

## HOW TO PRAY IN LATIN:

### AN EASY AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD INSTRUCTION FOR BEGINNERS

#### Latin: The Language of the Universal Church

Latin is the language of the one, holy, universal (*catholic*) and apostolic Church. It has been consecrated as sacred and infused with divine power, and it remains our unifying language and tradition shared with the Saints.

Great saints and popes have professed Latin as God's merciful remedy to the punishment wrought upon man for the Tower of Babel: it is the one common – and thus unifying and edifying – language of the Catholic Church; both for Her ministers and Her faithful, in liturgy, prayer, sacred music, dogma, canons and so forth. [1]

Latin is rich in beauty, mathematical in logic and scientific in precision; making it vivid, exacting and immutable. It is a brief and concise language with an economic vocabulary that does not employ unnecessary words and this, coupled with its acute precision in meaning, subject and tense mitigates the opportunity for ambiguity. The English rendering of Latin text often requires the use of additional words to capture the full meaning and intention. [2]

In the Apostolic Constitution *Veterum Sapientia* (1962), Pope John XXIII, quoting his predecessors Pius XI and Pius XII, declared that the “Latin language must be esteemed a treasure of incomparable worth” and characterised the language's nobility as of a “concise, varied and harmonious style, full of majesty and dignity making for singular clarity and impressiveness of expression.” [3]

This solemn document gave very specific instructions as to the continued primacy of Latin within the Church and categorically stated “We [are] impelled by the weightiest of reasons ... [and] are fully determined to restore this language to its position of honor, and to do all We can to promote its study and use. The employment of Latin has recently been contested in many quarters ... We have therefore decided to issue the timely directive ... to ensure that the ancient and uninterrupted use of Latin be maintained and, where necessary, restored.” [4]

Latin is an ‘anointed’ (*holy*) language, having being nailed to the Cross with our Lord (*cf. St. John 19:19-20*) and is therefore is a *relic* of the Passion. Prayers offered in Latin are imbued with enhanced potency and efficacy, rendering them more likely to be *heard* by God; that is, regarded as meritorious and thus favoured. [5] God appreciates the effort made and, so, prayerful supplications accompanied by the *Pater noster* – *Ave Maria* – *Gloria Patri* – all things being equal, *ipso facto*, are immediately more laudable in the sight of the Almighty.

Exorcists attest that the devil hates Latin and that prayers offered in such are of a weaponised potency. [6] Bishop Andrea Gemma, one of the Church's more prominent exorcists of modern times, stated that “demons have a horror of [the Latin] language” and that “the devil is happy with the near disappearance of Latin.” [7] Servant of God Dom Prosper Guéranger wrote that:

*Hatred for the Latin language is inborn in the heart of all the enemies of Rome. They recognise it as the bond of Catholics throughout the universe, as the arsenal of orthodoxy against all the subtleties of the sectarian spirit... it is a master blow of Protestantism to have declared war on the sacred language. If it should ever succeed in destroying it, it would be well on the way to victory.* [8]

One does not need to be fluent in or even familiar with Latin in order to pray in it and the Supreme Pontiffs have long recommended that Catholics learn the ‘core’ prayers of the Faith in this holy language, regarding it as highly advantageous so to do. [9] The ‘stan-

dard’ Rosary comprises 74 individual prayers and if one prays the *Hail Mary* as an *Ave Maria* then immediately over seventy per-cent of these, by number, are in Latin. By further reciting the *Glory be as Gloria Patri*, this swells to eighty per-cent. These prayers are short and simple and can be learnt in gradual steps: learn and pray the ‘easy’ verses first, adding as one goes, the more familiar one becomes. For example:

“*Pater noster, Qui es in caelis*, hallowed be Thy Name ..  
.. And deliver us not into temptation, *sed libera nos a malo.*”

“*Ave Maria, gratia plena*, the Lord is with thee ..  
.. *Sancta Maria, Mater Dei*, pray for us sinners ..”

“*Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto*. As it was in the beginning ..”

English uses the Latin alphabet and many of our words find their origin in the language, however the pronunciation of Latin sounds is different and distinct (even alien) to the English ear, as anyone who has attended Holy Mass (the *Vetus Ordo*) can attest, and at first this can be confounding and even discouraging. Do not be over-wrought by this. With a little effort familiarity hastens, and this pamphlet is cobbled together by one such who has encountered this learning curve and it is thus specifically authored to assist the novice in a manner in which he himself wishes had been available to him. Your correspondent does not speak Latin – barely a word of it – though has been praying in this solemn language for years, and in these modest pages are the step-by-step instructions, tips & tricks of how to do like-wise, in a hopefully straight-forward manner and with a view of avoiding error, angst and bad habit.

