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Why Pope Leo's Eliminating Latin will Result in Irrecoverable Loss for Catholicism

§1. The curial institutions will normally draft their acts
in Latin *or in another language.**

A deeply troubling turn of events unfolded at the Vatican two months ago *under the personal direction of Pope Leo XIV*.

What occurred was *nothing less* (no exaggeration here) than an architectonic rupture that divides the Church *present* as a ***Magisterial Institution*** from the Church *past*, or at least the Church that existed prior to November 24, 2025. What Leo had done requires a much-needed and thorough explanation of what it was and why the decision made then was not a good one.

I am not sure *at all* that I have done so, but this is at least an opening into something that I see as perhaps the final unfolding of events that systematically began 64 years ago and are now culminating in an *irrecoverable* loss of “*Catholicism*” as a ***unique identifier*** for the *historical* millennia old *Church* that we now casually call “Catholic,” when, in fact, many of those distinctive markers have lost their semantic mapping, their historical linkage if you will, to the very things that made them recognizable as *Catholic* in a way that could not be equally and widely predicated of every *other* denomination that understands itself as *Christian* ... but... ***not-Catholic***.

Less than six months into his pontificate, Pope Leo XIV has taken one of the most dramatic steps toward the ***ongoing de-construction of Catholicism*** since October 11th 1962 and the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

The Roman Catholic Church as a ***Magisterial*** institution — that is to say, one with a uniquely and *divinely instituted* commission to ***authoritatively teach*** in matters of faith and morals — and, as such, possesses the indefeasible character of divine certainty— has:

- *Written*
- *Decreed*
- *Formalized*
- *Legislated*
- *Authoritatively Taught* ...

... and *unequivocally expressed itself — in Latin* for One-Thousand-Six-Hundred-Years-and-Ten-Months.

In other words, Latin is *the language* through which the Roman Catholic Church has uniquely and definitively expressed itself for at least the 1,600-years-and-10 months prior to Pope Leo XIV's shocking and sweeping mandate on November 24, 2025 that pronouncements of the Church's curial offices are no longer to be exclusively rendered in Latin, but “in Latin *or in another language.*”

Despite any rhetoric to the contrary, this is a monumental shift in paradigm. Until Pope Leo XIV, every “Curial act,” had been “drafted” *by default* in Latin — as it had been for nearly two millenia.

In a Mere Six Words ...

What are we to make of this move? I think that it is *extremely significant* that this staggering change (and it is nothing less) was made with *no* explanation *whatever*, *no* prefatory rationale, and *no* attending commentary *at all* by Leo ... and the Holy See itself. Deliberately couched *in a mere six words*, it deceptively appeared to be nothing more than a *routine* administrative utterance — behind which was nothing less than the odor of pontifical subreption, or stealth, a device utterly unworthy of a pope — and this *is* shocking.

And what is equally interesting, and quite nearly as shameful, is the Catholic press and its uniform unwillingness to examine this issue, an unwillingness that goes beyond mere reluctance and ventures into culpable journalistic negligence. Why is this so, I wonder?

It is my intention to now argue that this change from Latin to a multiplicity of vernaculars is a regrettable, but logical extension of Vatican II's 1964 *Decree on Ecumenism, Unitatis Redintegratio (Restoration of Unity* [among all Christians], that is to say, a segue into the wholesale repudiation of Latin as constituting a *distinctly* Catholic *impediment* to an evolving pan-ecumenism (and, most especially in Europe, to Protestantism.)

Otherwise, we must believe that the Church no longer possesses the intellectual, scholarly, and linguistic assets that had made her the light of the civilized world for 2000 years. Are, then, her scholars, her Bollandists, her Latinists no longer capable of translating into the vernacular of every nation ... what their predecessors had been capable of up to November 25, 2025?

Of course this is a rhetorical question!

What, then, is the impetus to this change that will inevitably, indeed, *undoubtedly*, not merely impede, but necessarily *destroy* the very possibility of virtually any *univocal* utterance, written or spoken, in the Church?

