



**Foederatio Internationalis *Una Voce***

***Positio N. 12***

THE TEACHING OF LATIN  
IN SEMINARIES

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### From the General Introduction

These papers, commissioned by the International Federation *Una Voce*, are offered to stimulate and inform debate about the 1962 Missal among Catholics ‘attached to the ancient Latin liturgical tradition’, and others interested in the liturgical renewal of the Church. They are not to be taken to imply personal or moral criticism of those today or in the past who have adopted practices or advocated reforms which are subjected to criticism. In composing these papers we adopt the working assumption that our fellow Catholics act in good will, but that nevertheless a vigorous and well-informed debate is absolutely necessary if those who act in good will are to do so in light of a proper understanding of the issues.

The authors of the papers are not named, as the papers are not the product of any one person, and also because we prefer them to be judged on the basis of their content, not their authorship.

The International Federation *Una Voce* humbly submits the opinions contained in these papers to the judgement of the Church.

### The Teaching of Latin in Seminaries: Abstract

The question of Latin as a liturgical language has been dealt with in a previous paper; here the issue of Latin as the common language of the Church is addressed. The importance of Latin as a component of seminary education has been stressed before, at, and following the Second Vatican Council, but not only because of its liturgical importance: its wider importance is that it makes possible communication between generations (from the past to the present, and from the present to future generations) and between nations, in a stable language which can be learnt by all. The loss of such a common language has been a matter of great concern to a long succession of Popes, and many documents, including Canon Law, place great emphasis on the importance of Latin. It is a matter of the utmost importance that Latin be restored in seminary education, and in Catholic schools.

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1. Latin is important to the Church not only as a liturgical language,<sup>1</sup> but also as a language of administration, discussion, and for the dissemination of ideas, notably in magisterial documents, and as the language of countless classic works of theology, history, and other disciplines, from the Fathers and the Scholastics, and well into the modern period. Latin's use in practice as a language of communication in the Church depends on its being taught in seminaries (and also in Catholic schools); its place in seminary education has often been addressed by the Magisterium. On this topic, both the concerns, and the insights, of those attached to the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite, have application to the whole Church. Priests ordained without an education in Latin find it difficult, if not impossible, to use of the provisions of the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum*,<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, the argument of this paper will be based upon wider considerations.

### The Magisterium on Latin

2. The 1983 Code of Canon Law strengthened the demand of the 1917 Code,<sup>3</sup> stating:  
The programme of priestly formation is to provide that students not only are carefully taught their native language but also understand Latin well.<sup>4</sup>  
The verb 'understand' in the English translation understates the force of the Latin 'calleant':<sup>5</sup> skill in, not mere comprehension of, Latin, is required by Canon Law, since Latin is a means of two-way communication.
3. Canon 249 reflects the Second Vatican Council's decree on Priestly Training, *Optatam totius*, which says, of seminarians,  
Moreover they are to acquire a knowledge of Latin which will enable them to understand and make use of the sources of so many sciences and of the documents of the Church. The study of the liturgical language proper to each rite should be considered necessary; a suitable knowledge of the languages of the Bible and of Tradition should be greatly encouraged.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Positio 7: Latin as a Liturgical Language

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Bishops accompanying the Motu Proprio *Summorum Pontificum* (2007): 'The use of the old Missal presupposes a certain degree of liturgical formation and some knowledge of the Latin language; neither of these is found very often.' As a matter of the law of the Church, the question of the criteria to be met by priests wishing to say the Extraordinary Form was clarified in the Instruction *Universae Ecclesiae* (2011) 20 b: 'Regarding the use of the Latin language, a basic knowledge is necessary, allowing the priest to pronounce the words correctly [better: 'to give due utterance'] and understand their meaning.' ('ad usum Latini sermonis quod attinet, necesse est ut sacerdos celebraturus scientia polleat ad verba recte proferenda eorumque intelligendam significationem;')

<sup>3</sup> 1917 Code of Canon Law 1364.2: 'They [sc. seminarians] will accurately pursue languages, especially Latin and the national language of the students.' ('Linguas praesertim latinam et patriam alumni accurate addiscant')

<sup>4</sup> 1983 Code of Canon Law 249: 'Institutionis sacerdotalis Ratione provideatur ut alumni non tantum accurate linguam patriam edoceantur, sed etiam linguam latinam bene calleant.'

