

+ SACRUM MYSTERIUM +

Holy Mysteries

The purpose of this bulletin series will be to take a closer look into the Church's liturgy. Over the course of the next year, we will spend some time surveying the different aspects of the Mysteries of our Faith, namely, the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. To begin with, I want to speak about the Church's use of the Latin language in her worship.

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in the Holy House of Loreto. This is a place in Italy where pilgrims from around the world gather and pray. While I was celebrating the Mass, the little house began to fill up with pilgrims. Most of the people in the house did not speak English, so we utilized Latin for many parts of the Mass. I was honestly expecting that the people would participate interiorly, but when we began the Sanctus, the little house erupted in voices raised to heaven. The same was true for the Pater Noster, and the Agnus Dei. It was a moment that taught me how important our shared liturgical language is.

To be clear, the Church *did not* do away with the use of Latin in her liturgy at the Second Vatican Council, nor has the Holy Father forbidden its use in the liturgy. This is a great misconception. Unfortunately, this idea has been perpetuated for many decades. In the Liturgy document *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, from the Second Vatican Council we read in article 36, "Particular law remaining in force, the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites." In article 54, we read "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.

So, what does this all mean? Quite simply, it means that while we are permitted to use the vernacular in our liturgical rites, the Latin language should also be employed in our worship. The document says that the faithful should be able to say or sing the Ordinary parts of the Mass - the parts that do not change from week to week- in Latin. What are the unchanging parts of the Mass? They are: The sign of the Cross - *In nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti*, the responses to the greetings *Dominus Vobiscum – Et cum Spiritu tuo* (The Lord be with you - and with your Spirit), the *Gloria*, the *Credo*, the Preface dialogue, the *Sanctus* (Holy, Holy, Holy), the *Mysterium Fidei*

(Mystery of Faith), the *Pater Noster* (Lord's prayer), the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God), the *Domine non sub dignus* (Lord, I am not worthy...) and the *Deo Gratias* (Thanks be to God) after the *Ite Missa Est* (The Mass has ended). That seems like a lot of Latin, and indeed it is. Many parishes that utilize Latin in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass often only say or sing a few of these parts of the Mass.

Does this mean that at every Mass we will be using Latin for all of these parts of the Mass? No, it does not mean that at all. We will have one Mass per weekend – the **9:30 am Sung Mass on Sunday at St. Mary**, that will make use of many of these parts in Latin. When this Mass is not a sung Mass most of these parts will be said in the vernacular. At the other Masses, we will use vernacular settings for these parts of the Mass, while occasionally saying or singing some of them in Latin.

The other parishes around us do not use Latin. Shouldn't we all be doing Mass the same way? Each pastor has to discern in prayer what is the best liturgical practice for the parish he leads, which means each parish will differ in certain ways in the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This does not mean that one is better than the other. It simply means that each pastor directs the Liturgy in his parish according to his discernment.

Why are we using Latin at any of our Masses, if there is a Latin Mass celebrated at the Oratory of Our Lady of Providence? The Mass celebrated at the Oratory is the Mass of 1962, or the Extraordinary Form of the Mass. This Mass is entirely in Latin, with the exception of the Lessons from Scripture and the Sermon. The reason that we are using Latin in some of the Ordinary Form Masses - the Missal of 1970, is simply because the Liturgy Documents of the Second Vatican Council call for it.

What am I supposed to do if I do not understand Latin? The best suggestion is the simplest. Learn what the parts of the Mass are, and you will understand what we are saying or singing in Latin. There are also worship aids called the *Mass of Vatican II* in the pews to help you follow along. One does not have to be a Latin scholar to be able to participate in saying or singing in the Church's sacral language. The more we do it, the more familiar we become with it. Ultimately, remember that much of what we say or sing, or see in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is shrouded in mystery. If we enter into the Mass with an open heart, great things will happen.