

## The Use of Latin in the Roman Rite: 1st Saturday Morning Mass

Dear St. Peter Parishioners,

Beginning on March 4, 2023, St. Peter Parish will celebrate its monthly “First Saturday” *Novus Ordo* Mass in Latin. Please find the rationale for this periodic celebration of the *Novus Ordo* Mass in Latin below:

When Catholics today hear about Masses celebrated in Latin, they usually assume this refers to what is now called the ‘Extraordinary Form’ of the Roman Rite: the ancient liturgy, celebrated completely in Latin, which was used with little variation for many centuries prior to the reforms of Vatican Council II.

Relatively few Catholics, however, are aware that the ‘ordinary form’ of the Roman-Rite Mass – that is, the revised, post-conciliar liturgy now celebrated in the vernacular – can also be celebrated mainly in Latin and with other more traditional options. This is a part of a healthy liturgical pluralism that has deep roots in the traditions of our worldwide Church. As well as incorporating seventeen different Eastern rites, each with its own forms of worship, Catholicism has traditionally included quite a few varieties of the Latin liturgy.


But can the new Mass be offered using Latin? Indeed, it can. On hearing this, some Catholics assume it must be a “hybrid” liturgy: an incongruous mixing-up of the ordinary and extraordinary forms. Not so. On the contrary, the new rite (a.k.a. the *Novus Ordo*) celebrated mainly in Latin could be described as the most “thoroughbred” form of the post-Vatican-II Mass. The Missal used is the latest Latin “editio typica”, the original and most authoritative text for the modern liturgy. Published at the Vatican, it’s not only used quite often by the post-conciliar popes but is also the basis for the world’s different vernacular translations.

Many Catholics are surprised to learn that the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal allows for certain traditional options that are now seldom seen in the U.S. But the ordinary form of the Mass, as celebrated with these options is actually very close to the style of worship contemplated by the Fathers of Vatican II when they promulgated the Constitution on the Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) in 1963. They decreed, that Latin was to continue as our main liturgical language (SC #36). *Sacrosanctum Concilium* also insists that the Church’s great treasury of sacred music, especially Gregorian chant, should be not only retained but given “pride of place” (SC #116).

The celebration of the novus ordo in Latin is very much in line with Benedict XVI's well-known call for a "hermeneutic of continuity" with respect to Vatican II. This meant that he, like all the other post-Vatican II popes, insisted that the Council's teachings and directives are to be understood, explained and implemented in a way that shows forth their harmony and unity with the Church's great bi-millennial heritage of doctrine and worship.

Along with all other 'ordinary form' Eucharistic celebrations, the Latin novus ordo includes the three main reforms deriving from Vatican II. First, there is the much greater selection of Scripture readings now provided in the multi-volume (English) Lectionary. Another is the encouragement of more active participation by the faithful. So, as in other parishes, lay readers at St. Peter proclaim the Scriptures, and worshippers learn to sing and recite the essential Latin chants, hymns and responses, as SC urges (#54). The third main conciliar reform has been a greater use of the vernacular while also retaining Latin. Accordingly, we use English for the Scripture readings and Responsorial Psalm (chanted), the Prayers of the Faithful, and one or two congregational hymns, while English translations are provided (in the pews) for everything recited or chanted in Latin.

The celebration of the novus ordo in Latin represents a valuable witness to the essential continuity of the Roman liturgy that stretches back 1,500 years while incorporating the post-conciliar reforms now constituting the 'ordinary form' of this venerable rite. We invite you to join us at 8:30AM Mass on 'First Saturdays' at St. Peter to witness another instance of how Holy Mother Church can bring forth from her storeroom treasures both new and old (*Mt. 13: 52*).

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Ben". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline.