



AS IT IS

Vatican Prepares for Possible Women Swiss Guards

May 05, 2022

A new housing center for the Vatican's Swiss Guard force will reportedly **accommodate** both male and female members.

The purpose of the force is to guard the **residence** of Pope Francis, as well as all official entrances to Vatican City in Rome, Italy.

Currently, only males are permitted to serve in the Swiss Guard.

A Swiss organization is raising money to build the new housing center – also called a barracks. The organization signed an agreement with the Vatican's Secretary of State on May 4.

An official with the Foundation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard told Reuters the agreement calls for the new barracks to have single rooms with private bathrooms. The barracks where the Swiss Guard now live is a shared space.

The official, Riccardo Boscardin, said there were two reasons the new barracks will have the ability to separate Guard members. "One is because COVID hit when the project started and the second is the possibility of **integrating** women into the guard," he said.

When asked about the possibility of women joining the force, Boscardin said, "this decision is not ours, but **exclusively** that of the Vatican and the pope."

The rule requiring Guard members to be male goes back to the year 1506, when the force was created. Members must also be Catholic, unmarried and have Swiss citizenship.

The 85-year-old Pope Francis has already named women to several high positions in the Vatican administration. In March, he introduced a new constitution that permits any **baptized** Catholic, including women, to head most Vatican departments.

The Foundation of the Pontifical Swiss Guard is seeking to raise about \$46 million to **replace** the current barracks, Boscardin told Reuters. He said work was expected to begin in January of 2026. That date was chosen so members would not be **displaced** during the 2025 Holy Year, when millions of visitors are expected to travel to the Vatican.

Boscardin said the **site** of the current barracks will be kept or rebuilt exactly as it is now. He noted that the new barracks will look a lot like the existing one on the outside. But he said building a new, environmentally friendly barracks will cost much less than repairing the existing one.

I'm Ashley Thompson.

The Associated Press reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English.

Words in This Story

accommodate – *v.* to provide what is needed or wanted for something

residence – *n.* where a person lives

integrate – *v.* to combine two or more things to make something more effective

exclusive – *adj.* not shared with everyone

baptism – *v.* a religious ceremony held when a person officially enters a religion

replace – *v.* to take the place of something else

displace – *v.* to make someone or something leave their usual place or position

site – *n.* the place where something happens

We want to hear from you. Write to us in the Comments section, and [visit our Facebook page](#).
