

## Introduction

Salvete, Discipuli, and welcome to our 1<sup>st</sup> of 6 Intensive Latin classes here at St. Joseph's Parish! It is a great honor and joy for me to be able to share our Latin heritage and birthright with you as fellow Catholics!

Please note that in the title of our class it is mentioned this is an intensive study of Latin and thus we cannot delve too deeply into any one subject regarding our study of Latin in these 6 weeks. The height and breadth of Latin, its origin, prominence and importance in the culture of both the Church and society is immense and would certainly be able to fill an entire semester course on the subject. In light of this, it is my hope that this introductory class will be enough to not only help you understand the importance of Latin in your life, both as a Catholic and as a patriot of our great country, but that it will also inspire you to delve more deeply into the study of this great language which, by its nature, is ready and able to assist you in your journey to Heaven.

## Latin Conceptions and Misconceptions

Let's first begin our class with what we already know, or at least presume, about the Latin language:

- began in Italy, near Rome
- irrelevant
- difficult to learn
- dead, no one uses any more
- sacred
- mother language
- literary/cultural resource
- English vocabulary and derivatives
- important in fields of medicine and law
- increases test scores
- can assist with brain injury

## History of Latin

Latin, one of several Italic families of Indo-European languages, was established in Latium (from *Latus*, meaning "wide"), a small western-central region of the Italian peninsula, in the southern portion of modern-day Lazio, the Italian region of Rome. In this area lived a tribe of people known as "the Latins." There isn't much in the way of historical records to state with authority when Latium actually came to exist, but historians give the approximation of somewhere between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC. At this time, there were also other Indo-European people and languages present in this area, including the Etruscans, who exerted a strong cultural and political influence on Latium beginning from about the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC and onward. Regardless of this great influence, the Latins felt compromised by the Etruscans and eventually formed the Latin League, a coalition of other Latin city-states, to prevent further Etruscan expansion and dominance. Eventually, Rome became a large and successful military power in the region, and it is to Rome that Latin owes her prominence. Before Rome's advancement, Latin was the least prevalent language on the Italian peninsula.

As Roman conquests began and continued for centuries, the Latin language increased in prominence and use primarily by the establishment of Latin as the official language to be used in the Roman military to promote unity and camaraderie. In his book, *Ad Infinitum: A Biography of Latin*, Dr. Ostler identifies three reasons why Latin succeeded where Etruscan and Oscan ultimately failed, namely that Latin: "... was a farmers' language, a soldiers' language, and a city language." Latin's prominence grew throughout the Italian peninsula with every Roman conquest. Rather than destroying the fields of their enemies, Rome settled retired soldiers on the fields of those they conquered. As these now Latin farmers were speaking Latin throughout the peninsula, Latin soon became regarded as a language of prestige. Another Roman policy was to require the young men they seized to enlist in the well-regulated Roman army, where it would become necessary for them to learn Latin. After returning from their military life and exhibitions, these young soldiers would bring back their newly acquired speech to their families and/or to their place of retirement.<sup>1</sup> With Latin being spoken in Rome and in the cities that the Romans were establishing in conquered territories, Latin acquired her glory. Over time, as the conquered lands developed their own dialects of Latin, which resulted in the development of over 26 Romance languages between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD.

## Importance of Latin in Academia and in the Study of Our English Language

Wow! That's amazing and fantastic that a language, having once been so insignificant, has had so much influence in the Western world and for so long! But, what does that have to do with us, today? We rarely hear of Latin... no one speaks it any more and we don't even use Latin in writing. It has not only disappeared from our schools, it has also, for the most part, sadly disappeared from our life as Catholics. Once used in all of our Liturgies and scholastic institutions throughout the world, it's almost as if Latin has been laid to rest, only to be looked upon with great memory and respect for all she gave us as our alma mater (nourishing mother in Latin). "Mother has passed now and we must move on," our culture would seem to say, right? or Wrong?!

