

# **The Case for Latin in the Catholic Liturgy**

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In recent months there have been several unseemly demonstrations in Bangalore by Kannada — speaking “Catholic priests” and laymen who are attempting to coerce the ecclesiastical authorities (of the heretical ecumenical Church of Vatican II ) to declare Kannada the official language of the new “liturgy” in the archdiocese.

However, there are in the archdiocese of Bangalore, several linguistic communities other than the Kannada-speaking group, and their interests and rights cannot be ignored. It is the conviction of the writer of this paper that this deplorable situation would not and could not have arisen if the “bishops” of the world — and of India in particular — had not illicitly introduced, and foisted on the laity, an all-vernacular liturgy.

Throughout the nations and the centuries (until some thirty years or so ago) Latin had been the universal and unifying language of the Latin Church, and it is its abandonment in the liturgy that is directly responsible for the fragmentation of the Catholic (?) Church today.

An all-vernacular liturgy has been imposed by the “bishops” and is being demanded by the various regional linguistic fanatics under the deliberately mistaken impression that this was not only permitted but even ordered by the Second Vatican Council. I hold no brief for Vatican II, but to give the devil his due, far from banishing Latin, the Council reconfirmed it as the language of the Church’s divine worship in clear terms: “The use of Latin in Latin rites is to be preserved” (Art. 36-2: Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy). The Council did go on to say (Art. 36-2) there may be exceptions where the vernacular may be found very useful for the people, and its introduction, in part, is granted, especially in the readings and admonitions and in certain prayers and in singing.

These, therefore, are the limited exceptions to the sovereign and general rule that Latin is to be preserved. How then, has it come about that Latin has been completely banished from the liturgy, thus turning the Constitution the other way round, making the exception the rule and the rule the exception? For Latin is now tolerated only in Masses offered by aged priests in private where no faithful are present but only the pews! Further, in an interview given on February 13, 1969 to Fr. Louis Coache, parish priest of Montjavoult (France) and a doctor of Canon. Law, the late “Cardinal” Benno Gut, the then Prefect of the Consilium for the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, said: “Latin remains the normal liturgical language of the Church.” He said, furthermore: “The

Church wishes that the Canon of the Mass be habitually said in the Latin language.” His “eminence” then deplored the fact that, by an appalling reversal of things, the vernacular has come to occupy the primordial place in the liturgy which by right belongs to Latin.

John XXIII, who convened Vatican II, speaking on “Latin, language of the Church”, in his encyclical *Veterum Sapientia*, concludes: “In the exercise of their paternal care, they (the bishops and Superiors-General of religious orders) shall be on their guard lest anyone under their jurisdiction, being eager for innovation, write against the use of Latin, whether in the teaching of the higher sacred studies or in sacred rites, or through prejudice, attempt to belittle the Holy See’s will or interpret it in their own way”. (Emphasis added). Is it not obvious that this admonition applies pointedly to the “bishops” of the world and with particular emphasis to the “bishops” of India and to those Kannada-speaking “Priests” who staged a ‘walk-out’ at the “priests” conference held by the then “archbishop” of Bangalore on 16.10.1980?

If further proof were needed that it was never the intention of the Church to banish Latin but rather, that She considers it essential for Her Divine Worship, here is a relevant extract from the encyclical, *Mediator Dei* by Pope Pius XII of revered memory:

**“The rash audacity of those who are deliberately introducing new liturgical usages or reviving rites already fallen into disuse and not conforming to the laws and rubrics in force, is severely to be reprimanded. Thus, not without great pain, we know that this is taking place not only in minor matters but also in those of very grave importance; there are not lacking, indeed, those who are using the vernacular in the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice...The use of the Latin language is a clear and noble mark of unity and an efficacious antidote to all corrupting influence on pure doctrine.”** (Emphasis added)

To me it is quite clear that these modernist innovators who have illicitly imposed a vernacular liturgy on the unsuspecting faithful, knew perfectly well that Latin, as Pius XII said : “affords at once an imposing sign of unity and an effective safeguard against the corruption of pure doctrine”. That is why, precisely, they were determined to suppress it. Latin must go, that heresy may come, and unity depart. **Heresy has entered and unity departed with the advent of the vernacular liturgy!**

One of the major reasons put forward by the innovators for the removal of Latin is that it is an “unknown” language and, therefore, not understood by the laity. But is understanding of the language of the Mass really necessary? Does an infant understand the words pronounced over it at Baptism, and is the flow of baptismal grace impeded because the baptismal formula is unintelligible to the infant? The famous English writer, Evelyn

Waugh, who is an illustrious convert to Catholicism, says : “I do not believe that complete verbal comprehension is necessary for prayer.

Most of the liturgies of the historic religions, Christian and heathen, have been incomprehensible for most of the faithful. Lately there has been a prophetic of Zambia who stirred up a whole province to ferocious ecstasies by playing records (in English, of which the people knew nothing) of Sir Winston Churchill’s speeches. I am not advocating such extreme measures but, in the traditional Mass, it was easy to know by a glance at the priest’s movements the precise place he had arrived at.”

Christ said: “Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a child does, shall not enter it”. A child does not have to understand in order to believe, still less to pray. When the disciples asked Jesus why He so often spoke in parables, He replied: “To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; but, it is not given to the rest.”