<sup>5</sup> The Oxford Latin Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2012) gives the meaning for *callere* 'to have experience of; to be skilled or experienced in'.

<sup>6</sup> Second Vatican Council, Decree on Seminaries *Optatam totius* 13: '...ac praeterea eam linguae latinae cognitionem acquirant, qua tot scientiarum fontes et Ecclesiae documenta intelligere atque adhibere possint.[Footnote] Studium linguae liturgicae unicuique ritui propriae necessarium habeatur, cognitio vero congrua linguarum Sacrae Scripturae et Traditionis valde foveatur.' The footnote refers to Bl. Pope Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Summi Dei Verbum*, 1 (see footnote 13 below).

As far as the liturgy is concerned, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as well as insisting that ‘the use of the Latin language is to be preserved in the Latin rites’,<sup>7</sup> also assumes that clerics will normally say the Office in Latin.<sup>8</sup>

4. These documents maintain earlier teaching and practice: notable 20<sup>th</sup> century documents include Pius XI’s Apostolic Letter on seminary training *Officiorum omnium* (1922),<sup>9</sup> the Congregation for Seminaries’ Letter *Latinam excolere linguam* (1957),<sup>10</sup> Pope St John XXIII’s Apostolic Constitution *Veterum Sapientia* (1962),<sup>11</sup> and the ‘Ordinationes’ applying this (*Sacrum Latinae linguae depositum*, 1962),<sup>12</sup> Bl. Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Letter on seminaries, *Summi Dei Verbum* (1963),<sup>13</sup> the Instruction applying *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to religious, *In edicendis* (1965), and Bl. Pope Paul VI’s motu proprio *Studia Latinitatis* (1964). Immediately following the Council Bl. Pope Paul VI again commanded the retention of Latin, particularly in the Office, in his Apostolic Letter *Sacrificium laudis* (1966);<sup>14</sup> and the Congregation for Catholic Education

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<sup>7</sup> Second Vatican Council Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 36, 1: ‘Linguae latinae usus, salvo particulari iure, in Ritibus latinis servetur.’; cf. 54: ‘Nevertheless steps should be taken so that the faithful may also be able to say or to sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them.’ (‘Provideatur tamen ut christifideles etiam lingua latina partes Ordinarii Missae quae ad ipsos spectant possint simul dicere vel cantare.’)

<sup>8</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 101, 1: ‘In accordance with the centuries-old tradition of the Latin rite, the Latin language is to be retained by clerics in the divine office.’ (‘Iuxta saecularem traditionem ritus latini, in Officio divino lingua latina clericis servanda est’) This was reiterated by the Instruction *In edicendis* (1965) 1, which goes on to spell out the kind of cases for which concessions could be considered, including for mission countries.

<sup>9</sup> Pope Pius XI Apostolic Letter *Officiorum omnium* (1922), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 14 (1922) pp349-358: ‘Therefore – and this is something guaranteed by canon law (*Codex Iuris Canonici* can. 1364) – in the schools of literature where the sacred order’s expectations reach maturity, we wish the alumni to be instructed very exactly in the Latin language. We wish it also for this motive, in case, when they later approach the higher disciplines that must certainly be both handed on and received in Latin, it happens that through ignorance of the language they cannot achieve full understanding of the doctrines, let alone exercise themselves in those scholastic disciplines by which the talents of youths are sharpened for defending the truth.’

<sup>10</sup> Congregation for Seminaries Letter *Latinam excolere linguam* (1957) *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 50 (1958), pp. 292-906

<sup>11</sup> Pope St John XXIII Apostolic Constitution *Veterum Sapientia* (1962) 11, 4: ‘Wherever the study of Latin has suffered partial eclipse through the assimilation of the academic program to that which obtains in State public schools, with the result that the instruction given is no longer so thorough and well-grounded as formerly, there the traditional method of teaching this language shall be completely restored. Such is Our will, and there should be no doubt in anyone’s mind about the necessity of keeping a strict watch over the course of studies followed by Church students; and that not only as regards the number and kinds of subjects they study, but also as regards the length of time devoted to the teaching of these subjects.’ (‘Sicubi autem, ob assimilatae studiorum rationem in publicis civitatis scholis obtinentem, de linguae Latinae cultu aliquatenus detractum sit, cum germanae firmaeque doctrinae detrimento, ibi tralaticium huius linguae tradendae ordinem redintegrari omnino censemus; cum persuasum cuique esse debeat, hac etiam in re, sacrorum alumnorum institutionis rationem religiose esse tuendam, non tantum ad disciplinarum numerum et genera, sed etiam ad earum docendarum temporis spatia quod attinet.’)

