



Shrine of the True Cross Catholic Church

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

The Latin Language in the Liturgy.

Latin is the universal language of the Latin Rite (Roman Catholic) Church. It is a precious part of our heritage and patrimony.

We look to what the Church's magisterium has set forth and follow her instructions, rather than allowing a tug of war between opposing preferences, to determine how to conduct the sacred liturgy. We all share in the duty of following the Church's guidance in these matters.

To include Latin in the liturgy is not going backwards. The liturgy is the possession of the universal Church under the direction of the Pope as the supreme liturgist.

The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Instruction **Redemptionis Sacramentum: On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist*** (hereafter, RS)# 14, teaches us.

"The regulation of the Sacred Liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, which rests specifically with the Apostolic See and, according to the norms of law, with the Bishop." And then #11: "The Mystery of the Eucharist "is too great for anyone to permit himself to treat it according to his own whim, so that its sacredness and its universal ordering would be obscured." On the contrary, anyone who acts thus by giving free reign to his own inclinations, even if he is a Priest, injures the substantial unity of the Roman Rite, which ought to be vigorously preserved, and becomes responsible for actions that are in no way consistent with the hunger and thirst for the living God that is experienced by the people today. ***Nor do such actions serve authentic pastoral care or proper liturgical renewal; instead, they deprive Christ's faithful of their patrimony and their heritage. For arbitrary actions are not conducive to true renewal, but are detrimental to the right of Christ's faithful to a liturgical celebration that is an expression of the Church's life in accordance with her tradition and discipline*** [emphasis added]. In the end, they introduce elements of distortion and disharmony into the very celebration of the Eucharist, which is oriented in its own lofty way and by its very nature to signifying and wondrously bringing about the communion of divine life and the unity of the People of God.³⁰ The result is uncertainty in matters of doctrine, perplexity and scandal on the part of the People of God, and, almost as a necessary consequence, vigorous opposition, all of which greatly confuse and sadden many of Christ's faithful in this age of ours when Christian life is often particularly difficult on account of the inroads of 'secularization' as well."

With the exception of Pope John Paul I--who died only 33 days after his elevation to the Chair of St. Peter--every pope, including Blessed John XXIII, has upheld the call to maintain at least some use of Latin in the sacred liturgy. As faithful Catholics we should enthusiastically follow the guidance of the Church.

Ave Crux, Spes Unica!

Hail O Cross, Our Only Hope!

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Enlightening in this connection are the words of Francis Cardinal Arinze, then Prefect of *the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments*, who taught under the authority of Pope John Paul II...

"Indeed, we can say that the most important thing in divine worship is not that we understand every word or concept. No. The most important consideration is that we stand in reverence and awe before God, that we adore, praise and thank him. The sacred, the things of God, are best approached with sandals off.

In prayer, language is primarily for contact with God. No doubt, language is also for intelligible communication between us humans. But contact with God has priority. In the mystic, such contact with God approaches and sometimes reaches the ineffable, the mystical silence where language ceases." Latin and Vernacular: Language in the Roman Liturgy, November 11, 2006.

The following is a summary of Church instructions regarding Latin in the liturgy:

Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Sacrosanctum Concilium (hereafter, SC), December 4, 1963, #36.1:

"The use of the Latin language, with due respect to particular law, is to be preserved in the Latin rites."

SC, #54:

"... steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass [which pertain to them]".

SC, #116 - 117

"All other things being equal, Gregorian chant holds pride of place because it is proper to the Roman Liturgy. Other types of sacred music, in particular polyphony, are in no way excluded, provided that they correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful.

The typical edition of the books of Gregorian chant is to be completed; and a more critical edition is to be prepared of those books already published since the restoration by St. Pius X. It is desirable also that an edition be prepared containing simpler melodies, for use in small churches.

Instruction On Music In The Liturgy, Sacred Congregation of Rites, March 5, 1967 Musicam Sacram, ## 50.

(a) Gregorian chant, as proper to the Roman liturgy, should be given pride of place, other things being equal. Its melodies, contained in the "typical" editions, should be used, to the extent that this is possible.

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(b) "It is also desirable that an edition be prepared containing simpler melodies, for use in smaller churches." [See the quote containing "Jubilate Deo" below.]

Letter to the Bishops on the Minimum Repertoire of Plain Chant, "Voluntati Obsequens", Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship April 14, 1974:

"Our congregation has prepared a booklet entitled, "Jubilate Deo", which contains a minimum selection of sacred chants. This was done in response to a desire which the Holy Father had frequently expressed, that all the faithful should know at least some Latin Gregorian chants, such as, for example, the "Gloria", the "Credo", the "Sanctus", and the "Agnus Dei"."

General Instruction of the Roman Missal 3rd ed., March 19, 2003, #41

Since faithful from different countries come together ever more frequently, it is fitting that they know how to sing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin, especially the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, set to the simpler melodies."

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum*: On certain matters to be observed or to be avoided regarding the Most Holy Eucharist, March 25, 2004, #112

"Mass is celebrated either in Latin or in another language, provided that liturgical texts are used which have been approved according to the norm of law. Except in the case of celebrations of the Mass that are scheduled by the ecclesiastical authorities to take place in the language of the people, Priests are always and everywhere permitted to celebrate Mass in Latin."

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments *Liturgiam authenticam*, On the use of Vernacular Languages in the Publication of the Books of the Roman Liturgy, March 28, 2001, #28:

"Consideration should also be given to including in the vernacular editions at least some texts in the Latin language, especially those from the priceless treasury of Gregorian chant, which the Church recognizes as proper to the Roman liturgy, and which, all other things being equal, is to be given pride of place in liturgical celebrations. Such chant, indeed, has a great power to lift the human spirit to heavenly realities."

Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* of the Holy Father Benedict XVI, February 22, 2007, #62:

"I ask that future priests, from their time in the seminary, receive the preparation needed to understand and to celebrate Mass in Latin, and also to use Latin texts and execute Gregorian chant; nor should we forget that the faithful can be taught to recite the more common prayers in Latin, and also to sing parts of the liturgy to Gregorian chant."

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Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship, November 14, 2007, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

61. ...care should be taken to foster the role of Latin in the Liturgy, particularly in liturgical song. Pastors should ensure “that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them.” They should be able to sing these parts of the Mass proper to them *[This includes all of the prayers, responses, and hymns of the Mass that the assembly sings or recites as a group or together with the Priest: the responses, the penitential rite including the Confiteor and Kyrie (Greek), Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, Mysterium Fidei, Pater Noster, Agnus Dei, etc.]* at least according to the simpler melodies.

62. At international and multicultural gatherings of different language groups, it is most appropriate to celebrate the Liturgy in Latin, “with the exception of the readings, the homily and the prayer of the faithful.” In addition, “selections of Gregorian chant should be sung” at such gatherings, whenever possible.

63. To facilitate the singing of texts in Latin, the singers should be trained in its correct pronunciation and understand its meaning. To the greatest extent possible and applicable, singers and choir directors are encouraged to deepen their familiarity with the Latin language.

65. Seminarians should “receive the preparation needed to understand and to celebrate Mass in Latin, and also to use Latin texts and execute Gregorian chant.”

Please enter the following web address to read **Latin and Vernacular: Language in the Roman Liturgy** by Francis Cardinal Arinze.

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/Liturgy/latinvernac.HTM>