival of Social Doctrine.
- On July 7th, Pope Francis travelled to Trieste to close the 50th Social Week of Catholics in Italy.
- From September 2nd to 13th, Pope Francis undertook the longest Apostolic Journey of his papacy, travelling to Asia and Oceania. The Holy Father visited Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore.
- Pope Francis visited Luxembourg and Belgium between September 26th and 29th.
- On December 15th, the Holy Father visited Corsica, designating this Apostolic Journey as a continuation of his "Mediterranean pilgrimage".

During all these journeys, members of the Pontifical Swiss Guard accompanied Pope Francis and ensured his protection so that St. Peter's successor could exercise his Petrine ministry to the fullest.

## EMERGENCY IN TRIESTE

During a pastoral visit to Trieste, an incident attracted the attention of the Italian authorities. Shortly before the Pontiff's arrival, a firearm was discovered in a suitcase that had been left behind at the city's railway station. The case contained a semi-automatic pistol, a magazine and some items of clothing. This discovery prompted a rapid mobilisation of security forces and counter-terrorism units and increased protective measures to ensure that the event went ahead safely.

In an environment rife with potential threats such as the one in Trieste, the role of the Pontifical Swiss Guard takes on a special resonance. Our oath obliges us to protect the Pope by sacrificing our own lives if necessary. This event reminds us of the importance of our oath of absolute loyalty to the Pope and our dedication to the Church's mission.



Papstliche Schweizergarde  
Garde Suisse Pontificale  
Guardia Svizzera Pontificia  
Guardia Svizzera Pontificia

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Recruitment and  
public relations



## Personnel marketing

# Successful advertising measures

Based on the experience of recent years, we increased our presence with serving Swiss Guards in our home country once again in 2024 in order to draw attention to our work in the Vatican. This applied to careers fairs, presentations in the Swiss Armed Forces, at schools and at church events. There are also numerous visits to our quarters in the Vatican by school classes, acolyte groups and confirmation candidates. The two taster trips organized by the Command were fully booked this year. All these encounters are instrumental in young Swiss people choosing to take the step into the Vatican and take on this demanding and honourable role.

Recruitment has become a major challenge in recent years. The shortage of skilled labour, demographic trends, dealing with Generation Z and the ever-increasing demands placed on applicants are just some of the factors that have a significant impact on recruitment. The situation in recruitment is complex and is determined by various factors. In order to successfully attract and retain the required candidates, we must develop innovative strategies that meet the needs of today's candidates. This is the only way to ensure long-term success. The fact that we will reach the target number of personnel in the corps again from January 2025 shows that the measures we took were successful. To remain successful in the future, we must remain committed to the search for talent. The three entry

dates for recruits in January, June and September mean that recruitment activities are spread throughout the year.

- **Taster trips**

Interested young people have the opportunity to go on our taster trips in April or October. This enables them to get an idea of the duties and life of the guards. The 2024 trips were fully booked with a total of 30 participants. The first applications have already been received.

- **Careers fairs and exhibitions**

We attend various careers fairs every year. In 2024, we were present in Moutier, St. Gallen and Lucerne. We also attended exhibitions and open days at the cantonal police in Geneva and Ticino. In addition, we were present at

the World Youth Day in Chur and the Adoray Festival in Zug. All these events enabled us to present ourselves to a wide audience.

• **Presentations at the Armed Forces training schools**

The Swiss Armed Forces assist us with recruitment by allowing us to give presentations at the training schools and publicise the Guard. In 2024, we again gave over 40 pres-

“We must develop innovative strategies that meet the needs of today’s candidates.”

entations throughout Switzerland. The response has been very positive, and we are extremely grateful for the generous support.

As a result of all these measures, we put forward a total of 37 candidates for future training school intakes on six recruitment days this year.

## COMPLEX CHALLENGES

The shortage of skilled labour in Switzerland currently affects more or less all sectors. Most of the causes stem from demographic change, the Swiss education system and globalisation. The implications for employers are considerable and the “war for talent” is constant. As a result, employers are increasingly making compromises in terms of employment conditions that we can only offer to a very limited extent, if at all.

Demographic trends will make the shortage of skilled labour even more acute in the coming years. The “baby boomer” generation is currently retiring. As they were significantly higher in number than subsequent generations, the result is that more people are retiring each year than are entering the labour market. This imbalance will be a major challenge for us in the coming years.