#### Latin: A brief History

Greek and Latin derive from the ancient (and lost) ‘Indo-European’ or ‘Aryan’ language; they are its two ‘daughters’ and diverged separately, both from the mother language itself and from one another.

Latin spread through the frequently warring Italian regions over time as the Latins (*i.e.* the Romans, from Latium) gained ascendancy over other tribes and imposed language and culture. In the third century B.C. a scholarly Greek prisoner of war, Livius Andronicus, was brought to Rome and engaged as a tutor to the city's leading families and his literary work, typically the translation of Greek plays, effected a significant refinement of the Latin language, which had hitherto been heavy, cumbersome and uncouth and which he vitalised with Greek polish, limber and sophistication. At that time the well-heeled citizenry of Rome spoke Greek and Andronicus was the first to display a scholarly interest in and an authentic affection for Latin, recognising its potential and beauty. [10] His efforts sparked a resurgence, culminating in the literary ‘golden age’ of c. 80 B.C. - 14 A.D.

Over time two distinct versions of Latin developed: ‘*urbánus*’ (the literary strain of the well-educated elites in the cities, and which is closest to what is regarded as ‘Classical’ Latin) and ‘*vulgáris*’ (that spoken by the common towns-folk) and this latter variety is the root of the ‘Romance’ languages such as Italian, French, Spanish and Portuguese. Regional dialects and the passage of time account for many of the variances between these related languages. [11]

Usage of the literary *urbánus* Latin ultimately waned back to Greek and the early Church initially followed suit; however, as the masses still spoke the common *vulgáris*, the Church, wishing to reach the people, pivoted from Greek and embraced the common *vulgáris* Latin. In so doing She refined and infused it with many of the literary strain's more polished traits, and also borrowed from its more extensive vocabulary. And so, in a sense, the Church did to the common *vulgáris* strain what Livius Andronicus did to Latin centuries earlier: invigorated and refined it. Thus, Ecclesiastical or Church Latin came into ex-

istence and this occurred in Roman Africa. Tertullian of Carthage, who converted to Christianity in 197 A.D., was the principal architect and proponent of early Ecclesiastical Latin and is regarded as the 'Father of Latin Christianity'. [12]

And so when secular aficionados of Classical 'Literary' Latin, in their sundry remonstrations against Ecclesiastical Latin, repine that '*Latin was never pronounced like that*', etc., etc., their broad objections are not implausible as Church and Literary Latin are not the same creature.

As Latin is no longer in common usage the language is in effect safe-guarded from profane corruption and remains reserved for the worship of the Almighty; and so therefore, by the grace of God and by way of example, '*gaudi*' still means joy and gladness and remains free of any connotation regarding the sin that cries out to heaven for vengeance.

In its pronunciation Ecclesiastical Latin ties itself to the spoken norms and hallmarks of modern Italian (e.g. long vowels are stressed, 'h' is essentially treated as silent, and 'ti' and 'c' are often-times given the Italian 'tse' and 'ch' accentuation) and, whilst this very much vexes Marxist academe, this ingenious (and perhaps Divinely inspired) practice affords the otherwise 'dead' language with a living and spoken standard, thereby providing an easy and accessible bench-mark for correct pronunciation. Therefore, whether one hails from Rhode Island, Reykjavik or Rhodesia, by simply listening to an Italian gentleman's protestations over this or that, one will quickly learn how Latin is spoken.

#### Latin: At First Glance

- The 'English' alphabet is the Latin alphabet (however there is no 'W');
- In ancient times, there was no 'J' or 'U' in Latin ('I' and 'V' were used instead). These have been blended into modern Church Latin, however 'J' is still pronounced as an 'I' and some texts still use 'I' instead of 'J'. Jesus was originally written 'Iesvs' and pronounced '*Ieh•suzs*';
- Latin has 6 tenses, 4 conjugations (verb 'categories') and 5 declensions (noun 'patterns'), all of which are expressed at the end of the word, joined to the root (i.e. they are suffixed to the end of the root word as an *inflection*). Thus '*spiritui*' and '*spiritus*' both mean '*spirit*', though in different contexts;
- The practical point of this for the novice is that the end of the word, the inflection, determines context and tense;
- And further, that this inflection can significantly alter a word's meaning & application;
- Latin does not use *definite* or *indefinite articles* (so, no '*the*', '*a*' or '*an*') and so, for example, '*rex*' can mean '*king*', '*a king*' or '*the king*';
- '*In*' = '*in*' (and also '*on*') and '*et*' = '*and*' (and is the origin of the English word '*etcetera*');
- In contrast to English, adverbs & adjectives typically follow rather than precede the word which they describe, and syntax is only loosely governed. This is made possible by the language's inflected nature which specifies, with precision, context and relationship.
- Indeed, Latin has a largely 'free' word order and, often-times, the most important words, those which are being emphasised, will appear either at the start of or at the end of the sentence. A contrasting word may also be placed along-side the important word, thereby imbuing a sense of disparity and thus emphasis. [13]

