

RECTOR'S LETTER

July 25, 2021

Timendi causa est nescire

Dear Friends in Christ:

Anh chị em thân mến trong Chúa Kitô:

Estimados Amigos y Amigas en Cristo:

Modern people often refer to Latin as a dead language. If it is a dead language, then it must be an undead or zombie language, because it still has the incredible gift of making people feel threatened or defensive, when in fact it remains an indispensable part of Catholic Life in the Latin Rite.

After the Holy Father's motu proprio *Traditionis custodes* was released on Friday, not only was there much discussion about the ramifications for the letter's intended subject, the Mass celebrated according to the 1962 Roman Missal, but much confusion as to what "Latin Mass" means. People last Sunday asked me questions such as "does this mean we can't sing in Latin anymore?"

Therefore, for the sake of clarity, I simply want to offer a FAQ about the usage of Latin in the church.

Q: What is the "Latin Mass"?

A: Good question! In fact, this title is vague and can mean a lot of things. Usually when you hear this term, it is a reference to Mass celebrated according to the Roman Missal of 1962, the last Missal before the beginning of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. This Mass has often been called the *Tridentine Mass* (as it was streamlined after the Council of Trent), the *Traditional Latin Mass* (by those distinguishing it from the more Modern Mass following Vatican II that is usually characterized by the usage of vernacular language), the *Vetus Ordo* (old or ancient order of Mass, to differentiate it from the so-called Novus Ordo, or new order), *usus antiquior* (ancient usage), or most recently up until Friday in official Church nomenclature, the *Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite*.

Q: OK, so Latin Mass is the old Mass?

A: Not exactly. This is why this is a problematic expression lacking clarity. While many use this term to refer to the "old" Mass, the current Mass is based in Latin as well. In fact, the Roman Missal (the book out of which the Mass is celebrated) is translated into different languages (English, Vietnamese, Spanish) from the Latin translation, the

Missale Romanum. While it is less common to see it, our current Mass can be celebrated entirely in Latin just as it can be in any other approved language.

Q: But we can't use Latin anymore, right?

A: The Holy Father's legislation of last week is concerning the conditions under which the old Mass according to the 1962 Missal can be celebrated. It says nothing about the celebration of the current Mass.

Q: I'm confused.

A: That's not a question. But that's OK!

Q: What does this mean for us?

A: At the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, the changes do not practically change anything. Those most impacted are the communities that celebrate Mass according to the 1962 Missal, of which we are not one. However, many people, especially the young, have a strong attachment to this beautiful form of the liturgy and are thus reacting strongly.

Latin, however, continues to be important to us. While we do not celebrate the Tridentine Mass, nor even do we regularly celebrate the current Mass in Latin, we do utilize the official (not dead!) language of the Church in many ways. Some of you expressed concern about what this means for music. Nothing! Our music ministry will continue to use Mass Settings and liturgical music that are situated in English, Vietnamese, and Spanish, while also drawing from the rich treasury of the Church's history in Latin. When we sing the *Kyrie Eleison* (Lord, have mercy), we are even throwing in a little Greek!

The long and short is that while liturgical ritual varies in different parts of the Church, we are rooted in the one Eucharist. For Catholic of the Latin (Roman) Rite, the Latin language is our patrimony and our culture. While we celebrate the Mass in many tongues, we will continue to remain rooted in the language of our fathers in faith.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, we place all our trust in You. Amen.

Yours in Christ,



Very Reverend Jeffrey L. Bame
Rector & Parish Administrator