Although Latin has definitely taken a more laid back role in our lives as Catholics and patriots, one cannot look past how she still continues to nourish us today as a living, though quiet, wise mother! We mentioned earlier in our talk that Latin gave birth to more than 26 Romance languages! That means that over 900,000,000 people currently speak a form of Latin in our current day! Our own English is derived from Anglo-Saxon, a sister (cognate) language to Latin, which, in its infancy, had to borrow words from Latin. Once St. Jerome's Latin Vulgate was accepted and promulgated in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Latin entered the language as a result of St Augustine, who had been sent by Pope Gregory to Christianize the Angles. Unfortunately, Anglo-Saxon was suppressed at the victory of William the Conqueror in 1066, and it became the speech of humble daily life, and was no longer a literary language. Nevertheless, by the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, after the Normans had a chance to finally amalgamate with the English natives, Anglo Saxon reasserted herself. Because she was so impoverished over the past hundreds of years, however, Anglo Saxon had to borrow words from Latin... and she did so abundantly!

Consequently, our own English language contains thousands of Latin cognates and derivatives.

<b>Latin</b>	<b>English Derivative</b>	<b>English Meaning</b>
• Mater	maternal	mother
• frater	fraternity	brother
• duo	dual, duet	two
• dens (dent)	dental	tooth
• pes (ped)	pedal, pediatric	foot
• cors (cord)	cordial	heart
• fero	fertile	to bear

\*Note bene:\* nouns of the 3<sup>rd</sup> declension (**dens**, **dentis**) have different genitive endings (than their nominative endings) which form the root of the noun. Thus, you see in dens, pes, and cors that the genitive form of the root is what is used in the formation of the English derivative. More on this in our third class on September 26<sup>th</sup>!

It is estimated that over 80% of our words are derived or directly evolved from Latin (20% indirectly from French, also a derivative of Latin)! Here you see the richness of our vocabulary! And, if you continue to study Latin, you will become more keenly aware of how limited our English would be without this Latin influence!

Because Latin is so influential in our vocabulary, it is easy to see how the study of this immense and rich language would increase test scores! Anyone who has studied Latin naturally has a larger vocabulary and it has been proven that Latin students consistently outperform their peers in language and vocabulary sections on standardized tests. It has even reached the point that admissions officers will favor students who have taken Latin due to this phenomenon. It is not unremarkable that much of the resurgence in classical education is taking place in low-income and minority neighborhoods in order to boost SAT scores, which gives students a better chance of being accepted into a university.

## Latin's Ability to Help Improve Brain Function

Now, some say that Latin is difficult! And, many would agree, not because they have tried to learn it but simply because it's "ancient" and dead! "It must be dead for a reason" they say! However, it is precisely this difficulty that makes Latin able to increase both gray AND white matter in the brain! As a review, gray matter is found everywhere in the brain, including those areas responsible for

- attention
- memory
- emotions
- motor skills

- language

and white matter in the brain is often responsible for

- stronger problem-solving
- creative thinking skills
- improved vocabulary
- greater reading comprehension
- increased ability to multitask

Scientific experiments have shown that the learning of a new language not only encourages the growth of the brain's gray matter, but it also forms new synapses, forcing neuroplasticity. And, while any language can achieve these results, because of Latin's rubrics and rigidity, it has the potential to form new brain matter and increasing neuropathways in the brain more quickly. Latin requires memory, logical reasoning and language skills, all of which are primarily exercised in the left inferior parietal cortex of the brain, the center responsible for the learning of language, math and logical reasoning. Studying a language, such as Latin, encourages the growth of this cortex, which has been shown to become larger than that of a person who knows only one language. Because Latin is so effective at building new neuropathways in the brain, it can greatly impact the healing of an injured brain!

### Is Latin Really Dead?

Can a language that is "dead" be so affirming to the human person and to his experience as Latin is?! What exactly do people mean when they say that Latin is a "dead" language and why do we still pine after it if it is really extinct? Because so many of our classical literary works were written in Latin and are experiencing a "come back" in modern education, Latin's influence is still great even though it has been diminished in our Faith and institutions in the last 50 or more years. So, obviously, dead, in this sense, cannot mean "no longer relevant." Perhaps we should first ask what we mean by a "living" language.