In Chapter I of the 10th edition of a book entitled The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass by Herbert Cardinal Vaughan, Archbishop of Westminster, published in 1913, one reads:

**“To take part in the Mass and derive merit therefrom, it is not at all requisite that those who assist at it should hear or understand the prayers and the words pronounced by the priest.”**

And, again:

**“The Mass, then, being an Act of Sacrifice, performed by the priest, it is not necessary that the people, in order to assist at it and participate in it, should either hear the prayers said by the priest and handle, or as it were, feel the sharpness of the sacrificial sword which the priest alone is appointed to wield. It suffices that they deliberately, by their intention, associate themselves with the priest by their personal presence before the Altar and in the Sacrifice itself by their Faith and devotion.”**

It must be remembered, that the priest saying the Mass in Latin is speaking to God and not to the congregation.

“If I don’t understand, I don’t pray” — the equivalent of St. Thomas the Apostle: “Unless I see, I will not believe”<sup>6</sup>, the inverse of the Augustinian philosophy — “believe in order to understand”. The essential thing is not to understand but to believe, and so a change from Latin to the vernacular was not called for on the grounds of intelligibility.

Another canard circulated by the clerical innovators is that Latin is divisive, and so must go. They said that Latin formed a “diaphragm” between the priest “presiding over the assembly” and the assembled; a dividing line making for distinctions between a privileged lettered class and an unlettered, unprivileged one of averagely educated people understanding only the common language.

But is Latin really divisive? On the contrary, it has always been a unifying influence in the Church which has always tried to unite the faithful through a uniform liturgy; and the fundamental reason why she has succeeded has been the use of a single universal language — Latin. The Roman Mass in the Latin tongue was the most splendid and eloquent manifestation and demonstration of the world unity of the Catholic faith.

With the banishment of Latin, unity has fled. Unity of language has vanished, unity of hearts has disappeared, even between people of one and the same parish, region, community, family. Everywhere, unity has given way to acrimonious discussion, disagreement, division and even violence.

The *Bible* teaches the significance of the unity of language as regards the practical effects of union. *Genesis* says: “And the earth was of one tongue and of the same speech.” And there was peace. Discord came, and was called ‘Babel’ “because there the language of all the earth was confounded”. And there was war. The Church, one in language in Her universality, and one in Her worship, was thereby always seen by the world’s peoples — today more than ever war-weary, more than ever hankering for union and peace — as the anti-Babel. The cementing unity possessed by Her, aspired to by all, was always recognizable to all from Her language — a marvelous bond of unity among peoples.

The curse of Babel is more divisive than color, class, creed or nationality. Varieties of languages is a punishment; a consequence of sin; it was inflicted by God that the human race might be dispersed over the face of the earth. The Holy Church, the Immaculate Spouse of Christ, has been established for the express purpose of destroying sin and uniting all mankind; consequently, She must everywhere speak the same language.

It is sheer deliberate blindness not to see in this thoroughly universal language of Rome the universal Church’s genuine language. It is treason to replace it with the Babel of tongues that does nothing but divide and oppose the nations of the world. For, whether one likes it or not, Latin has all the marks of being the predestined Catholic language.

With Latin, prophetically, Virgil made the Sybil say: “*Ait. Deus! Ecce Deus*” — behold God (*Aeneid*, VI, 46). And, amid the Jewish shouts and accusations in Jerusalem, was it not Latin alone that proclaimed and defended Jesus through the mouth of an innocent Roman woman, Claudia Procula, wife of Pontius Pilate?: “*Nihil tibi et iusto illi*” (Have nothing to do with this just man).

And was it not in Latin that Pilate said “*Ego nullam invenio - - - in eo causam*” (I find no guilt in Him). Was not Latin the language in which a Roman centurion first uttered the Catholic Holy Communion formula: “*Domine non sum dignus...*

? (Lord, I am not worthy), and in which another Roman centurion at the Crucifixion declared: “*Veri filius dei erat iste*” (Truly this was the Son of God).

And was it not in Latin that St. Peter, the first Vicar of Christ (and a Galilean) celebrated his first Mass in Rome? And it is this Latin, sacred over, and hallowed by, the centuries, that has been banished from the liturgy and replaced by the vulgar, profane vernaculars of the world!

A final argument for the retention of Latin is that, being a “dead” language, it is unchangeable. And because for unchangeable dogmas is required an unchangeable language which should guarantee from all alteration every formula for those dogmas, Latin is indubitably the language of the Church. Besides the great changes that fundamentally alter the living languages, there are many others which appear only slightly important but are really very important, indeed. Thus everyday usage alters the sense of words and often debases it by licentiousness.

A classical example of total vocabulary-shift in English is King James II’s observation on Sir Christopher Wren’s new *St. Paul’s Cathedral*: “It is at the same time amusing, awful and artificial” — In present day parlance, “pleasing, venerable and done with art.” If this is what can happen to the English language — now the most widely used of any — in less than three comparatively slow moving centuries, what may not occur in two or three fast-moving decades in today’s increasingly technical and one world?

The enemies of the Catholic Church have always made the use of Latin a subject of bitter reproach to Her. They are conscious that the immobility of this cuirass marvelously preserves from all alteration those ancient Christian traditions whose testimony crushes them. Error willingly speaks a variable and changing language.

If the “bishops” of India and of the world have a genuine desire to restore unity in the Church (at least in the false Church of Vatican II), let them revert to Latin in the liturgy, even though this will not confer validity on the *Novus Bogus* (Dis-Ordo), which is invalid, even when said in Latin.

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