Pope Leo's move will *forever* frustrate any attempt to arrive at universally accepted and indisputable *meaning*, any precise *denotation* of words or phrases *that allow for no equivocation* — and to which all divergent or competing translations can appeal as to an absolute arbiter in any dispute.

For this alone is *the vocabulary necessary for and indispensable to doctrine and dogma*. Denotations, definitions, and terms cannot be malleable, but *fixed* and forever *certain*, or remain mere propositions only.

A Dramatic Shift in Paradigm

I will argue that there are not simply compelling, but indisputable reasons that the Roman Catholic Church, prior to Pope Leo, used Latin not just as a *theological*, but as a precise juridical, pedagogical, archival, and institutional language.

Why, in a dramatic shift of paradigm, Pope Leo has apparently chosen otherwise, we can only speculate upon — which I will not do. However, if we choose the least contentious (but misleading) explanation we will probably arrive at something like the following:

Drafts only?

If we argue that by its explicit wording the paragraph in question pertains to “*drafts*” *only*, that is to say, to *preliminary* versions, *tentative in nature only*, and understood as being presented in a *provisional* form *waiting* to be rendered into the structural and historical framework of the 1,600-year Latin *in* which, and *through* which, the Church has always articulated itself, its dogmas, and its doctrines, then all is well.

It nevertheless remains that even in their most articulate vernacular form, these several (many) languages can only, and at best, *approximate* any Latin version — and will, at worst, deviate from it. Either Latin cannot be reconciled with these vernaculars, or these vernaculars cannot be reconciled with Latin. It is simply and factually the case.

This leaves the Roman Revisionists with an uncomfortable choice: one language group *must* be left out in the cold. They cannot choose to leave out Latin without undermining the very historical framework and foundation upon which the Church exists. But given the Leonine mandate how, then, shall they proceed?

Without a single language invested with what attains, structurally, to near-apodictic certainty, a language forged within and articulated through millennia of unbroken doctrinal, juridical, and theological form — *i.e. Latin* — and forming a single authoritative linguistic source, to which every “other language” must appeal or submit to in the way of final and decisive denotation, providing both *recourse* and *redress* to competing vernaculars, the Church as Magisterial ceases to be. Latin alone can provide this. A plurality of languages cannot.

On the other hand, ...

If this *indeed* is the case, why bother to add the disjunctive “*or*” (“*or in another language.*”) in the first place? What is the purpose of introducing this qualification at all?

That is to say, if the directive that, “*The curial institutions will normally draft their acts in Latin or in another language*” does not constitute a clear divergence from

the unique historical language of the Church, *why is it directed to do so in “another” language at all*, not simply as *permissive*, but in so stating, implicitly endowing “another” (*any* language) with the same historically stable and unique characteristics that are inherent within, and inextricable from Latin alone — especially in the way of precision and immutability (I will explain a bit further on)?

We must notice, too, that the word “will” is used as an *imperative* — not “can,” nor “are allowed to,” but is applied *with equal force* to *both* the vernacular and the Latin — *but how can this possibly be?*

A *literal* Latin composition will *always* differ from every vernacular rendering. What is more, *each and every* translation distinct from the Latin will differ not just from any “optional,” “alternate,” or even “concurrent” Latin rendering — but from *each other* as well. In other words, *every* vernacular translation will be applied without prejudice to each other. *All* will be “correct” despite any nuance within, or latent conflict between, them.

To further complicate matters, given many translators (and assuming that each translator possesses a mastery of the subtleties inherent in their own language) *and* subsequent revisions by still *other* translators within that language, the combined likelihood of a divergence in translation between languages is not just “possible”— but inescapable.

What does this mean for the Church?

In abrogating the only *non-evolving language* — Ecclesiastical Latin — the language through which alone the stringent *conceptual* architecture of the Church has been articulated, sustained, and preserved, defining its dogma, and sixteen millennia of doctrine — the *Magisterium* of the Church will now be divided between the Church of roughly 1600 years prior to Pope Leo XIV, and the post-Leonine Magisterium articulated, not through *one*, but through *many* languages in *many* translations. If this indeed is the case, as it well appears to be, then it is unavoidably a move away from *apodictic* Magisterial certainty.