To some extent, Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2011) have completely different expectations and requirements in the workplace. Flexibility in the workplace and work-life balance are key needs for Generation Z, and they value them greatly. They make decisions at extremely short notice, which is always very challenging for us, especially when it comes to recruitment.

53

personnel marketing events

37

candidates

6

recruitment days

## Public relations

# The Guard is popular with the public

The task of the media office is to support recruitment measures and fundraising with targeted, active and coordinated public relations work. This is best achieved through a strong media presence. In addition to providing information directly on behalf of the Swiss Guard, the media office is also available to partner organizations as a sparring partner and advisor. However, it also acts as a point of contact with the Swiss Guard for media professionals.







The Swiss Guard is extremely well regarded by the public. It enjoys a very high reputation, even among those who are otherwise sceptical of the Catholic Church, the Curia or the Vatican. Appreciation is readily expressed if someone has previously served in the Guard. The Swiss Guard has a very high media profile. In 2024, around 2270 mentions of the Guard were counted in Swiss media, an average of more than six per day.

### STRONG DEMAND

Much of this attention focuses on the guards themselves: they are particularly sought-after interviewees for the regional media in their home cantons. This means that the Guard is practically omnipresent in the media. Young guards strike the right balance between openness and the restraint that befits a Swiss Guardsman in talking about themselves and the corps. This is the best advertisement for the Guard.

While, as expected, most articles in the first half of the year related to the swearing-in, the number of requests for YouTube and TV reports increased thereafter, from the likes of M6, EWTN, SRF, Tele Südostschweiz and Rome Reports, which also produced a documentary film for SRF, among others. Several TV productions were completed. The content covered various aspects of life in the Guard, with the result that all manner of messages were put across.

This also had an impact on the community of followers on social media, which grew considerably in 2024 (see statistics). The number of followers on the Guardia Svizzera Pontificia Instagram account continues to grow. It has risen by around 20,000 in the last three months alone and currently stands at over 150,000. The Guard's social media team is very creative. The number of followers on LinkedIn has also risen to around 2,600. A step-up in social media activities, particularly improved use of LinkedIn, is a focus of communication planning for the coming year. It is linked to the relaunch of the website (see below), which will enable better handling of the various topics.

## OUR CORE MESSAGES

- Serving in the Guard is an attractive, demanding and responsible profession
- Serving in the Guard opens the door to great experiences
- Life in the Guard is diverse and friendly
- The Guard is a Swiss cultural asset with an outstanding reputation worldwide, and a great ambassador for our country
- After serving in the Guard, the common spirit remains intact

### MAGAZINE AND WEBSITE INTEGRATION PROJECTS

The image of the Guard in Switzerland is not only characterized by the Guard itself. Among different target groups, both former guards and the Guard and Barracks Foundations make a significant contribution here. This is particularly true of the museum, which is run by the Swiss Guard Center in Naters, Valais, the municipality that sent a particularly high proportion of guards to Rome in the past. One new addition is the "Friends of the Swiss Guard" association, founded in 2024.

Two central integration projects are intended to provide substantial support for the public relations work of all these partners and express the common ground between the "Guards family", the joint magazine *GUARDIA VIVA* and the Guards website.

In March 2024, the publications "Schweizer Gardist", issued by the alumni association, and "Messaggero", issued by the foundations and the active Guard, appeared separately for the last time. The merger of the two publications and more professional editorial management is intended to increase output and quality and reduce costs. The concept focuses on one core topic per issue, with a cover story and several supplementary articles in various formats. Other stories, short news items and reports will continue to be included. The first issue of *GUARDIA VIVA* was published at the end of August, with swearing-in as its main theme. Overall, the new magazine met with a predominantly positive response.

2,270

mentions in the Swiss media

150,000

followers on Instagram

3,000

copies in the initial print run of GUARDIA VIVA

Despite plans to release two issues of GUARDIA VIVA – in addition to the final editions of the two predecessor magazines – only one was published in 2024. Ultimately, merging the previously independent support organizations, with their different communication cultures and demands, proved more challenging than anticipated amid the initial enthusiasm. Once the remaining issues are resolved, we will start work on the next issue of GUARDIA VIVA. Three issues per year are planned.

2,600

followers on LinkedIn

“The aim is to emphasise the shared mission of the partner organizations: supporting the Pontifical Swiss Guard.”

The magazine will be followed by the relaunch of the website [www.schweizergarde.ch](http://www.schweizergarde.ch). The aim is to modernise the website, make it easier for outsiders to navigate, and emphasise the shared mission of the partner organizations: supporting the Pontifical Swiss Guard. This means designing the website in such a way that all partner organizations are perceived as a joint family. An initial project proposal has been submitted, with completion scheduled for 2025.