Living languages are defined as those which are still used in spoken conversation and continue to evolve in meaning. Although Latin has been canceled in our current culture, we find that she still experiences a prominence in everyday usage, and moreso than any other language. Science and medical terminologies are the most obvious (have you heard of **coronavirus?**), but Latin sayings and terms have embedded themselves into our everyday vernacular as well. When we tell the time, we indicate morning or evening with a.m. or p.m.—short-form for *ante meridiem* (i.e., "before midday") and *post meridiem* (i.e., "after midday"), respectively. We see or hear such terms as *non sequitur* (i.e., "it does not follow"), *antebellum* (i.e., "before the war"), *semper fidelis* (i.e., "always faithful"), *ad nauseum* (i.e., "to the point of nausea"), i.e. (*id est*, "that is"), etc. (i.e., "and so on"). We see the same in the field of law and government. We still use legal terminology such as *quid pro quo* (something for something), *a priori* (from what was before), *bona fide* (in good faith), *contra* (to the contrary). Even today, Latin continues to be a source of new words, particularly for the scientist and ad writers who invent product names.... many of which are derived directly from Latin! Despite being declared dead, Latin seems to still be very much alive!

Regardless of the fact that Latin is still spoken by way of these idioms, it is understood that it is no longer used as a spoken form of communication, and thus the meaning of its words are no longer evolving or changing. Many, such as modern Catholics, scholars and teachers, posit that this attribute renders Latin useless in our church and educational institutions. But, quite the contrary is true! It is actually this very attribute which makes Latin so valuable, especially to Holy Mother Church.

Here at last we arrive at the most distinctive, and for Catholics, the most important benefit of Latin. Latin is not only an ancient language, it is a sacred language, worthy of communication with the Divine.

### Latin as a Sacred Language

What do we mean by a sacred language and how do we distinguish it from other languages? Before answering that question, we should note that the phenomenon of sacred language is found in most, if not all, religions. The Greeks used ancient Greek in their oracles, the Romans used ancient prayers, the Jews used the Old Hebraic, their readings were from the Aramaic and their prayers were recited in Hebrew. The Orthodox Greeks celebrate their liturgy in ancient Greek, the Russians in Church Slavonic and Anglican services use Elizabethan English, all of which are ancient languages no longer used as a common tongue. Sacred Languages existed in numerous cultures and in almost all epochs of history... and they continue to exist as an expression of a fundamental human need of the experience of

something supernatural, divine, transcendent and wholly other to which man seeks to respond by using a language which differentiates itself from his everyday experience and speech.

### **Characteristics of Sacred Language**

So, what then, are the characteristics of a Sacred Language? For a language to be sacred, it must have the following qualities:

- it cannot be a colloquial/common language (this makes the “complete otherness” of the divine felt);
- it must have a conservative tendency to favor antiquated expressions and adhere to certain speech forms from centuries ago, as is well-suited for the worship of an eternal and unchanging God;
- it must retain the use of foreign words that evoke religious associations (alleluia, Sabaoth, hosanna, amen, etc...)
- it must have syntactic and phonetic stylizations (parallelisms, alliterations, rhymes, rhythmic sentence endings) that clearly structure the train of thought, are memorable and allow for easy recollection and which strive for tonal beauty.

Examining these criteria, it almost seems as if a sacred language would create a language barrier. Consider the phenomena that, for most ancient religions, the prayer of the priest was so antiquated, it was often unintelligible to the priest, himself, as well as to those praying with him. Knowing what we know about our Catholic Faith and how God made us to have a relationship with Him, why does the Church use an unintelligible language for religious celebrations which are supposed to draw us together? How can we draw closer to the Divine if we don't even know what we are saying? Wouldn't an unintelligible language prevent a relationship from being formed between he who prays and He Who is adored?

### **Sacred Language Draws Man to God**

Far from this observation, we find that sacred languages call to mind that religion has “something else” to say to man. In addition, using a sacred language, rather than the vernacular/colloquial everyday language, unites both man and God together more intimately. By presenting to the Divine a prayer or form of communication which is just and fitting to Him, it also evokes within ourselves a reverence for Him, to Whom we wish to draw near.

Imagine, in an earthly setting, the effect it might have, in both an average citizen and in a dignitary, when the former approaches the latter in jeans and a torn t-shirt, speaking in modern slang, such as “Hey, bruh, whaz up?” What would each of these say about how the two people viewed themselves and each other? How would the dignitary act or feel about the citizen's lackadaisical demeanor, character and external qualities? Would he or she feel drawn to the citizen? Desire a relationship with him? Would he/she feel compelled to assist the citizen in a request that he, himself, did not seem to care enough about in order to dress or act more appropriately? Engaging in a relationship necessitates not only that we have an appreciation or reverence that is appropriate and fitting for the person to whom we desire to draw near; but it also necessitates that we employ a language that is fitting to express our feelings about the same.