If this is what Pope Leo XIV intends, it is not just momentous, but potentially *catastrophic*, and this is why: the distinct linguistic morphology of Latin *is not shared by any other language* — it possesses an unparalleled and historically embedded matrix of denotation and meaning — not only *which has been* — but *in which it has been* — *consistently propagated* through sixteen centuries in a way indispensable to matters doctrinal and juridical within Holy Mother Church.

Any appeal to *certainty* — a certainty absolutely vital to doctrine and unimpeachable Magisterium — that falls short of an unequivocal standard to which *all translations must appeal* for univocal substantiation — and which *alone* can exclude all possible translational *doubt* — of itself subverts the very certainty that it seeks, or must abolish apodictic certainty itself — and with it, Holy Mother Church.

Why?

The Roman Catholic Church is the *only institution* in the world that (for 2000 years) has claimed *absolute certainty* concerning its dogmatic and doctrinal utterances. No other religion has made, or been able to make this claim, and possessed the credentials for doing so, and certainly no social or political institution in history has made a pretense to indefeasible *ideological* claims. Polities and societies change, and such changes are *integral* to the institutions which articulated them. But this is not so for the Church — nor *can* it be. The very notion of something *logically* understood as *dogma* and *doctrine*, and at the same time *questionable* and *uncertain* is simply an abuse of language. Dogma *is* certainty. Doctrine *is* certainty.

If, *henceforth*, the teachings of Holy Mother Church *are no longer — because they can no longer be* — understood as unequivocal and categorically certain, then the Church forfeits her right to teach *anything* absolute, and with that forfeiture, the historical certainty of her Magisterium ends as of Pope Leo's devastating change on November 24, 2025.

This, of course, will not play out instantly; no more than the devastating changes following the implementation of Vatican II played out immediately — but it is now following a trajectory well established since 1963 and brought to ruinous fruition in the decades that soon followed.

How tragic that the pathological mentality of the 60s so aggressively leached into the Catholic Church, and *persists* in it with a virulence seen nowhere else.

Perhaps it is due, *in part*, to the cardinals and bishops who, *almost without exception*, were and are *of that generation*, or the *children* of that generation, both of whom were indoctrinated in the “counterculture” of the 60s: rebellion against authority and established form (behavioral, moral, artistic, literary, etc.), revolution, experimentation, unrestrained freedom of expression (much as we had found, and still find, in the *countless* iterations of the Novus Ordo Mass) *resistance*, the inauguration of Earth Day and environmentalism in 1970 (and consecrated in the Church by Leo’s predecessor, Francis, in [Laudate si](#) and [Laudate Deum](#)).

A Three-Fold Forfeiture

We must, in the meanwhile, be absolutely clear about what has happened, and why Pope Leo’s eliminating Latin as the *lingua franca* of Holy Mother Church is a plunge, henceforth, from indefectible *certainty* into inescapable *skepticism* concerning all things ecclesiastical, doctrinal, and juridical — and why it will be the undoing of the now *Post-Catholic* Conciliar Church of Vatican II.

Latin is often, and mistakenly, referred to as a “Dead Language” inasmuch as it is no longer the spoken language belonging to any existing country or people. This, however, is misleading. Yes, Latin is indeed — and quite fortunately — dead to nations, but nevertheless remains alive *to* and *within* the Catholic Church.

This has far-reaching consequences: for we can now see that Latin became, and remains, the *conceptual* property of the *institution*, the Church; that is to say, it is the language *in which* and *through which* it articulated the very concepts by which she herself is defined and understood. It is not the possession of a *culture*. It *transcends* nations, peoples, cultures, borders, precisely because it is a property of none and a settled medium of all.