<sup>12</sup> Congregation for Seminaries *Sacrum Latinae linguae depositum* (1962) *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 54 pp339-368. This document goes into considerable detail on the contents of seminary curricula.

<sup>13</sup> Bl. Pope Paul VI Apostolic Letter *Summi Dei Verbum* (1963): ‘The cultural formation of the young priest must certainly include an adequate knowledge of languages and especially of Latin (particularly for those of the Latin rite).’ (‘In studiorum denique suppellectile, qua adulescens clerus ornari oportet, sane ponenda est non exigua variarum linguarum scientia, in primisque Latinae, si maxime de sacerdotibus agatur Latini ritus.’)

<sup>14</sup> Bl. Pope Paul VI Apostolic Letter *Sacrificium laudis* (1966): ‘Yet those things that We have mentioned [sc. requests for permission to say the Office in the vernacular] are occurring even though the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council has after due deliberation declared its mind in solemn fashion (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 101,1), and after the publication of clear norms in subsequent Instructions. In the first Instruction (*ad executionem Constitutionis de sacra Liturgia recte ordinandam*), published on 26th September, 1964, it was decreed as follows: In celebrating the divine office in choir, clerics are

emphasised the importance of Latin in its 1970 *Ratio fundamentalis* on seminary education.<sup>15</sup> In 1976 Bl. Pope Paul established the ‘Latinitas Foundation’ to promote Latin.<sup>16</sup> Pope St John Paul II stressed the importance of Latin in his Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cena* (1980),<sup>17</sup> and in the same year the Congregation for Catholic Education’s revised *Ratio fundamentalis* did the same.<sup>18</sup> Later the same Congregation published an Instruction on the study of the Fathers, which stressed the need to bolster the study of Latin and Greek in seminaries, so that seminarians might read patristic texts in the original (*Inspectis diebus*, 1989).<sup>19</sup>

5. In 2007 Pope Benedict XVI returned to the subject of seminary formation in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, where he wrote:

I ask that future priests, from their time in the seminary, receive the preparation needed to understand and to celebrate Mass in Latin, and also to use Latin texts and execute Gregorian chant; nor should we forget that the faithful can be taught

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bound to preserve the Latin language (n. 85). In the second Instruction (de lingua in celebrandis Officio divino et Missa “conventuali” aut “communitatis” apud Religiosos adhibenda), published on the 23rd November, 1965, that law was reinforced, and at the same time due consideration was shown for the spiritual advantage of the faithful and for the special conditions which prevail in missionary territories. Therefore, for as long as no other lawful provision is made, these laws are in force and require the obedience in which religious must excel, as dear sons of holy Church.’ (‘Sed ea, quae supra diximus, fieri contingunt, postquam Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum Secundum meditate ac sollemniter hac de re suam edixit sententiam (Cf. Const. de sacra Lit. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 101, 1), et Instructionibus eam subsequens certae editae sunt normae; in quarum Instructione altera, *ad executionem Constitutionis de sacra Liturgia recte ordinandam* die XXVI mensis Septembris anno MCMLXIV emissa, haec sunt decreta: «In divino Officio in choro persolvendo clerici linguam latinam servare tenentur» (n. 85); altera vero, quae *de lingua in celebrandis Officio divino et Missa «conventuali» aut «communitatis» apud Religiosos adhibenda* inscribitur ac die XXIII mensis novembris anno MCMLXV fuit vulgata, praeceptum illud confirmatur simulque ratio ducitur spiritualis fidelium emolumenti et peculiarium condicionum, quae in regionibus obtinent missionali opere excolendis. Donec ergo aliter legitime statuatur, hae leges vigent et obtemperacionem expostulant, qua religiosos sodales, filios Ecclesiae carissimos, apprime commendari oportet.’)

<sup>15</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1970): 66. ‘On the completion of these studies, any deficiency in knowledge which is required in a priest must be made good either before or during the study of philosophy, as n. 60 indicates. An example would be that reasonable proficiency in Latin, which the Church continually and insistently demands. A list and program of these studies should be included in the Scheme for Priestly Training.’