#### Latin: Essential Pronunciation Rules

- Church Latin follows the same pronunciation norms as modern Italian and is thus spoken with a 'stress' accent, giving emphasis to a word's syllable which contains the long vowel;
- Every word has one (and only one) long vowel;

- There are no silent letters ('h' notwithstanding, discussed later) and so therefore every letter, vowel or consonant, is pronounced. Importantly, Latin is a language of 'joined sounds', and every sound, on a letter-by-letter and syllable-by-syllable basis, is spoken. In contrast to English individual letter sounds are not blended or amalgamated. For example: '*tuum*' (*yours*) is pronounced '*too-um*' (not '*toom*'), with the syllables distinctly articulated;
- The concept of 'long' and 'short' vowels is very simple, much more so than in English:
  - ▶ **Long Vowels:** the sound is held and emphasised thereby giving dominant accent, and these are often-times indicated by the macron symbol ( ¯ ).
  - ▶ **Short Vowels:** all other vowels, which are pronounced as normal.
- If a word has ONLY ONE OR TWO vowels, the FIRST vowel is ALWAYS LONG. So, for example:
  - '*Áve*' (*Hail*) is pronounced '*AH-veh*' with a long 'A' and a short 'e';
  - '*Tuum*' (*yours*) is pronounced '*TU-um*' (or '*TOO-um*') where the first 'u' is long and the second is short;
- When there are three or more vowels there are no set rules and the designated long vowel will vary from word to word. As a very loose guide — and do not be vexed by this as it is not important for the beginner to be sensible to such a guideline — if a word has THREE OR MORE SYLLABLES, the 2ND OR 3RD LAST SYLLABLE will likely contain the LONG vowel;
- The last vowel of any given word is unlikely to be the long vowel;
- These last points illustrate that stressed long vowels are intended to instill a measure of balance or balast into a word's pronunciation. It doesn't follow that the long vowel will therefore always be in the middle of the word, like a kiel on a yacht, but nevertheless.

#### Pronunciation of Vowels

Latin has the five native vowels 'A', 'E', 'I', 'O' and 'U' all of which have 'long' and 'short' stresses. Added to these are 'Y' (borrowed from Greek) and various diphthongs (simply, 'combined vowels'), the most common being 'AE' (æ), 'OE' (œ) and 'AU', none of which have long or short variations.

Long vowels are denoted by the ' ¯ ' macron symbol, however most texts dispense with their usage, or apply them only for uncommon words (the Latin prayer booklets offered via this web-site indicate the ' ¯ ' wherever possible). Whilst the use of macron symbols is of much utility, immediately conveying the word's stress, their typical omission, whilst unfortunate for the beginner, is not prohibitive to worthy pronunciation if he follows the norms and helps listed below. Keep firm in the mind the inexorable and golden rule: **if a word has only one or two vowels, the first is always long.**

It is worth noting that long vowels are not fixed across varying inflections of the same root word. That is, different tense inflections can and do alter the vowel given long emphasis. For example, note the long stress change from the *first* 'a' in '*Immaculate*' to the *second* 'a' in '*Immaculatam*' (this inflection indicates feminine possession). Do not be even mildly concerned by all this: **one does not need to learn Latin in order to pray — and to pray well — in it.**

As mentioned, Latin can be conceived as a language of 'joined sounds' and in order both to conceptualise and pronounce Latin words, **one must approach each word on a syllable-by-syllable basis**, joining (rather than *blending*) the individual sounds. There are no silent letters in Latin ('h' notwithstanding, see below), and so every individual letter, within each syllable, must be pronounced distinctly, and this can be counter-intuitive to the native English speaker, who will naturally look to amalgamate, conflate or commingle letter

sounds. By way of very simple example to illustrate this principle, here is how some simple English words would be rendered in Latin:

- ‘as’ in Latin would be delivered as ‘AH•s’ (with the ‘a’ having long stress); not ‘AHs’, but rather ‘AH•s’;
- ‘at’, similarly, would be ‘AH•t’;
- ‘in’ (which is a Latin word of same meaning), is correctly spoken as ‘EE•n’;
- ‘is’ would be ‘EE•s’;
- ‘on’ would be ‘OH•n’;
- ‘and’ would be ‘AH•nd’;
- ‘amen’ (a Hebrew word), is rendered as ‘AH-mehn’;
- ‘full’ would be ‘fOOL•l’.