Latin is the linguistic architecture of a divine institution *approximating* as much as possible in the immutability of her language, the immutable ordinances entrusted her by God. This language alone makes dogma, doctrine, and law immune to ambiguity

and error. The denotation (the irreducible, the strictly literal meaning of a word) in Latin establishes boundaries beyond which interpretation may not pass. Once a term is authoritatively defined by the Church its meaning is set, fixed, and unalterable, and for this reason it is precisely the linguistic medium for matters juridical, theological, and liturgical, especially in the way of maintaining unity.

When. On the other hand, the Church substitutes a necessarily *evolving* vernacular (and not simply of *any* country, but of *all* countries) for the *non-evolving* institutional Latin — and at the same time presumes to maintain ***the three-fold unity of dogma, doctrine, and law*** that characterized the Church prior to November, 2025, it will be an inescapably impossible. It nearly attains to a mathematical certainty.

An Analogy

Consider a very pertinent analogy: following Vatican II we witnessed the emergence and standardization of the vernacular liturgy (a change that was **not** called for by the Council in the December 4, 1963 Conciliar document *Sacrosanctum Concilium* §36.1 (“*Linguae latinae usus, salvo particulari iure, in Ritibus latinis servetur* — The use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites.”)

This change from Latin to the vernacular resulted in what essentially became a proprietary liturgical language for *each* nation, and as a consequence no two linguistic groups could coherently participate in *each other's* liturgies apart from signs and gestures (the most primitive forms of communication), and theology, no longer *universally* anchored in Latin, became *regional*, acquiring social and political characteristics unique to different countries and continents (e.g. “Liberation Theology” in South America, “Synodalism” in Germany).

And this, I suggest, is a mere harbinger of things to come, for in going forward it will open the Church to inevitable controversies and disputes that will not be amenable to any linguistic arbitration. Among languages with competing denotations in ecclesiastical issues, which language will prevail ... and why should it?

This is the uneasy state of a church in flux ... so much so that it is difficult to see how, henceforth, she will be able to speak to her children unequivocally and in reassuring certainty as she had in ages past.

A Cautionary Note

However fraught with the seemingly insurmountable problems that we have addressed — and yes, the dangers from which I cannot see Holy Mother Church now able to extricate herself — we now come to an impasse. Reasoning and logic can go no further; at least to my own modest extent they have been depleted. What recourse do we have then?

The only conclusion that I foresee and one to which all Catholics are obligated to concede is this:

The Church is Christ's. It is indefectible. To utter this within a whirlwind of confusion is an *Actus Fidei*, an act of Faith. Christ is greater than any confusion sown in the Church. As one poet put it, “He knows what He is about.”

Pope Leo Has the Authority to Make This Change

However perplexing, imprudent, and ill-conceived we may find Pope Leo's decision to be, as Catholics we are bound to acknowledge that, as pope, Leo possesses *supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority in the Church* in matters of *Discipline* (law and governance), *Liturgy* (rites, rubrics, and approved languages) and the *Administration* of ecclesial life. He can enact universal laws, suppress or permit rites, regulate liturgical language, and require obedience while a law stands. This authority is invested in the Petrine Office itself.

In a word, Pope Leo has the *authority* to make this change, and however opaque to our understanding, however inconsistent with reason and precipitously detached from two millennia of ecclesiastical history, it has been done — and only a future pope can rectify it.

And a Final Note

I cannot help, however, but feel that somewhere deeply within all this, a subtle but ancient malice stirs this confusion: there is something primeval, something insidiously deep and dark that I cannot shake, an ontological menace that I cannot ignore. “Something” now crouches in the corner and lurks among the shadows of men, and I believe that it is profoundly involved in the unfolding of the uncertainty to surely follow.

In hoc et in omnibus, sicut Deus vult

* “General Regulations of the Roman Curia, 24.11.2025

Title XIII

LANGUAGES IN USE

Art. 50

§1. The curial institutions [*] will normally draft their acts in Latin or in another language.”

<https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2025/11/24/0896/01618.html>

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Feast of St. Hyginus, Pope and martyr



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