<sup>16</sup> Bl. Pope Paul VI Chirograph *Romani sermonis* (1976). The aims of the Foundation are to promote the use and the study of Latin.

<sup>17</sup> Pope St John Paul II Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cena* (1980) 10: ‘The Roman Church has special obligations towards Latin, the splendid language of ancient Rome, and she must manifest them whenever the occasion presents itself.’ (‘Ecclesia quidem Romana erga linguam Latinam, praestantissimum sermonem Urbis Romae antiquae, peculiari obligatione devincitur eamque commonstret oportet, quotiescumque offertur occasio.’)

<sup>18</sup> Congregation for Catholic Education, Instruction *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (1980): ‘the Council is far from having banned the use of the Latin language. Indeed, it did the contrary. Thus the systematic exclusion of Latin is an abuse no less to be condemned than the systematic desire of some people to use it exclusively. Its sudden and total disappearance will not be without serious pastoral consequences.’

<sup>19</sup> Instruction *Inspectis diebus* 66: ‘But it is clear that the proper instruments and resources are necessary to undertake Patristic studies properly. Such are libraries which are well stocked with respect to Patristics (‘corpora’ or collections, monographs, reviews or journals, dictionaries). And it is also clear that classical and modern languages are necessary as well. Since, however, the schools of our day and age are plainly deficient in the liberal arts, to the extent possible we shall have to further strengthen the study of Latin and Greek in our own Institutes of Priestly Formation.’ (‘Perspicuum est autem ad studia patristica apte peragenda necessaria esse instrumenta et subsidia congruentia—ut bibliotheca rite instructa quoad patristicam (corpora seu collectiones, monographiae, commentarii seu ephemerides, lexica), atque linguas classicas et hodiernas necessarias quoque esse. Sed cum in excolendis studiis humanisticis scholae nostri temporis aperte deficiant, opus erit—quod id fieri possit—ut in nostris Institutis formationis sacerdotalis studia linguae Graecae et Latinae amplius corroborantur.’)

to recite the more common prayers in Latin, and also to sing parts of the liturgy to Gregorian chant.<sup>20</sup>

In 2012 Pope Benedict issued the *Motu Proprio Lingua Latina* replacing the Latinitas Foundation with the 'Pontificia Academia Latinitatis', with a wider remit for the promotion of the language, including in seminaries.

6. To summarise, it cannot be said that the Council represented a change in the teaching, or called for a change in the practice, of the Church on this subject. The reasons given in these documents for the importance of Latin fall into a number of related categories.
7. The first concerns the place of Latin in the liturgy. This is stressed by Pope Benedict XVI in *Sacramentum Caritatis*, as quoted above. It suffices to say here<sup>21</sup> that it is impossible for priests to obey *Sacrosanctum Concilium*'s command, 'the use of Latin is to be preserved in the Latin Rites', without at least a basic grasp of the language.
8. Secondly, the Latin language has a fundamental place in Catholic culture, which is closely entwined with spirituality. Latin poetry, hymnody, and chant, and the texts which have inspired musical compositions from every era of Christian music, cannot be translated or replaced by vernacular equivalents: the work of art represented by the original would, at best, be replaced by a new work of art, the translation. The Latin chants, both in their poetry and in their musical settings, are, in Bl. Pope Paul VI's phrase, 'an abundant well-spring of Christian civilisation and a very rich treasure-trove of devotion.' He urges religious superiors  
to ponder what they wish to give up, and not to let that spring run dry from which, until the present, they have themselves drunk deep.<sup>22</sup>
9. Thirdly, the patrimony of theology, philosophy, canon law, and history, of the Latin Church is preserved, overwhelmingly, in Latin. The Latin version of Magisterial documents is nearly always the normative one; a translation, however skilful, can never capture all the nuances of the original, and translations do not always exist,<sup>23</sup> the same is true of a great many major works of the theological tradition.<sup>24</sup> Latin has always been seen as essential for the preservation of accuracy and continuity in doctrine, a point stressed in *Veterum Sapientia*. The importance of Latin for academic studies is stressed

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<sup>20</sup> Pope Benedict XVI Post Synodal Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis* (2007) 62: 'In universum petimus ut futuri sacerdotes, inde a Seminarii tempore, ad Sanctam Missam Latine intellegendam et celebrandam nec non ad Latinos textus usurpandos et cantum Gregorianum adhibendum instituantur; neque neglegatur copia ipsis fidelibus facienda ut notiores in lingua Latina preces ac pariter quarundam liturgiae partium in cantu Gregoriano cantus cognoscant.'

