

Father's Notes

March 9, 2025

In recent weeks when we were planning for Lent, I inquired of our staff members and leaders who work with our liturgy, about how liturgies were done at our parishes. One thing that was stated is that it has been the practice to incorporate some use of Latin responses in the season of Lent, specifically the Eucharistic acclamations (*Holy, Holy; Memorial Acclamation, Lamb of God*).

I've found that some people wish Latin was used more, and I also find that some respond negatively to it. In the broad range of people that we have in our parish and in our pews, even at a given Mass, not everybody has the same preferences. In trying to balance that range of needs, I've asked myself why some have an aversion to any use of Latin.

On the occasions that I've spoken with parishioners about it, I've heard it explained that "*We don't speak that language and therefore don't understand it*" or "*The Second Vatican Council called us to celebrate Mass in our own language, and therefore reincorporating its use is a movement backwards*".

To be clear, when we moved to use of the common vernacular, as directed by the teachings of the Second Vatican Council it was not intended that we would flush away all use of Latin. Sacrosanctum Concilium (the Church's *Constitution on Sacred Liturgy*) stated the following: "*Care must be taken to ensure that the faithful may also be able to say or sing together in Latin those parts of the ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them*" (SC, 54).

It's an interesting phenomenon, that more young people and those who are coming into the Church desire things that evoke tradition and transcendence. I also consider that Latin is for us a language primarily reserved for our faith. Consider that all the distorted ways we use our first language, such as insulting others, telling lies, swearing, gossiping—we don't do so in Latin. It's reserved for holy things. Further, while the diversity of the people of our parish communities may have different first-languages Vietnamese, Tagalog, Spanish, Samoan, Latin serves as a language we hold in common.

Perhaps it can be said that incorporating use of Latin is another way of being people of the present age, but also holding on to Tradition. You likely know that in our liturgy we also use Greek (Kyrie Eleison) and a few Hebrew words (e.g. *Hosanna*). Latin is not the only ancient language we use.

Using it during Lent is another way to make this particular season distinct from the rest of the liturgical year. To make it easier for those who are not familiar, these sung Mass parts are in either our missalettes or hymnals. Be patient as you (re)gain familiarity with it.



Father Todd O. Strange (*Pastor*)

+ St. Philomena Parish & School (*Des Moines, WA*)

+ St. Thomas Parish (*Tukwila, WA*)