This last example illustrates a further point: **double letters are treated as separate syllables (or pertaining to) and are therefore delivered individually** rather than combined, and so in contrast to English practise. This applies to both vowels and consonants. For example:

- ‘peccatōribus’ (sinners), with the long ‘o’, is delivered ‘pec-cah-tOH-re-bus’;
- ‘castissima’ (most chaste) with the long ‘i’ is delivered ‘kahs-tEEs-se-mah’;
- ‘sanctissime’ (most sacred) with the long ‘i’ is delivered ‘sahnk-tEEs-se-meh’;
- ‘insidiis’ (insidious) with the long third ‘i’ is delivered ‘een-seed-EE-es’ (or if easier to grasp and close enough: ‘ein-seid-EE-eis’).

This syllable-by-syllable (and letter-by-letter therein) approach is paramount, and failing to apply it is most likely the biggest stumbling-block to learning how to pray in Latin, making the process much more irksome and arduous than is otherwise the case, at once retarding pronunciation and progress. This technique is not difficult to apply and one can readily practice it with English words. For example, read the following sentence, syllable-by-syllable (or ‘cluster’), relishing the letter sounds therein:

In•vari•ably, the old•en ways of an•tiqu•ity are bet•ter: pri•ce•less and in•valu•able.

The reader may be quick to re-discover sounds (and clarity) in these common-place words that he had forgotten, or too readily misplaces; and, when applied to Latin, this simple approach will immediately and manifestly assist his pronunciation and thus mitigate his angst & vexation. The mind being quick to wander, some focus is required, though when readily applied this practice is a most useful tool for the novice. If one’s focus wanes, simply refresh it.

As we advance to specific pronunciations, let the reader be sensible to the primacy of vowels and a required accuracy of their sounds. **Armed with authentic vowel sounds and the syllable-by-syllable approach, the beginner is well equipped and will progress quickly.**

This pronunciation guide is for Ecclesiastical Latin when spoken and the norms vary a little from those for sacred music, which are more strictly regimented, being formally codified by Pope St. Pius X. [14]

Vowel	Sound	As in...
Á (long):	‘AH’	fAther or ClAra
A (short):	‘ah’	Clara

Never like Mary, fan or fawn.

Practical Tip: Whether of long or short stress, keep the ‘ah’ sound front and centre in one’s mind. The fairly typical English ‘a’ sound, such as in ‘Mary’, does not exist in Latin and the sooner the

beginner becomes accustomed to this, instinctively rendering ‘a’ as ‘ah’, the very much happier he will be: Maria is pronounced “Mah-rEE-ah”, and not “May-rEE-a”.

É (long):	‘EAh’	fEte or said
E (short):	‘eh’	heh (think ‘Ave’) or head

Practical Tip: treat all ‘e’s as short, pronouncing them as ‘eh’. This is a good habit to apply early on and will foster a more intuitive & authentic pronouncitaion of many words, thereby removing two hurdles, viz: distinguishing between long / short vowel and then remembering the required sound; and secondly, re-inforcing in the mind that the Latin ‘e’ makes a sound closer to an English ‘a’.

If a word has two or more ‘e’s, one of which is the long vowel, try to soften and extend it a little; a good example of this is ‘miserére’ (have mercy), which is pronounced “me-seh-rEAh-reh”.

The fairly typical English ‘e’ sounds, such as in ‘Eric’, ‘Emma’ or ‘Effie’, have no place in Latin.

Í (long):	‘EE’	rEEed or machIne
I (short):	‘e’	pít or chín

Practical Tip: get accustomed, quickly, to the fact that the Latin ‘i’ sounds more like an English ‘e’. Whether long or short, the ‘i’ is a crisp and clean sound and the ‘joined sounds’ of many Latin words pivot from this sharp ‘i’ sound. Not surprisingly, so too does the tongue.

Ó (long):	‘OH’	tOne or pharaOH
O (short):	‘o’	off or not

Practical Tip: there is little harm in always treating ‘O’ as long (which is the practice when sung).

Ú (long):	‘OO’	mOOon
U (short):	‘uy’ or even ‘yue’	pull ulysses

Practical Tip: emphasise and hold the long ‘OO’. For the beginner, render the short simply as ‘uy’ (the typical sound of an English ‘u’). The common suffix or inflection ‘um’ (e.g. in ‘Dóminum’) gives good example.

The more ‘exotic’ short rendering of ‘yue’ will come somewhat naturally, a function of the surrounding letters and their sounds. The beginner should pay this little attention, with possible exception to the first ‘u’ in the word ‘mulíeribus’ (women), which can be tricky to repeat numerous times in short succession and is prominent in the Ave Maria: “..benedicta tu in mulíeribus,..”; it is best pronounced “myue-le-EAH-re-bus”.

