Discover, Choose, Serve: The Journey of Young People in the Italian Army

Published on 11/04/2026

The journey that leads a young person to wear the uniform **does not arise suddenly**, but is built through experiences, encounters, and **conscious choices**. In this sense, initiatives like the first Open Day organized at the Military Academy of Modena represent a fundamental step in the process of **bringing young people closer to the Institution**.

The event, hosted in the historic Palazzo Ducale, involved high school students, offering them the opportunity to come into direct contact with the academic and military reality. It was not just a simple educational presentation, but an **immersive experience**, built on **peer dialogue**. The Officer Cadets shared their journey, recounting motivations, difficulties, and perspectives, making a choice that often seems distant or little known more tangible.

In this context, the role of the Army also emerges as an **educational actor**, capable of guiding and accompanying young people in a delicate phase of their lives. Major General Stefano Messina, Commander of the Military Academy, emphasized how the initiative does not just

illustrate university paths, but opens the doors to a **value system based on discipline, sense of duty, and spirit of service**.

This is where the first question arises, often silent but decisive: embarking on a military career is not just a professional possibility, but a **life choice**. The Open Day thus becomes the moment of discovery, where curiosity and interest begin to transform into awareness.

The Choice, the Oath, and the Entry into the Army

If orientation represents the beginning of the journey, the oath constitutes the **most solemn and definitive passage**. At the “Ugo Bartolomei” Barracks in Cesano di Roma, home of the Infantry School, about two hundred Initial Service Volunteers of the 3rd Block 2025, belonging to the 17th Volunteer Training Regiment “Acqui”, pronounced their **“I swear!”**, officially marking their entry into the Italian Army.

The ceremony took place in the presence of the **War Flag**, a symbol of identity and historical continuity, and saw the participation of civil, military, and religious authorities, as well as the families of the oath-takers. A moment full of emotion, made even more significant by the notes of the Anti-Aircraft Artillery Band.

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Entry of the War Flag. Source: Italian Army.

The oath represents a **point of no return on a moral level**: from that moment, the young person is no longer an observer but becomes an integral part of the **military community**. The words of Brigadier General Eugenio Dessì, Commander of the Infantry School, highlighted the depth of this choice, emphasizing how the volunteers belong to a generation that has been able to choose the **responsibility of “us” over individualism**.

In this transition, a fundamental transformation takes place: aspiration translates into **concrete commitment**, curiosity gives way to responsibility. The oath is not just a formality, but an **act of adherence to values and principles** that will accompany the entire military career.

Awareness, Values, Experience, and Military Identity

After the choice, the journey does not end but enters its deepest phase: that of **awareness**. At the Army Non-Commissioned Officers School, the Cadet Marshals had the opportunity to engage with figures of high moral and professional value, such as Sergeant Major Andrea Adorno, Gold Medal for Military Valor, and First Warrant Officer Salvatore Mascoli, Bronze Medal for Army Valor.

During the meeting, the Decorated shared personal experiences marked by **responsibility, sacrifice, and sense of duty**, offering a direct testimony of the most authentic meaning of service. The message that emerged is clear: being a soldier is not just a profession, but a **true vocation** that requires full awareness of one's choices and the consequences that follow.

Sgt. Maj. M.O.V.M. ADORNO during the speech. Source: Italian Army.

Particular attention was paid to the role of family and social context, fundamental elements in the formation of the individual and in the construction of military identity. The values learned from childhood – **respect, responsibility, spirit of sacrifice** – find full realization in the military experience.

This phase marks the transition from technical training to **ethical maturity**: the soldier is not only trained to act but is called to understand the meaning of their actions. It is in this dimension that the journey is fully realized, uniting **orientation, choice, and personal growth** in a single coherent process, capable of forming not only defense professionals but **citizens responsible and aware of their role in serving the community**.

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