## FRIENDS OF THE SWISS GUARD

# Strengthening togetherness

In spring 2024, the “Friends of the Swiss Guard” association was founded to unite individuals with strong attachment to the Swiss Guard. This added another valuable partner to the circle of support organizations for the Swiss Guard.

The “Friends of the Swiss Guard” now rank alongside the Foundation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard, the Foundation for the Renovation of the Barracks, the Association of Former Pontifical Swiss Guards and the Swiss Guard Center, which runs the Museum of the Swiss Guard in Naters, Valais.

The members of the new association will receive regular updates on current developments within the corps and be able to take part in a variety of cultural events, liturgical celebrations, pilgrimages and other occasions. These encounters will provide a valuable opportunity to explore the rich history and living traditions of the Guard in a community of like-minded people.

### Strengthening through experiences

The association’s planned events are designed to foster a strong sense of community and cohesion. They are intended to enable members to express their appreciation for the Swiss Guard, make new friends and deepen existing relationships. Whether at a solemn mass or on an inspiring pilgrimage, these shared experiences will strengthen the bond between members and create a sense of affinity.

In addition, the support association will give its members the opportunity to attend guided tours and lectures that provide an insight into the life and work of the Swiss Guard. These experiences should help to deepen understanding of the crucial role of the Swiss Guard in the Vatican and emphasise its importance as the guardian of centuries-old traditions. In this way, the association will become both a

place of exchange and encounters, and a key pillar for the preservation of the Guard’s cultural heritage.

### Strengthening through projects

The “Friends of the Swiss Guard” support projects of Swiss Guard spiritually, materially, financially and in other ways. This commitment goes beyond mere support. It is an expression of a deep bond and a common goal: to promote and preserve the values and mission of the Swiss Guard.





Behind  
the scenes

Kitchen and refectory service

# Dedicated staff

The catering area of the Pontifical Swiss Guard handles the high and increasing demands of the guards, the Command and guests with great dedication. As well as providing everyday catering, the Guards stalwarts help to strengthen team spirit and the community of the Guard family in the long term.

## THE ALBERTINE SISTERS, THE BACKBONE OF THE KITCHEN

Meals are prepared by the esteemed Albertine Sisters. After four years of hard work in the kitchen, one member of the sisterhood returned to Poland. Fortunately, the vacancy was filled by a Sister who had already been part of this community in Rome from 2007 to 2014. Furthermore, the target number of five Sisters was reached again in October with the addition of a further Sister.

But they are not the only indispensable ones: Like the refectory service, the kitchen is almost permanently staffed by volunteers from Switzerland. 29 kitchen assistants supported the Albertine Sisters last year. The language barrier was a considerable challenge, but it has been overcome with good will and a healthy dose of humour. And thanks to the generous commitment of two trained cooks from the squad, the entire community of Sisters even took the whole of July as a holiday and spiritual retreat.

## REFECTORY

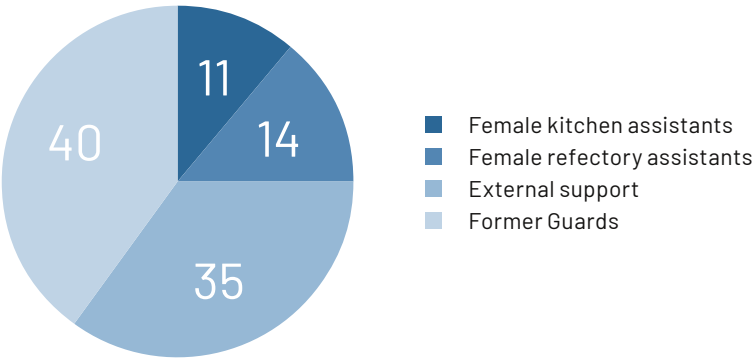
In August, the deputy head of the refectory left the corps after two years of service. A halberdier from the squad with the appropriate expertise made himself available for this demanding role.

The frequent turnover of the valued temporary staff in the canteen, which sometimes happens every fortnight, is a challenging task for the catering managers.





TEMPORARY STAFF



A host of information has to be passed on each time. The extremely long shifts due to the opening hours of the catering area are particularly worth mentioning. All meals for the troops are served at two different times. Furthermore, assignments can be added at short notice or take longer than expected. These circumstances have consequences for the catering sector. This means that the hours worked by temporary staff can sometimes extend unexpectedly.