Y:	‘Ee’	
Same as a long ‘I’ but just a little softer; Always the same: neither long nor short stress.		
AE (Æ, æ) and OE (Œ, œ):	‘Ay’	may or pray
Similar (though not identical) to a short ‘E’; Always the same: neither long nor short stress.		
AU:	‘Ow’	now or cow

AI, AY, EI, EU  
UI and OU

each vowel is pronounced  
(give more prominence to the first)

Finally, if one encounters the ‘’ diaeresis (*to divide*) symbol above a vowel, this indicates that that vowel is not joined as a diphthong to the other vowel that will be found next to it, and that therefore the two vowels are to be treated as separate syllables. A good example is *Michaël*, pronounced ‘*Mik-ah-ehl*’, rather than ‘*Mik-Ayl*’, which would indeed be the case if there were no ‘’ over the ‘e’ as the ‘ae’ (æ) diphthong would be observed. The same applies to *Raphaël* (but not to *Gabriel*, as ‘ie’ is not a diphthong, and so the vowels are treated separately anyway). Words with ‘’ diaeresis vowels are uncommon, though *Israël* (‘*EEs-rah-ehl*’) and *äer* (*air*, pronounced ‘*AH-ehr*’) are further examples.

### Pronunciation of Consonants

Most consonants are pronounced the same as in English, specifically:

B D E F K L M N P Q V (there is no W)

The rest vary somewhat and the reader should not allow himself to be discouraged by the apparent litany of linguistic rules which follows. The more practised one becomes in the recitation of Latin the easier it becomes to grasp, and so to also to remember and apply these fairly simple norms. With familiarity they become somewhat intuitive.

Letter	When & How	Sound	As in...
C	before E, Æ, Œ, I or Y otherwise it is a hard ‘k’	‘ch’ ‘k’	<u>church</u> <u>kick</u>
CH **	likewise, a hard ‘k’	‘k’	<u>kick</u>
CC	after E, Æ, Œ, I or Y	‘tch’	<u>catch</u>
For example: ‘Ecce’ (behold) is pronounced ‘EAH-tch-eh; otherwise spoken as a double ‘k’.			
G	is typically hard unless before E, Æ, Œ, I or Y in which case it is soft like a ‘j’	‘g’ ‘j’	<u>God</u> , leg gem, gaol
GN	soft & silky	‘ny’	mag <u>num</u> or even can <u>ny</u> on
From the front of the mouth.			
H **	either silent or ‘breathed out’	‘(h)’	<u>h</u> our, or <u>h</u> onour
Somewhat contentious; typically regarded as silent, especially if proceeded by a consonant or <u>not</u> the first letter.			
<u>But</u> there are two important exceptions: ‘mihi’ (to me) and ‘nihil’ (nothing) where it is pronounced as a soft ‘k’, making the pronunciation ‘mEE-kee’ and ‘nEE-keel’.			
J	The Latin ‘j’ makes the same sound as the English ‘y’	‘y’	y <u>e</u> s, y <u>o</u> nder
There was originally no ‘J’ in Latin, instead the letter ‘I’ was used (with a different set of norms). ‘I’ is often still used instead of ‘J’ (e.g. ‘Iesus’, ‘Ioseph’, ‘Ierusalem’).			
PH	the same as in English	‘f’	<u>ph</u> one
Though quite hard.			

QU	the same as in English	‘kw’	<u>qu</u> ack
R	Rs are ‘rolled’	‘rr’	roar, <u>Terry</u>
S	is hard as in: <b>unless</b> placed between 2 vowels in which case it is softer, like:	‘s’ ‘z’	<u>s</u> ong or y <u>e</u> s m <u>i</u> ser <u>y</u> , r <u>i</u> se
The English speaker will instinctually treat any ‘S’ at the end of a word as soft ‘z’ (to denote plural-ity), such as in ‘apples’, or ‘biscuits’; avoid this: it is a hard ‘Song’ sound (unless between two vowels).			
SC	before E, Æ, Œ, I or Y	‘sh’	<u>sh</u> ell
SC	before A, O, U or H	‘sk’	<u>s</u> cale, or <u>s</u> chool
T	is a hard English ‘T’, as in: This applies before all letters (and also at the end of words <u>except</u> when followed by an I + VOWEL; eg: grat <u>ia</u> ).	‘t’	<u>tea</u> , <u>time</u>
TI	makes a ‘tsee’ sound <b>when:</b> before a vowel <b>except:</b> after S, X or T	‘tsee’	‘gra- <u>tsee</u> -a’ rather than ‘gra-tia’
This may seem complicated but it’s actually rather simple as S and X both make ‘s’ type sounds, rendering any subsequent tsee’ sound awkward; likewise with or after a double TT.			
TH **	As H is involved this can be contentious as many insist H is silent, rather than breathed out softly as in ‘hour’	‘t(h)’	<u>t</u> all
Whether rendered simply as ‘T’ or as ‘T(h)’ e.g. ‘Cat(h)olic’ it certainly does <u>not</u> make the English ‘TH’ sound such as in ‘the’.			
X	the hard ‘ks’ sound as in: <b>but</b> softer between 2 vowels	‘ks’ ‘gs’	tack <u>s</u> , tax ex <u>a</u> m
V	same as English though using the W sound is acceptable	‘v’	<u>v</u> ine
Z	the hard ‘ds’ sound as in:	‘dz’	sud <u>s</u>