<sup>21</sup> See also Positio 7: 'Latin as a Liturgical Language'

<sup>22</sup> *Sacrificium laudis*: 'cum sit in Ecclesia Latina christiani cultus humani fons uberrimus et locupletissimus pietatis thesaurus,' 'Rogamus igitur omnes, ad quos pertinet, ut ponderent, quae dimittere velint, neque fontem sinant inarescere, unde ad praesens usque tempus ubertim hauserint.'

<sup>23</sup> It is relevant to note that, of the documents cited in this paper, the following are not translated into English, French, or German, on the Vatican website: Pope Pius XI *Officiorum omnium*, Pope St John XXIII *Veterum Sapientia*, Congregation for Seminaries *Sacrum Latinae linguae depositum*, Instruction of the Sacred Congregation for Rites *In edicendis*, Bl. Pope Paul VI *Sacrificium laudis*, Congregation for Catholic Education *Ratio fundamentalis* (both the 1970 and 1980 versions), and *Inspectis diebus*. (Of these, only *Veterum Sapientia* is available in Spanish, and only *Sacrificium laudis* in Italian.) Unofficial translations of some, but not most, of these, into some of these vernacular languages, are available elsewhere.

<sup>24</sup> Even such an important and influential work as St Alphonsus Liguori's *Theologia Moralis* has no English translation. Students without Latin have access to a greatly narrowed tradition, and are subject to the debatable judgements of translators.

by *Officiorum omnium*,<sup>25</sup> *Veterum Sapientia*,<sup>26</sup> *Optatam totius*,<sup>27</sup> *Inspectis diebus*,<sup>28</sup> and *Lingua Latina*.<sup>29</sup>

10. Fourthly, there is the role of Latin as the language of the Church: a language for the exchange and development of ideas and, as Pope St John Paul II put it, ‘an instrument of mutual friendship’.<sup>30</sup> The administrative importance of Latin is stressed by *Officiorum omnium*,<sup>31</sup> *Veterum Sapientia* 4, *Optatam totius* 13, and *Lingua Latina*. The last of these documents has underlined the point:

The Latin language has continuously received the great esteem of the Catholic Church and the Roman Pontiffs, inasmuch as they consider it their own language.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> *Officiorum omnium*: ‘[If Latin is carefully taught:] Thus the occurrence we often grieve over will happen no longer: - our clerics and priests, when, through neglect of the copious volumes of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church in which the dogmas of the Faith are presented, being both set forth very lucidly and defended invincibly, they have not put enough effort into the study of Latin literature, seek for themselves a suitable supply of doctrine from more recent authors; among these one can virtually say not only is a clear kind of speech and an exact method of arrangement generally lacking, but so too is a faithful interpretation of the dogmas.’

<sup>26</sup> *Veterum Sapientia* 11.2: ‘In the exercise of their paternal care they [sc. bishops] shall be on their guard lest anyone under their jurisdiction, eager for revolutionary changes, writes against the use of Latin in the teaching of the higher sacred studies or in the Liturgy, or through prejudice makes light of the Holy See’s will in this regard or interprets it falsely.’ (‘Paterna iidem sollicitudine caveant, ne qui e sua dicione, novarum rerum studiosi, contra linguam Latinam sive in altioribus sacris disciplinis tradendis sive in sacris habendis ritibus usurpandam scribant, neve praeiudicata opinione Apostolicae Sedis voluntatem hac in re extenuent vel perperam interpretentur.’)

<sup>27</sup> *Optatam totius* 13, quoted in paragraph 3 above.

<sup>28</sup> *Inspectis diebus* 53: ‘The study of Patrology and of Patristics, which in its initial stage consists in outlining [the subject-matter], demands that manuals and other bibliographical resources be employed. When one arrives at difficult and involved questions of Patristic theology, however, none of these aids suffices: one has to go directly to the Fathers’ very texts. For it behoves Patristics to be both taught and learned—especially in Academies and in specialized curricula—with professor and student going directly to the primary sources themselves.’