Guard events 2024

JANUARY

22

Celebration of the founding of the Guard

AUGUST

01

Swiss National Day

SEPTEMBER

25

Feast in honour of St. Nicholas of Flüe and barbecue in honour of the "147 group" (patrons)

OCTOBER

05

Maltese evening (friends of the Guard)

20

Ticino evening (friends of the Guard)

22

100 years of "FC Guardia"

NOVEMBER

01

Raclette evening

11

Feast in honour of St. Martin of Tours (patron saint of the Guard)

DECEMBER

06

St. Nicholas party

25

Christmas party

### QUALITY ASSURANCE

The tireless efforts of all those involved and the ongoing standardisation in various areas will continue to play a big role in guaranteeing a high quality of service in the catering area of the Pontifical Swiss Guard.

The following measures have been taken to maintain and continuously improve the quality of the service:

- Adaptation of checklists and instructions
- Group chat with the temporary staff to enable faster communication
- List of scheduled events updated in real time
- Two hours of training for each temporary employee

The canteen management prioritizes to the flow of information, communication and the induction process for temporary staff. The meal registrations submitted by the troops both verbally and in writing is a new addition here.

### FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

The Pontifical Swiss Guard organised ten internal festivals and celebrations in 2024. These are organised alongside normal operations, and the regular catering for the guardsmen is not impeded. As far as catering is concerned, the head of the refectory coordinated these events, supported by 40 volunteer guards and temporary staff.

Refreshments for guests can be organised at short notice while the quarters and refectory are open. However, groups of ten people or more are required to register in advance. To make this easier, various set refreshment menus have been standardised. Refreshments can be ordered quickly and easily under the names “Schildwache”, “Benemerenti” and “Gran-Gala”. 71 such events were held in 2024, with a total of 1,199 guests. It is particularly gratifying to note that the excellent “Guard’s own” wines remain hugely popular.



### TROOP RATIONS

25,000

lunch servings

5,000

breakfast servings

8,000

dinner servings

## The Armeria

# Always in impeccable condition

Specialists are particularly in demand for maintenance of the Swiss Guard's weapons and equipment. The corps can always draw on the various specific skills of individual members.

In January 2024, a trained gunsmith took over the role of "master gunner": the person responsible for the Guard's equipment. He is entrusted with the care and maintenance of the firearms of the Pontifical Swiss Guard. These professional skills and interests are extremely valuable to the armoury.

In 2024, the armoury also benefited from the expertise of another member of the corps, who performed regular maintenance on all armour and morions (metal helmets). In around 115 hours of work, the trained panel beater checked 54 suits of armour and 94 morions, removed rust spots, and polished helmets and suits of armour. These jobs need to be done every three to four years. To ensure that every guard always has flawless equipment on hand, all halberdiers must also present their equipment to the officer responsible for the equipment and the master gunner for inspection every year.

Along with equipment for new recruits, a number of uniforms have to be made each year to replace those that are no longer fit for purpose due to passage of time, weather conditions and general wear and tear. To produce the various uniforms (gala/drill uniforms, berets, etc.), the Guard tailor and his staff used around two kilometres of different types of fabric in 2024.

Special attention is paid to the uniform collars and the white gloves. Particularly in the warmer months, they get heavily soiled from sweat and sunscreen, and must be changed and washed thoroughly every day. To this end, the Corps uses the services of various external experts. This year, more than 5,000 gala collars and just as many pairs of gloves were sent to the laundry. The guards are well aware that they must always look pristine when on duty.





# 5,000

gala collars and pairs of gloves cleaned

# 54

suits of armour maintained

# 94

morions maintained

# 2 km

of fabric for new uniforms

## Barracks maintenance

# Maintenance and relocation preparations

The construction of the new barracks is getting closer. Although a decision is still to be reached as to where the single guards will relocating stay during the construction phase, priority has been given to the married corps members out of the barracks. In fact, with the exception of the staff members, they have all left the barracks and moved into official residences in the immediate vicinity of the Vatican City.

Various archaeological excavations have also been under way in and around the barracks since mid-October. For example, in the immediate vicinity of the Passetto and the Armeria, a three-metre-wide shaft is being drilled to a depth of six metres. The report is expected at the beginning of 2025.

