



Boston Catholic Journal



NIHIL NISI IESUM

Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

Salus Animarum Suprema Lex Esto (Canon Law 175)

The Salvation of Souls is the Supreme Law in the Church

“... or in another language.”



**Why Leo's Eliminating Latin as
the Language of the Church ...
will Result in *Irrecoverable Loss*
for the Catholic Church**

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

In less than six months, Pope Leo XIV has made the most significant step toward the de-construction of Catholicism.

The Roman Catholic Church as a *magisterial* institution possessed of the inexpugnable character of divine certainty, has written, decreed, formalized, legislated and expressed itself *in Latin* — the language through which it has authoritatively *taught* for at least 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 rhetoric to the contrary, this is a monumental shift in paradigm. Until Leo XIV every “Curial act” had been, until last month, been “drafted” *by default* in Latin as it had been for over 1,600 years.

First of all, are we to really understand that the directive to use “Latin or ... another language” applies *only* to deliverances of the *Roman Curia*, and second, that such deliverances themselves are to be understood as “drafts only” and not final forms? And in the end, does it really matter?

A Dramatic Shift in Paradigm

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

Why, in a dramatic shift of paradigm, 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 this paragraph 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 logical 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.

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?

What is more, without a single language invested with what attains to apodictic certainty through nearly two millennia of historical authority through unbroken doctrinal, juridical, and theological form — in Latin — 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. A plurality of languages clearly cannot achieve this.

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, 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? Especially in the way of precision and immutability (I will explain a bit further on)?

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 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. In a word, should this prove to be the case, it is a move away from *apodictic* Magisterial certainty.

If this is what 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 — ***which falls short of an unequivocal standard to which all translations must appeal*** for univocal substantiation — that 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.

In subsequent articles I will explain why I believe this to be the case if — and only if — Leo’s directive pertains only to “Curial acts” and their “drafts” ...

* “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>

Geoffrey K. Mondello

Editor

Boston Catholic Journal

December 16, 2025

Feast of St. Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli and martyr