<sup>29</sup> *Lingua Latina* 2: ‘In our day as well a knowledge of the Latin language and culture is vital for looking into the springs from which very many branches of learning generally draw, such as Theology, liturgical studies, Patristics, and Canon Law, as the Second Vatican Council teaches (see the decree on the education of priests, *Optatam Totius*, 13).’ (‘Nostris quoque temporibus Latinae linguae et cultus cognitio perquam est necessaria ad fontes vestigandos ex quibus complures disciplinae ceteroqui hauriunt, exempli gratia Theologia, Liturgia, Patrologia et Ius Canonicum, quemadmodum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II docet (cfr Decretum de Institutione sacerdotali, *Optatam totius*, 13).’)

<sup>30</sup> Pope St John Paul II, Allocution to the winners of the 12<sup>th</sup> Vatican competition, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1978: ‘...in this you confer assistance of great value on the Roman Church, which has preserved the dignity of the language of Latium, since she always reckoned it to be a bond of unity, a visible sign of stability, and an instrument of mutual friendship’ (‘id facientes, Romanae Ecclesiae magni pretii auxilium confertis, quae Latii sermonis dignitatem servavit, quippe quod unitatis vinculum, stabilitatis aspectabile signum, mutuae necessitudinis instrumentum semper existimaret.’)

<sup>31</sup> *Officiorum omnium*: ‘Since Latin is such a language, it was divinely foreseen that it should be something marvellously useful for the Church as teacher, and that it should also serve as a great bond of unity for Christ’s more learned faithful; that is to say, by giving them not only something with which, whether they are separated in different locations or gathered into one place, they might easily compare the respective thoughts and insights of their minds, but also – and this is even more important – something with which they might understand more profoundly the things of mother Church, and might be united more closely with the head of the Church.’

<sup>32</sup> *Lingua Latina* 1: ‘Latina Lingua permagni ab Ecclesia Catholica Romanisque Pontificibus usque est aestimata, quandoquidem ipsorum propria habita est lingua’

## Latin as the Language of the Church

11. The importance of Latin as a common language for the Church is worth developing further. At the Second Vatican Council the participants and their advisers were able to make and understand speeches and interventions, and to consider multiple versions of proposed documents, in a single language, Latin.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, research has indicated that careful thinking is aided by the use of a non-cradle language.<sup>34</sup> A discussion among the bishops of the world along these lines would today be impossible, raising the question of whether the Church could again hold a General Council, should the need arise.
12. Multilingual organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union, despite abundant resources, face great difficulties. It is not possible to produce a document in several languages and assert with conviction that all the versions have precisely the same meaning. If, instead, the product of a multilingual deliberation is an official document in a single language, then those familiar with that language are given an enormous and unfair advantage. It is not surprising, then, that international diplomacy has a strong tendency towards a *lingua franca* (whether Latin, French, or English), a language in which every educated person can comment intelligently, and with mutual comprehension, on texts under discussion, and understand the significance of proposed changes, however small.
13. The need for precision in discussing and formulating documents is enormously greater in the Church than in secular diplomacy, and the importance of bishops gathered in Synod or General Council to be able to contribute to, and understand, discussions, is of the highest significance. The lack of Latin today, even at the higher ranks of the clergy, has contributed to a tendency towards using some convenient vernacular language in a particular meeting, or for the development of a particular document. This is problematic, because it places at a disadvantage, not to say disenfranchises, those less familiar with the language used,<sup>35</sup> and creates a linguistic gap between discussions and the official documents, in Latin, which derive from them. A situation in which an important Latin proposition is not actually discussed by those in whose name a document is promulgated, since they discussed instead a form of words in some other language which a translator thought equivalent, has the potential for disaster.
14. There is no practical alternative to magisterial documents, with rare exceptions, being promulgated in Latin,<sup>36</sup> since they must be able to refer to and develop the formulations

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<sup>33</sup> The advantages of Latin as a common language are not limited to clerics, or to Catholics. The Anglican apologist C.S. Lewis carried on a correspondence in Latin from 1948 to 1961 with an Italian priest, and saint, St Giovanni Calabria, and after the latter's death with members of his congregation, this being their only language in common. (See *The Latin Letters of C.S. Lewis: C.S. Lewis & Don Giovanni Calabria* edited and translated by Martin Moynihan (South Bend, Indiana: St Augustine's Press, 1998))

<sup>34</sup> Boaz Keysar, Sayuri L. Hayakawa and Sun Gyu An: "The Foreign Language Effect: Thinking in a Foreign Tongue Reduces Decision Biases" *Psychological Science* 2012 23: 661-668, 666: 'The foreign-language effect on decision making is most likely determined by multiple factors that increase psychological distance and promote deliberation.'