\*\* Regarding the pronunciation of ‘H’ (and thus ‘CH’ and ‘TH’), one can either regard it as wholly silent, which is the common practice, or render it in the same manner as in ‘hour’, ‘honest’ or ‘honour’ and thus ‘breathe’ it out softly. If this latter approach is to be observed, one might limit this deftly exhaled ‘(h)’ to instances where it serves as the first letter of a word, otherwise treating it as essentially silent and especially when proceeded by a consonant. With regard to ‘CH’ and ‘TH’ specifically, they can be enunciated either totally free of the ‘h’ sound, or as ‘K(h)’ and ‘T(h)’, and this is the habit employed by Your correspondent. In any event! do not deliver ‘h’ with the same gusto it enjoys in ‘happy’, ‘hippo’ ‘honey’ or ‘hostage’. None of this applies to ‘PH’, which gives a hard ‘F’ sound.

N.B. In the words ‘mihi’ (to me) and ‘nihil’ (nothing) the ‘h’ is rendered as a soft ‘k’ sound, which makes the correct pronunciations ‘mEE-kee’ and ‘nEE-keel’ (noting that the first ‘i’s are long and thus stressed). Ancient manuscripts show these words spelt with ‘k’s. [15]

'H' was most certainly pronounced, at least for some time, in the urbane literary strain of Latin. The letter was likely imported from Western Greek and it seems there was some disdain over its usage (or over-usage), as evidenced by an ancient satirical poem by Catullus which concerns a young fellow named Arrius, who over-emphasises his 'h's in vain attempt to appear more Greek (and thus educated), and which concludes, sardonically: "*The Ionian waves, after Arrius had gone there, were now no longer Ionian but 'Hionian'.*" [16]

As outlined above, Church Latin developed from the language's vulgar spoken strain, in which the letter was absent, and attaches itself to the pronunciation norms of modern Italian, which is wholly bereft of the 'h' sound, and so the letter is largely regarded as redundant.

### Latin: Tips, Tricks and Traps

It must be said that a good number of Latin words are very long and possess a multitude of syllables, inter-mingled between a sundry of diverse consonants, and it can most confronting indeed when presented with what appears to be three-quarters of the alphabet, and to then attempt to construct (or to even conceive of) an intelligible pronunciation.

And so remember:

- There are few such troublesome words in the 'core' prayers. Possibly the most rigorous, and certainly in repetition, is '*muliéribus*' (women) – which is prominent in the *Ave Maria* ("*..benedicta tu in muliéribus..*") – and which is best enunciated as "*myue-le-EAH-re-bus*".
- When new, difficult or outrightly incomprehensible words are encountered, stick to the basics: approach the word slowly, syllable-by-syllable (and letter-by-letter), giving focus to the correct letter sounds, particularly for the vowels. Both conceive and verbalise the troublesome word on a very slow and measured basis. If the beginner does this, even if he mangles it in initial recitations, he will discover, happily, that after repeated attempts, it will start to take shape in his mind and on his tongue; and, as pertains more broadly to the prayer or passage itself, that some sensible manner of punctuation and rhythm will also take form.
- Within reason, you do not need to know the meaning of the Latin words you are reciting. One should obviously be sensible to a prayer's overall content (so be abreast of, and make reference to, the English version), however the prayer is for God and He knows what the words mean, and also what is in your heart. Familiarity with the English prose and practised Latin recitation will, with repetition, afford an at least rudimentary understanding of what the words, phrases & sentences in the latter are conveying.
- Specifically ask the Blessed Virgin Mary under her title of Seat of Wisdom for assistance; St. Thomas Aquinas's succinct "*O Mary, Seat of Wisdom*", is appended below. Ask the same of your Patron and also of the Archangel St. Gabriel, one of who's titles is 'Great Teacher'. Further, pray sitting in an upright, attentive and reverential position (as one always should whilst in prayer) and with the hands in the *Orans* ('praying hands') position; that is, hands together at roughly sternum height, palms pressed flat and fingers extending in a heavenly direction with the right thumb crossed over the left. The reader may be surprised at the salient benefits this can elicit.
- Some days are better than others. Be prepared for days when the recitation of Latin simply does not come easily, if indeed at all. Then again, at other times one will notice most discernible improvements, especially after repeated and regular attempts of a particular prayer or prayers, often-times after only a week or so after the initial attempt.

