

FAITH AND REASON

A Professional and Spiritual Path: The Pontifical Swiss Guard is not improvised. There is a complete formative and spiritual path to be undertaken with commitment and determination. Because, before taking on the personal security and protection of the Pope, one has to know the Gospel and its principles. Fr Thomas Widmer, the Corps chaplain, emphasized this in an interview with L'Osservatore Romano at the start of 'summer school' for the new recruits.

What are the school's objectives? It is important that the recruits are able to enter the service well prepared, ready to assume the duties associated with their job. The first part of the training process is taking place in the Vatican now. In the fall, along with the next recruit training, there will be the second part of their formation at the military barracks in Isole, Switzerland. In that environment, the recruits will assimilate and further develop the regularly updated and necessary tactical and safety skills that correspond to their role in defending the Holy Father. But it is fundamental that this task is born and deepened in their hearts.

In what way? Here we enter the dimension of faith. They are in the first-place men, loved and cherished by God with a mission to be revealed ever more deeply. My objective as chaplain is always that of fostering their personal experience with Jesus: to encounter him and follow him as the model of service and giving, indeed, to give a new quality to their life. What are the priorities in the preparation of new recruits? On the one hand there is training for security, which is their principle task. Then there is a portion regarding knowledge of workplaces, of individual tasks and the performance of the honor service. The other part of the formation involves the spiritual aspect. I try to offer them the foundations of our faith and of Christian life. I think the recruit school allows for the sharing of personal experiences in the name of faith.

How is this spiritual dimension cultivated? In the school I dedicate several hours every week to catechesis with the new recruits. But I think the experience of faith goes beyond these strictly formative moments. Daily life in the Swiss quarters, inside the Vatican, include many situations of community sharing.

In this phase of the health emergency, what has changed in the Guards' service? Essentially the service has remained as usual, with some small changes: for example, the need to wear masks at the entrances to the Vatican or to take the temperature of anyone entering the Apostolic Palace. However, the honor service has been minimized. That is tied to the fact that fewer people arrive at the Vatican. The audiences and Masses presided by the Pope are either without or with few faithful. I hope the Guards will soon be able to resume the honor service wherever possible.

How are you planning for after the pandemic? Step by step, we are adapting to the new measures dictated by our superiors. Now that the people are resuming their movements, there certainly remains the need for some already tested security measures. But above all I hope that whatever we have matured within us during the experience of the pandemic will spur us to continue living important values such as solidarity. In this way we will be able to go forward as before and better than before... **Conversation with the chaplain of the Swiss Guards on the formation of new recruits**

We Cannot be Cafeteria Catholics: In the time of the Apostles, those who heard their preaching were told to submit their reasoning to a living authority. Moreover, whatever an Apostle said, his converts were bound to believe; when they entered the Church, they entered in order to learn. The Church was their teacher; they did not come to argue, to examine, to pick and choose, but to accept whatever was put before them.

Immediate, implicit submission of the mind was, in the lifetime of the Apostles, the only, the necessary, token of faith. Then there was no room whatever for what is now called private judgment. No one could say "I will choose my religion for myself, I will believe this, I will not believe that; I will pledge myself to nothing; I will believe just as long as I please, and no longer; what I believe today I will reject tomorrow if I choose. I will believe what the Apostles have as yet said but I will not believe what they shall in time to come."

No: either the Apostles were from God or they were not. If they were, everything that they preached was to be believed by their hearers. If they were not, there was nothing for the hearers to believe. To believe a little, to believe more or less was impossible. It contradicted the very notion of believing. If one part was to be believed, every part was to be believed. It was an absurdity to believe one thing not another; for the word of the Apostles which made the one true, made the other true, too ... The world had either to become Christian, or to let it alone. There was no room for private tastes or fancies, no room for private judgment... **Blessed John Henry Newman.**

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus says that there is a future for every human being; the cry for unending life which is a part of the person is indeed answered. God exists that is the real message of Easter. Anyone who even begins to grasp what this means also knows what it means to be redeemed. **Pope Benedict XVI**

A New You in Christ: The Christian way is different, harder and easier. Christ says: Give me all. I do not want so much of your time, and so much of your money, and so much of your work: I want you. I have not come to torment your natural self, but to kill it. No half measures are any good. I do not want to cut off a branch here and branch there, want to have the whole tree cut down. I do not want to drill a tooth, or crown it, or stop it, but to have it out. Handover the whole natural self, all the desires which you think innocent as well as the ones you think wicked - the whole outfit, and I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself: my own will shall become yours**C S Lewis**

The Trust of Abraham: Look back to the beginning of the history of faith. Abraham, in the end, does not, sacrifice anything he has prepared himself but offers the ram (the lamb) that has been offered to him by God. Thus, through this original sacrifice of Abraham a perspective opens up down the millennia; this lamb in the branches that God gives him, so that he may offer it, is the first herald of that Lamb, Jesus Christ, who carries the crown of thorns of our guilt, who has come into the thorn bush of world history in order to give us something that we may give.

Even when Abraham was still on his way, and as yet knew nothing of the mystery of the ram, he was able to say to Isaac, with trust in his heart: God will take care of us. Because he knew this God, therefore, even in the dark night of his incomprehension he knew that he is a loving God, therefore, even then, when he found he could understand nothing, he could put his trust un him, and could know that the very one who seemed to be oppressing him truly loved him even then.

Only in thus going forward so that his heart was opened up, so that he entered the abyss of trust, and in the dark night of the uncomprehend God, dared to keep company with him, did he thereby become capable of accepting the ram, of understanding the God who gives us that we may give the more we trust in him in the dark night of the uncomprehend God thenwe will become aware that the very God who seems to be tormenting us, is the one who truly loves us, the one we can trust without reserve. God gives that we may give. This is the essence of the Eucharist Sacrifice, of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ... **Pope Benedict XVI**

A Thought for the Day

- Sunday** A fountain fed from many springs will never dry up.
Monday It's a sickly faith that is shaken because some frail human being goes wrong.
Tuesday Practicing the Golden Rule in itself is an investment.
Wednesday The Christian life is like an airplane: When you stop you drop.
Thursday Happy is the man whose words issue from the Holy Spirit and not from himself.
Friday Just as Water extinguishes a fire, so love wipes away sin.
Saturday It seems to me that humility is truth. I do not know whether I am humble: but I do know I see truth in all things.

The life that I have is all that I have and the life that I have is yours. The love that I have of the life that I have is yours and yours and yours. A sleep I shall have, a rest I shall have. Yet death will be but a pause for the peace of my years in the long green grass will be yours and yours and yours... **Leo Marks**

Let me know myself: Let me know you. Soon after his baptism in his early thirties, Augustine asked himself what he needed to know to know in order to achieve heaven. His answer was "I need to know who I am; I need to know who God is" He was convinced that if he could discover the truth about himself and God, then the path to heaven would become clear. He recognized that one must know many things to get through life; but, most importantly, he recognized the ultimate truth of knowing oneself and God. Indeed, it is in our knowledge of God that we come to know ourselves and become perfected. Each one of us however, comes to know God in a unique way. In ways that are uniquely fitted to one one's own self. Augustine spent most of his life living in the mystery of self and God, and the knowledge he gained spare as it might be, was for him more precious than anything else he knew.

In His Will is Our Peace

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