<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Veterum Sapientia* (1962) 3: 'Of its very nature Latin is most suitable for promoting every culture among diverse peoples, for it gives no rise to jealousies, it does not favour any one group, but presents itself with equal impartiality, gracious and friendly to all.' ('Suae enim sponte naturae lingua Latina ad provehendum apud populos quoslibet omnem humanitatis cultum est peraccommodata: cum invidiam non commoveat, singulis gentibus se acquabilem praestet, nullius partibus faveat, omnibus postremo sit grata et amica.')

<sup>36</sup> Something reaffirmed in *Lingua Latina* 2: 'Furthermore, to manifest the universal nature of the Church, the liturgical texts of the Roman Rite have their paradigmatic form in the Latin language, as do the

of earlier Latin documents in a seamless way, and must not be rendered misleading or incomprehensible by the rapid changes typical of vernacular languages.

15. The Church today is a community without a common language. She has, instead, a number of overlapping languages, between which communication proceeds through translators of varied expertise, many of them working for the media or on the internet. Ease of communication in the Church, both between nations and between generations, is steadily decaying as an older generation who benefitted from a Latin education are replaced by a younger generation who, frequently, did not. It is not surprising that Canon Law, and the Papal Magisterium, has been so emphatic about the importance of Latin. It is a matter of utmost urgency that Latin be restored to its former place of honour in seminaries, and also in Catholic schools.

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principal documents of the Magisterium and the solemn, official acts of the Roman Pontiffs.' ('In hac praeterea lingua, ut universalis Ecclesiae natura pateat, typica forma sunt scripti liturgici libri Romani Ritus, praestantiora Magisterii pontificii Documenta necnon sollemniora Romanorum Pontificum officialia Acta.')

## Appendix: Some Practical Considerations.

### A. The state of Latin in Catholic schools and seminaries

On the basis of informal research carried out by FIUV, it is possible to generalise that the teaching of Latin has become, within the Church as in secular educational establishments, the mark of elite institutions. The best seminaries, notably in Rome, still maintain a certain standard of Latin, but at the other extreme there are many seminaries around the world which offer no Latin at all. Others, perhaps a majority, maintain a low level of Latin, aimed at giving students the ability to pronounce it correctly and a grasp of basic vocabulary and grammar. Typically it is taught for a single year, and not in a very intense way. This level of Latin is almost useless: since it cannot be employed for academic studies, it is likely to be neglected after the course is over and soon forgotten.

The Bishops' Conference of the United States has received permission from the Congregation for Catholic Education to omit Latin from the curriculum, on the grounds that they wished to use the time for other subjects, including Spanish. The words of Pope St John XXIII seem apposite:

Should circumstances of time and place demand the addition of other subjects to the curriculum besides the usual ones, then either the course of studies must be lengthened, or these additional subjects must be condensed or their study relegated to another time.<sup>37</sup>

Catholic schools around the world are in an even worse state: even the best schools generally retain Latin only as an option, and the standards required for many public examinations are incomparably lower than they were 50 years ago. This makes the work of seminaries much more challenging, even in countries with a well-established network of Catholic schools.

### B. How Latin can be taught

In *Sacrificium laudis* Bl. Pope Paul VI noted, addressing religious superiors:

Of course, the Latin language presents some difficulties, and perhaps not inconsiderable ones, for the new recruits to your holy ranks. But such difficulties, as you know, should not be reckoned insuperable.<sup>38</sup>

Certainly, the teaching of Latin to seminarians today presents difficulties greater than in former times. We may usefully make some observations derived from the experience of teaching ancient languages to adults at university level, where these languages, when necessary for a degree course, can rarely be taken for granted among school-leavers. While less than ideal, a combination of intensive courses over the summer in preparation for the course, and intensive tuition at the beginning of a course, can make possible the use of an ancient language within the degree course itself. This leads to the language being embedded in the students' memories and steadily improved.