Regardless of the barracks project, proper building maintenance continues to require the undivided attention of those responsible for logistics. For example, cracks in the kitchen floor of the refectory and dents in the cobblestone floor of the “small courtyard” have had to be repaired. From mid-June to mid-August, of all times, the air conditioning system failed in some of the rooms of the crew barracks. The system requires increasingly frequent minor and major maintenance to ensure its operation. It is in use almost year-round, as it also serves for heating during the winter months. The room lighting in the crew barracks has been largely replaced with energy-efficient LED lighting.



## Guided tours of the Guard

# A huge attraction

Guards are readily available for guided tours for groups of ten, and enjoy sharing interesting facts and anecdotes from the extremely rich history of the Guard. These tours are often followed by light refreshments in the guest canteen, which was artistically decorated by ex-guard Robert Schiess in the 1940s.

In the 2024 calendar year, the Pontifical Swiss Guard again welcomed a large number of guests to the Guard's quarters as part of guided tours of the site. April, May and October saw the highest number of visitors. The majority of these groups were Swiss groups of confirmation candidates and acolytes. In addition, the swearing-in ceremony takes place in May, and spring and autumn are when the weather is best for a trip to Rome. Most guided tours were conducted with fewer than ten people. However, groups of more than ten are common. These require the authorisation of the commander.

It is particularly worth mentioning that from July 29th to 31st and August 1st to 2nd, four out of every hundred people hosted by the Guards as part of the International Ministrants' Pilgrimage were Swiss. However, the Command also received an increasing number of enquiries from groups from Germany, Austria and France.

### GUIDED TOURS OF THE BARRACKS

4,622

visitors

888

visitor groups

192

guided tours conducted by the chancery





Life in  
the Guard

## Pastoral care in the Guard

# The key is being human

The Guard regulations state that each guard must “always prove himself to be a good Christian and an exemplary soldier”. The first and most important lesson, and the foundation on which everything else is built and can flourish, concerns being human.

The chaplain’s task is to ensure that every member of the large Guard family is respected and valued as a human being, i.e. as the image and friend of God. This is even more important than work and moral integrity. And as a nurturer of life, he must be committed to helping each person’s God-given vocation, talents and spiritual gifts to grow, mature and flourish. This comprehensive human, mental and spiritual growth and maturation occurs chiefly through daily and varied interactions, living in intensive relationships in the extended family of over 100 people in a relatively small space in the barracks over a period of at least 26 months, and through regular advanced training.

### CHURCH SERVICES

A variety of celebrations, events and initiatives over the past year helped to further this relationship with the mystery of God and with each other: the daily liturgical celebrations in the Guard Chapel, various festive services to mark the anniversary of the founding of the Pontifical Swiss Guard on January 22nd, the swearing-in of the new guards on May 6th, the Swiss National Day on August 1st and commemoration of the Guard patron Saints Martin, Sebastian and Nicholas of Flüe, eleven farewell masses for guards who completed their service, the three-day retreat for all Guard members in Frascati, joint pilgrimages to the Marian shrine in Lourdes, in the footsteps of St. Benedict to Subiaco and Montecassino or to La Verna, a place of retreat and prayer for St. Francis, as well as the seven-church pilgrimage through the city of Rome during Lent.

### CHRISTIAN TRAINING

As part of the three training schools, preparation for the swearing-in and the monthly training of the three squadrons, the guards received introductions to the recitation of the rosary and studied the topics of “love, faith and life”, “praying while serving as a guard”, “service and dedication”, “vows” and “relics” (the image of Manoppello; the relic of the judge Rosario Livatino, who was murdered in 1990 and beatified in

### CULTURAL FUND OF THE SWISS GUARD

Young Swiss Guards who enter the service of the Pope live and work for a while in a unique cultural and religious environment. Rome and the Vatican are a great experience, a unique opportunity for young people in this respect. The Guard therefore feels obliged to bring its members closer to this greatness. Cultural and spiritual educational trips, for example to the Holy Land or Lourdes, are just as much a part of this as experiencing the former greatness of Rome or the cultural diversity of Italy. To meet the need for cultural education, the Guard has a cultural fund that helps to pay for trips, museum visits, etc. The fund is financed by the Foundation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard in Switzerland, as well as by direct donations.





01

**01** People also need regular inspiration and reflection to enhance their readiness to live out Christian values. One such experience was the pilgrimage to Lourdes in May. **02** Standing up for their convictions and setting an example – that's what a small band of guards did at the four-day march in Nijmegen, Netherlands.