By way of quick reprise:

- ▶ Latin can be regarded as a language of consistent and co-joined sounds: conceive and verbalise them on a letter-by-letter and syllable-by-syllable basis, resisting the instinctive English practice to blend or amalgamate letter sounds.
- ▶ Take your time, and approach new words slowly. With repetition they will take form both in the mind and on the tongue and, when they do, the reader will notice that he can recite familiar words rather quickly. Latin words tend to 'fit' and 'stick' together and enjoy a manner of rhythm or 'traction' which allows for a faster enunciation than English. This is a function of the consistency of vowel sounds and so further reinforces the importance of their correct pronunciation.
- ▶ It can be a formidable task to sedulously focus on each and every vowel sound concurrently, and so vary your attention over different sessions. That is, focus on the 'e's one day and the 'a's the next. Then the 'o's, 'i's and 'u's. Over time, the correct sounds will seed in the mind and sprout on the tongue.
- ▶ The rules outlined earlier do not need to be memorised prior to making a start and, with familiarity, they will be found to be rather intuitive; refer back to the guides every now and again to remind & re-inforce their content.
- ▶ Every word of the above being meant, don't be cavalier about familiarising yourself with these rules, for just as it is true that practice makes perfect, so is it also true that re-inforced bad habits are difficult to correct. Difficult and exasperating.
- ▶ You are doing this for God. The *Baltimore Catechism* reminds us that God made us to know, love, and serve Him in this world, so that we may be happy with Him forever in the next, and part of this is worshipping Him to the best of our capacity in right, reverential & proper manner. Latin is the language of His Church and prior to the 1960s (and the fruits of that era - judge them by their fruits) the Supreme Pontiffs encouraged the faithful to learn and to recite the core prayers in Latin. All things being equal, your efforts will be rewarded. Do not forget this guiding principle.
- ▶ Develop authentic vowel sounds and crisp consonants. If you encounter vexation with a particular word, the problem is likely in the vowels (either those *preceeding*, *at*, or even *after* the problematic section) and the resultant ill-effect on your tongue.
- ▶ Make your long 'O's prominent and be ever watchful for the 'ae' and 'oe' diphthongs as most texts do not use the 'æ' or 'œ' characters.
- ▶ In absence of the 'Ch' treatment, iterate 'C' as 'K'. Make your 'D's, 'S's, and 'T's hard and roll your 'R's.

God bless you and the Virgin protect you : *Benedicat nos Deus, et Virgo custódiat nos!*

(*Virgin of Revelation, Rome 1947*)

### O Mary, Seat of Wisdom

O MARY, Seat of Wisdom, so many persons of common intellect hath made, through thine intercession, admirable progress in their studies. I hereby choose thee as guardian and patron of my studies, and I humbly ask thee to obtain for me the grace of the Holy Ghost, so that from now on I may understand more quickly, retain more readily, and express myself more fluently. May the example of my life serve to honour thee and thy Son, Jesus. [17]

(*St. Thom. Aquinas*)

*Sancta María, Sedes sapiéntiæ, ora pro nobis.*

*Sancte Gábríel, Magíster magna, ora pro nobis.*

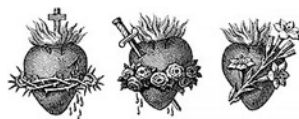
## NOTES:

- [1] [PrayingLatin.com](#) “Why Pray in Latin?”
- [2] *Church Latin for Beginners: An Elementary Course of Exercises in Ecclesiastical Latin*, J. E. Lowe, M. A., p.5 (Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., London, 1923)
- [3] “*Veterum Sapientia*” (“On the Promotion of the Study of Latin”), Pope John XXIII (1962). This Apostolic Constitution can be viewed (in English) at: <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/john23/j23veterum.htm>
- [4] *Ibid.*
- [5] Fr. Chad Ripperger, exorcist: “Latin is more efficacious than any profane language because of the fact it is a sacred language, and by virtue of it being sacred it is in the eyes of God more precious and more meritorious.”; [PrayingLatin.com](#), *Ibid.*
- [6] *Ibid.*
- [7] *Ibid.*
- [8] Source: “*Revolution and Counter-Revolution: The Fall and Rise of the Roman Rite*” by Michael Davies, RIP; source: *The Remnant* (Dec. 30, 2018; on-line edition)
- [9] [PrayingLatin.com](#), *Ibid.*
- [10] *Church Latin for Beginners: An Elementary Course of Exercises in Ecclesiastical Latin*, J. E. Lowe, M. A., pp.1-2 (Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., London, 1923)
- [11] *Ibid.*, pp.2-3
- [12] *Ibid.* p.3
- [13] *Ibid.*, pp.4-5
- [14] “*Tra Le Sollecitudini*” (“Instruction on Sacred Music”), Pope Pius X (1903). This *Motus Proprio* can be viewed (in English) at: <https://adoremus.org/1903/11/tra-le-sollecitudini/>
- [15] *The Correct Pronunciation of Latin According to Roman Usage*, Rev. Michael de Angelis C.R.M., Ph.D. (edited by Nicola A. Montani), p.16 (St. Gregory Guild, Inc., Philadelphia, PA.); source: <https://archive.org/details/correctpronuncia00dean/page/16/mode/2up>
- [16] *Catallus* 84: [https://en.m.wikisource.org/wiki/Translation:Catullus\\_84](https://en.m.wikisource.org/wiki/Translation:Catullus_84)
- [17] Source: [CatholicDoors.com](#)