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<sup>37</sup> *Veterum Sapientia* 11.4: 'Quodsi, vel temporum vel locorum postulante cursu, ex necessitate aliae sint ad communes adiciendae disciplinae, tunc ea de causa aut studiorum porrigatur curriculum, aut disciplinae eadem in breve cogantur, aut denique earum studium ad aliud reiciatur tempus.'

<sup>38</sup> *Sacrificium laudis*: 'Procul dubio lingua latina sacrae militiae vestrae tironibus aliquam et fortasse haud tenuem difficultatem opponit. Haec autem, quemadmodum novistis, talis non est habenda, ut vinci et superari non possit.'

To give a single concrete example, Theology students at Oxford University, who may have little aptitude for New Testament Greek, which is usually regarded as more difficult than Latin, are coached intensively in their first two terms, though not to the exclusion of other studies, and then take an examination. The examination stretches candidates by including a section calling for translation from English into Greek, but a pass may be secured, even by candidates whose gifts are not primarily linguistic, by a translation of Greek into English, from St Mark's Gospel, whose Greek is relatively simple. Adopting a similar model for Latin, at seminary, and perhaps taking advantage of seminarians' Propaedeutic year, Latin teaching after the first two terms would absorb fewer syllabus hours, and would be able to build upon a secure foundation. Needless to say, Classical Latin need not be taught in seminaries, but the Latin of the Liturgy and the Latin Fathers, with its freer grammar and much more limited vocabulary. Resources could also usefully be provided for students to put in some groundwork before arriving at seminary.

### C: Latin and the laity

It is worth noting that the Church's intention has never been for Latin to be an exclusively clerical language, and nor has this historically been the case. The laity too are urged to study Latin, an important point for the consideration of all Catholic schools and colleges. Thus we read Pope Pius XI, in *Officiorum omnium*:

But if, in any layman who is indeed imbued with literature, ignorance of the Latin language, which we can truly call the 'catholic' language, indicates a certain sluggishness in his love towards the Church, how much more fitting it is that each and every cleric should be adequately practised and skilled in that language!<sup>39</sup>

Pope St John Paul II was no less emphatic fifty six years later.

So we turn firstly to the youngsters, who at this time in which, as is known, Latin letters and the studies of humanity are prostrate in many places—they ought to receive enthusiastically this (so to speak) patrimony of Latin which the Church reckons of great value and actively to render it fruitful. Let them realise that this remark of Cicero (*Brutus* 37, 140) can be in a certain way referred to themselves: 'It is not so much a matter of distinction to know Latin as it is disgraceful not to know it.' But we exhort all you who are here present and the colleagues who help you, to continue the noble work and elevate the condition of Latin which is also—even though within narrower limits than was once the case—a sort of link among people of different speech. Know that the Successor of Saint Peter in the supreme ministry prays that there be happy results for what you have begun, that he is present with you, and that he strengthens you.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> 'Quod si in quopiam homine laico, qui quidem sit tinctus litteris, latinae linguae, quam dicere catholicam vere possumus, ignoratio quemdam amoris erga Ecclesiam languorem indicat, quanto magis omnes clericos, quotquot sunt, decet eiusdem linguae satis gnaros esse atque peritos!'

<sup>40</sup> Pope St John Paul II, Address to the Latinitas Foundation, 27<sup>th</sup> November 1978 (*Acta Apostolae Sedis* Vol 74 (1979) pp44-46): 'Ad juvenes ergo imprimis convertimur, qui hac aetate, qua litterae Latinae et humanitatis studia multis locis, ut notum est, jacent, hoc veluti Latinitatis patrimonium, quod Ecclesia magni aestimat, alacres accipiant oportet et actuosi frugiferum reddant. Noverint ii hoc Ciceronis effatum (*Brutus* 37,140) ad se quodam modo referri "Non ... tam praeclearum est scire Latine, quam turpe nescire". Omnes autem vos qui hic adestis, et socios qui vobis opitulantur, adhortamur ut pergatis nobilem laborem et attollatis faciem Latinitatis quae est etiam, licet arctioribus quam antea finibus circumscriptum, vinculum quoddam inter homines sermone diversos. Scitote beati Petri in summo ministerio Successorem incepti vestri felices exitus precari, vobis adesse, vos confirmare.'