02





03

**03** A variety of meetings and trips, for instance to Montecassino, served to foster important relationships within the group. **04** The experience of respectful, helpful and happy togetherness strengthens individual relationship skills, allows life to flourish and promotes social development. **05** In 2024, we welcomed various guests of honour as the main celebrant at special services, such as Dr Valentine Oluwole Koledoye, Episcopal Vicar of the Diocese of Basel, at the Holy Mass for family members before the swearing-in ceremony on May 5th.



04



05



“The human, mental and spiritual growth and maturation occur chiefly through daily and varied interactions.”



2021), as well as the Blessed Carlo Acutis and St. John Paul II. They also received a comprehensive introduction to the forthcoming Jubilee Year and the topic of indulgences. Part of this training included a visit to the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, as well as guided tours of buildings such as St. Peter's Basilica and the Papal Palace, focusing on art history and spirituality.

The guards learned about the history of the Church of San Pellegrino in the Vatican, which served as a chapel and burial place for the Pontifical Swiss Guard from the mid-17th century until the 20th century. Since January 2024, we have also been celebrating a monthly Holy Mass again in this special place of prayer and remembrance for the Swiss Guard, to which the former guards in Rome are also invited.

Prof. Katharina A. Fuchs, lecturer at the Institute of Psychology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, discussed the topic of “abuse in the Church” in a keynote speech. And in a lecture given by Katharina von Däniken, a certified counsellor from the INER (Institute for Natural Conception Regula-

tion), the guards gained in-depth knowledge of the topic of “natural family planning”. At the invitation of the Command, the guards were also introduced to the two institutions of the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem and the Malteser Hilfsdienst, which are active in Switzerland and offer former guards the opportunity for valuable social engagement in a church context.

#### CELEBRATIONS AND SOCIAL COMMITMENT

The numerous joint celebrations and events, both large and small, are also important to building a sense of community. These range from barbecue evenings with the recruits and individual squadrons, with the temporary priests, organists and the guards who act as sacristans, the family masses followed by lunch with the members of the Guard, the joint Advent wreath decorating and biscuit baking with the families during Advent, to the big joint celebrations on Swiss National Day, St. Nicholas' Day, at Christmas or at the traditional mission festival, at which around EUR 30,000 in donations for social causes were received in 2024. Above and beyond their rigor-

## Active family life

ous daily duties, the guards also showed their social commitment and impressive willingness to serve, already apparent for months on end at such a young age, in their voluntary help with cleaning the showers for homeless people in the colonnades and with the annual collection of medicines for the needy in the city of Rome.

### TRIPS, GUESTS AND ENCOUNTERS

Joint trips such as the three-day annual excursion, which this year took us to Europa-Park in Rust at the invitation of the Mack family, founders and operators of Europa-Park, are crucial to good cooperation within the large Guard family. Thanks to a generous invitation from the Bertarelli Foundation, we again enjoyed a long weekend with the families of the married guards at the Montecucco estate in Tuscany, with an additional short trip to Florence.

At various celebrations and events, we welcomed numerous guests – including cardinals, bishops, the abbots of the Swiss Benedictine Congregation and the Swiss delegation to the World Synod – who visited the barracks for services, meals and convivial gatherings. In addition, around 35 groups of pilgrims, mainly from German-speaking countries, celebrated services in the Guard Chapel this year.

This intensive relationship, which shapes the everyday life of the guards and is an essential part of their special training for life, continues in daily exchanges with the guards' families as well as in conversations, contacts and acquaintances with employees and guests of the Curia and the Vatican, not forgetting the constant contact with countless pilgrims and tourists. And finally, the personal, privileged encounters with Pope Francis and his speeches and sermons at audiences and liturgical celebrations are valuable sources of inspiration for the guards, and moments of inspiration for their personal lives and their own search for God.

Anyone wishing to join the Swiss Guard must be single. This is what the regulations stipulate. Since 2018, members of the Guard, regardless of rank, who have served for more than five years have been able to marry. This has led to an increase in the number of families. In 2024, there was one wedding and six births. Consequently, by the end of the year, 25 families with a total of 26 children (aged between one month and 22 years) were in Guard accommodation. Due to limited space in the barracks and the upcoming construction of the new barracks scheduled to begin in 2026, most of them are temporarily housed outside of the quarters. Only four still live in the barracks.

The children of the guards attend the Swiss School in Rome, which offers all levels from kindergarten to secondary school. This is made possible by the support of the Guard Foundation, which also contributes to housing costs and insurance cover for the families. After school, the children meet regularly to play in the barracks courtyard, unless drill is in progress. Once a month, there is a special family service followed by lunch.