Of course, God, in His mercy, would not scorn a humble and contrite heart, no matter the language he uses; but are we giving Our Lord the BEST we can offer Him in our prayers when we speak in ordinary, colloquial language when we know of Holy Mother Church's preference to use Latin as a sacred language in her liturgical and devotional life? We know from the two sacrifices of Cain and Abel that the internal expression of our hearts is important in our prayer life and how we offer God thanksgiving, adoration, contrition and petition. Cain's sacrifice was not rejected because God didn't like fruits and vegetables. It was rejected because Cain did not give God the best that he had. As we will soon discover, Latin, as a sacred language, not only serves as a bridge between the profane world and the transcendent God, but it also lifts man up to the Divine, preventing him from dragging the Divine down to his own level. In essence, sacred language actually draws man more closely to his Redeemer by creating an atmosphere that both reflects and evokes a certain religious attitude, worthy of the Divine and in the heart of the one who prays.

### **The Development of Ecclesiastical Latin**

Now, many believe that Latin, being the most prominent language at the time of Christ, was the same as that which became the sacred language of the Church. However, we know from historical writings that the Church had to create her own Latin, several hundreds of years later. The reasons for this are because vulgar Latin of the uneducated was quite fragmented (without a number of parts of speech) and it was quite deficient in the vocabulary needed to express

the terms of the Christian Faith. It was partly for this reason that the Liturgy was still prayed in apostolic Greek, at least the Canon of the Mass, for two centuries. There were simply no Latin words to express the theology or proper understanding of the Greek expressions of Faith at the time.

Because the number of people speaking vulgar Latin continued to grow throughout the world, however, there were strides taken to translate the Scriptures into Latin from both the Greek and Aramaic. The first of those strides were composed in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by Tertullian, an enthusiastic convert to the Christian Faith, who is credited with the augmentation of ecclesiastical Latin. It is important to note that these texts were not simply a colloquial element within Divine Liturgy. They possessed a sacred stylization, a strong biblical complexion thru a close following of the scriptural forms of speech and a tonal beauty. In this way, Latin acquired a peculiarly foreign style, soon felt to be transcendent and holy... worthy of the Divine. Thus, by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, Ecclesiastical Latin contained all 4 characteristics of sacred language, causing it to eventually find its way into the readings of the Roman Liturgy.

### **Conclusion of Discussion And What to Look Forward to in the Next Class**

We have covered a LOT of information, today, and we will pick up on this in the next class on August 22<sup>nd</sup> when we consider how Latin serves as a suitable official language for Holy Mother Church. We will discover the many different Popes and saints who have demonstrated why Latin is so very important in the life of the Church, her sacraments, liturgy and the exposition of her doctrine.

### **Pronunciation of Latin**

As we begin to delve into the grammar of Latin, let's first take note of her pronunciation. The great thing about Ecclesiastical Latin is that there is only ONE sound for each letter of the alphabet, with only a few exceptions, unlike English which often has many different sounds for the letters of the alphabet.

In Classical Latin and in English, we note that each vowel has at least two sounds, if not more.

In Ecclesiastical Latin, however, each vowel only has ONE sound.

A = ah as in father

E = ay as in day

I = ee as in beet

O = o as in boat

U = oo as in boot

At this time, we concluded class by examining and pronouncing the new vocabulary handed out, which should be studied for our next class.

### **On August 22, 2021, Latin class will consist of the following:**

- Briefly discuss the importance of Latin from the heart and mind of Holy Mother Church
- Review our vocabulary and pronunciation
- Begin learning the Gloria and Our Father in Latin with proper pronunciation
- Begin our study of Latin verbs

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me either by phone, text or email at the following:

- Kathy Williams
- [stjeromestutoring@gmail.com](mailto:stjeromestutoring@gmail.com)
- 419-346-4959

Also, if you happened to miss our first class in July, you are more than welcome to join us at the second class. Simply read through the aforementioned material and study your vocabulary and its pronunciation (to the best of your ability) and you will be ready to attend our second class!

Happy studying! I am looking forward to seeing everyone, again, on August 22<sup>nd</sup>! Vale!!!