

# Vatican army 'may recruit women'

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**Women may be allowed to join the exclusive ranks of the world's smallest army, the head of the Vatican's Swiss Guard says.**

"I can imagine them for one role or another," Commander Daniel Anrig told Italian television.

Such a move would represent a significant departure from tradition.

The 500-year-old force, devoted to protecting the pope, usually recruits only young, single, Roman Catholic soldiers from Switzerland.

Previously logistical problems, such as the cramped living quarters for the forces, had been cited as an obstacle to allowing women to join.

But Commander Anrig said he believed such problems could be overcome. His predecessors have fiercely opposed such a move.

The comments came on the eve of an annual swearing-in ceremony for new recruits.

The Swiss Guard was founded in 1506 when Swiss mercenaries marched into Rome to serve under Pope Julius II, known as the "warrior pope".

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8035235.stm>