# Financing



## Financing of the Pontifical Swiss Guard

# Wide support

The Vatican's finances are a complex matter that encompasses both the Vatican City State and the Curia, i.e. the Holy See. These two entities have different financial structures and responsibilities.

The Holy See is the central administrative structure of the Catholic Church and comprises the various Dicasteries (ministries) and offices that assist the Pope in governing the worldwide Church. These organisations also include the Pontifical Swiss Guard. The Holy See's finances come from several sources:

- **Peter's Pence**  
A traditional collection of donations from all over the world to support papal charity work.
- **Investments**  
The Holy See has a portfolio of property and financial investments, the income from which is used to finance its activities.
- **Diocesan contributions**  
Many dioceses around the world also make contributions to support the Holy See.
- **Donations**  
Additional donations from individuals and organisations supplement the sources of income mentioned above.

In 2024, the financial expenses for the Pontifical Swiss Guard totalled around EUR 8.8 million. Salaries, pensions and social benefits for the guardsmen

and their families accounted for a significant proportion of these costs, around 80%.

The overall costs are largely financed by the Holy See. Nevertheless, other sources also make a significant contribution to covering expenditures, in particular the Foundation for the Pontifical Swiss Guard. Other institutions, such as the Swiss bishops, and additional donors also make significant contributions to the corps' financial security. In addition to monetary donations, material support and services are also important, for example from the Swiss Armed Forces and various police forces.

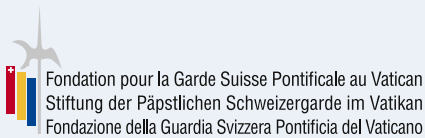
In addition, the Pontifical Swiss Guard itself generates income through its own services, for example through the sale of items relating to the Guard.

### EXPENDITURE IN 2024

8,8

million Euro





## FOUNDATION OF THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD AT THE VATICAN

# Bridge between the Guard and home

Founded in 2000 and based in Fribourg (Switzerland), the Guard Foundation is committed to the long-term survival of the Pontifical Swiss Guard in the Vatican. Its purpose is to support the Swiss Guard and its members financially, materially and socially, as the funds provided by the Holy See are not sufficient to cover all their needs. For 2024, the following project priorities were supported with around CHF 750,000:

- **Ongoing and advanced training**

A major part of the foundation's financial commitment is the training programme for security and surveillance specialists with a Federal Diploma of Higher Education (VSSU).

- **Recruitment and public relations**

The foundation assists with the recruitment of new guards by financing advertising materials, attending careers fairs and exhibitions, and contributing to the trial weeks in spring and autumn. These enable young people from Switzerland to become acquainted with the Guard on its premises. In addition, the foundation raises public awareness by financing publications and covering the costs incurred by the media office and liaison office in Switzerland.

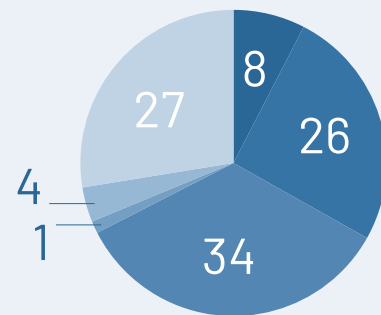
- **Contributions to occupational reintegration in Switzerland**

The foundation makes contributions to the Swiss Old-Age, Survivors Insurance/Disability Insurance and disability insurance scheme to avoid contribution shortfalls that could lead to pension cuts after the guards return to Switzerland. It also finances sufficient risk insurance and pension plans to ease the transition to the labour market after service in the Vatican.

"In many areas, the foundation acts as a vital bridge between the Guard in the Vatican and the guards' home in Switzerland."

Ruth Metzler-Arnold, former Federal Councillor,  
President of the Foundation Board

PROJECT PRIORITIES IN 2024  
% of the total amount



- Ongoing and advanced training
- Support for families and children
- Contributions to occupational reintegration in Switzerland
- Improvement of infrastructure and equipment
- Cultural activities
- Recruitment and public relations

- **Support for families and children**

At the end of 2024, 25 families with 26 children lived in the Guard. The foundation eases the burden on family budgets through family allowances. It enables schooling in line with Swiss standards by financing the fees for attending the Swiss School in Rome. In addition, the foundation contributes to ancillary housing costs and provides extended insurance cover for accidents and illness.

- **Cultural activities**

To promote team spirit and the spiritual development of the guardsmen, the Guard Command organises various pilgrimages and trips to Lourdes or the Holy Land that are open to the guards in return for a small contribution towards costs. The foundation makes financial contributions to support these activities as well as various sports and training programmes. Internal events organised by the Pontifical Swiss Guard have also been supported since 2024.

