

## Why are we singing in Latin???

There are about 20 sets of Mass parts in Latin that were used commonly before the Mass was translated into the vernacular. The Sanctus and Agnus Dei that we are currently singing are from Mass XVIII, commonly used as Requiem Masses (funerals). The somberness and simplicity of this setting pairs well with the penitential season of Lent. Many of the other settings have more joyful or uplifting qualities, so we shouldn't just associate singing in Latin with penance!

Despite Latin being a dead language, the Catholic Church has retained it to this day as the official language of the Holy See and the Roman Rite. All liturgical documents, rites of the Church, and even official statements given by the Vatican are **first** published in Latin, and **then** translated into other languages for use throughout the world.

So, why do **we** sing in Latin? It's a layered answer. Given what I've already said, singing in Latin connects us to the Universal Church on a deeper level. It also tips a hat to our heritage of four centuries of praying the Mass in Latin – a tradition many “pre-Vatican II Catholics” remember. Now, you're right in assuming that many parishes dropped the use of Latin after Vatican II. The Vatican II documents were interpreted and implemented differently in the United States than in other countries. While we saw an attitude of “out with the old, in with the new” here in the US, many other countries understood that one of the council's goals was to **retain** the rich heritage of the Church, including the way churches were designed and decorated, the use of Latin, and so on. Think of our own St. Clare church building that combines many ancient elements of architecture and symbolism along with the use of contemporary building materials and styles. The result of

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this combination of “old and new” is the magnificent space that we pray in each week.

Another favorite example of mine is when one of my friends was visiting France. She attended Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Paris (Notre Dame de Paris) and felt a sense of familiarity and comfort when they started playing and singing Latin Mass parts that she knew from singing in her parish in the United States. She was able to sing and pray at Mass in a foreign land. What a great example of the universality of the Catholic Church **surpassing** national language barriers!

Now, if you're not a seasoned world traveler, maybe you've seen some of the Papal liturgies on TV. Pay attention next time to the music; I bet you'll recognize some of the Mass parts, or maybe just the Latin text that the choir is singing. And hopefully that will bring a smile to your face because you'll know exactly what's going on. We must never forget that while borders and oceans may separate us, the Church is one body united with Christ.

Let us continue to pray for unity in the Church!

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