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**Iesu, María, Ioseph!**

Jesus, Mary, Joseph!

(Pre-1968 Indulgence: 7 years)

This mediocre pamphlet of instruction, aimed to afford some manner of utility to the faithful Catholic who is wholly unfamiliar with Latin, that he may greater glorify God in prayer, was compiled by Jonathon Reid from the reliable and competent sources listed opposite and the author’s personal experience & practice; and was posited on the world-wide inter-connected network (or, ‘inter-net’) for public dissemination via the ‘web-site’ [TraditionalCatholicPrayers.com](#) on the TWENTY-FIFTH day of SEPTEMBER, anno Domini TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-THREE. It is intended to be used in conjunction with the sundry Latin-English prayer-booklets found on the afore-mentioned.

UPDATED: 12.03.2024 A.D.

*Benedictus Dóminus Deus Israël: in Ángelis suis, et in Sanctis suis ; a sæculo et usque in sæculum ; et dicet omnis pópulus : Fiat! fiat! Allelúia.* (Ps. 105: 48)

*O María, sine labe concépta, ora pro nobis qui confúgimus ad te.*

## A WORD ON PRE-1968 INDULGENCES:

Where reliably sourced, the historical Pre-1968 Indulgences have been listed. Delineated in **penitential\* days or years** merited, these were over-hauled by Paul VI in 1967 and the radically changed treatment of indulgences came into effect a year later. Specific penance values no longer apply, re-formed into simple ‘*partial*’ (in which case God will adjudge the merit) or ‘*plenary*’ classes. As part of this process the number of formally recognised prayers, ejaculations, devotions, practises, etc. specifically meriting indulgence of either class was significantly curtailed.

Your correspondant would admonish the reader who does not hold high Ecclesiastical office to refrain, seduously, from any casual or cavalier discourse (and certainly any manner of pejorative remark) regarding the actions of a Supreme Pontiff, past or present, in the execution of his holy office.

**The Pre-1968 values are listed to give historical context** and, thereby, to show what ostensible value holy Mother Church, for centuries, placed on the importance of these prayers and practises prior to the 1960s; during eras in which, uncontentstibly, the holy Fear of God was first and foremost in Her teachings and thus visibly prevalent in her liturgies, ministers, buildings and by extension, flock.

The term ‘**..on the usual conditions**’ upon which plenary indulgences pivot means – both prior to 1968 and to this day – that the stated indulgenced act must be accompanied by worthy Confession\*\* and Holy Communion\*\*\* and prayers for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, with the norm being to offer an *Our Father* – *Hail Mary* – *Glory Be* for the same. Obviously, ‘*intentions*’ refers to the infallible and inexorably unchangeable intentions of the Office of the Papacy.

Plenary indulgences are only be merited if the suppliant is wholly detached from sin, of any species. If he does not merit a plenary indulgence for such or similar cause in the all-seeing eyes of God, a partial indulgence is given.

\* Not the same as earthly calendar days or years; rather “the amount of purgatorial punishment equivalent to that which would have been remitted, in the sight of God, by the performance of so many days or years of the ancient canonical penance.” ([New advent.org](#))

\*\* Prior to more contemporary times, this was regarded as being required within eight (8) days, either side, of performance of the indulgenced act; so, by standing custom, the faithful would in practise receive the Sacrament of Penance every fortnight (in the absence of specific contingencies) so as to ensure not only an ongoing state of grace but, further, satisfaction of the usual conditions.

\*\*\* In contrast, Communion had to received on the day of the performance or satisfaction of the indulgenced act. In the case of novenas or other devotion(s) spread over days, week or month, the indulgence was merited (or ‘claimed’) upon the reception of Communion. So, many plenary indulgences could be attached to one Confession; however, as the attaining of plenary indulgences is (typically) limited to one per day, every plenary indulgence requires Holy Communion.