- **Infrastructure and equipment**

To ensure the preservation of the armour and helmets, they are continually being replaced by handmade pieces. This armour is worn on ceremonial occasions such as the swearing-in ceremony on May 6th and the Urbi et Orbi blessing at Easter and Christmas.

Through these diverse support measures, the foundation is instrumental in ensuring that the Pontifical Swiss Guard can perform its duties effectively, while also promoting the well-being of its members and their families.



KASERNENSTIFTUNG  
PPSTLICHE SCHWEIZERGARDE

## BARRACKS FOUNDATION OF THE PONTIFICAL SWISS GUARD

# On the way to a modern new building

The Foundation for the Renovation of the Barracks of the Pontifical Swiss Guard in the Vatican (Barracks Foundation) was established in Solothurn in autumn 2016. Its sole aim is to renovate the barracks buildings and the other infrastructure facilities of the Guard.

Not long after the Barracks Foundation was established, a feasibility study revealed that a complete reconstruction of the Guard barracks was required. Modern and functional facilities are essential to ensuring the work of the Swiss Guard in the long term.

### Modern construction project

The barracks buildings date back to the 19th century. Since then, hardly any renovations have been carried out, resulting in a poor building fabric and inadequate insulation, which cause disproportionately high maintenance costs. Another reason for the renovation of the barracks is the reform process initiated by Pope Francis in 2018, which includes increasing the number of guards from 110 to 135 and adapting the marriage rules, resulting in an increased need for living space.

The new building project involves the construction of modern living and communal areas that meet the current needs of the guards and their families. This includes modern accommodation, improved sanitary facilities and rooms for training and leisure activities. One particular priority is the sustainability of the building in order to meet environmental standards and reduce operating costs in the long term.

At the beginning of 2024, the architecture firm Durisch + Noll from Massagno, Ticino adopted the recommendations of the UNESCO experts to upgrade the project further. Preserving historical elements such as the exterior faade of the old barracks poses an additional challenge. The architects submitted an adapted design to the Holy See for final approval at the end of 2024. This will also be submitted to UNESCO at the beginning of 2025.



### Adjustment of the budget

Traditionally, property projects on Vatican City soil are financed by external donations. A budget of CHF 50 million was estimated for construction in 2020. The donations for financing are collected by the foundation in Switzerland and abroad with the help of the Vatican. The Vatican is paying for temporary accommodation for the Guard during the construction period as well as covering some of the planning costs.

By the end of 2024, the Barracks Foundation had already received donations and pledges close to the target amount. It has therefore decided to temporarily suspend its fundraising activities. However, further funds are likely to be needed due to inflation in Italy in recent years and the additional requirements imposed by UNESCO. Once the detailed planning has been finalised, the budget will therefore be adjusted to reflect the current realities of construction costs. The Barracks Foundation will then start collecting donations again.

Prospects for 2025

# The Jubilee

The Jubilee will be the central challenge in 2025. The numerous planned events will place high demands in terms of operations and logistics. In addition, recruitment will be crucial to ensuring a sufficient number of guards after the Jubilee.

Planning and deployment of personnel for the various events at which the Pontifical Swiss

“The Jubilee promises to be a unique and unforgettable experience.”

Guard will be present is certainly a major challenge at an operational level. The balance between work and rest for the guards is crucial, and we want to ensure that all guards involved have the necessary resources to remain both operational and efficient during the Jubilee.

We are expecting events with an exceptional influx of pilgrims, such as the Jubilee of Youth from July 28th to August 3rd. After the Extraordinary Jubilee of 2016, the upcoming ordinary Jubilee will attract significantly more pilgrims to the Eternal City. It promises to be a unique and unforgettable experience.

Training for our members will remain a key concern in 2025. It is extremely important to ensure that an appropriate level of training is maintained for our officers and halberdiers. The Jubilee also gives the guards a valuable opportunity to become pilgrims of hope themselves and to further deepen their spirituality.

Recruitment remains an important task for the Pontifical Swiss Guard. The aim is to have a sufficient number of guards available beyond the Jubilee and keep the number of personnel at 135 in the long term. By strengthening our communication and advertising channels, we intend to attract young Swiss people who are willing to serve a unique institution that has been bravely and faithfully fulfilling its mission in the service of the Pope for more than 500 years - in keeping with the motto of the Guard.

Colonel Christoph Graf







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