

THE USE OF LATIN in the LITURGY

Hearing Latin used during the Mass evokes many different feelings among the faithful. For some, it's a beautiful reminder of the Church's tradition or how they remember Mass from years ago. For others, it's a foreign language that seems like it has no place in today's liturgy. From beauty and tradition, to mystery and confusion, it seems like each one of us has fairly distinct feelings when we hear those "old chants" come up during Lent.

WHY DO WE STILL USE IT?

But why do we use it? Maybe the better question is "why do we STILL use it"? *The Catechism Explained: An Exhaustive Explanation of the Catholic Religion* by Father Francis Spirago offers some reasons:

- The Latin language is venerable on account of its origin and its antiquity; it dates back to the earliest centuries of the Church and to the very Masses offered in the obscurity of the Catacombs.
- There is an element of mystery about Latin. It conveys to the mind of the people that something is going on upon the altar which is beyond their comprehension; that a mystery is being enacted.
- The use of Latin in the Mass is a means of maintaining unity in the Catholic Church, for the use of one and the same language in Latin Rite churches all over the world is a connecting link to Rome, as well as between nations separated by their cultures and native tongues.

The biggest reason, however, is that the church asks us to teach it! From the document "Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship" we hear:

"...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, at least according to the simpler melodies."

It isn't easy to pick up on something new, and it may take time to become comfortable singing (or even speaking) some of these Mass parts. But Saint Augustine beautifully puts it all into perspective:

"If there are some present who do not understand what is being said or sung, they know at least that all is said and sung to the glory of God, and that is sufficient for them to join in it devoutly."

May God continue to bless each of you on your Lenten journey, as we approach the most sacred time of year in our church!

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