

In Christ

Dear Parents,

We are finishing up the second week of school and I have enjoyed greeting the children in carpool, meeting them in assembly, speaking with them in classes and offering our first Mass together. It is a real pleasure to spend time answering their questions. They have impressed me with both their knowledge and their curiosity. One question I've gotten recently was "what do you like most about being a priest?" I told the students that I love offering Mass for the people and I love sharing with people the Catholic faith and traditions.

Something we are doing this year to foster the Catholic identity of the students is embracing the tradition of using Latin for a few parts of the Mass. We will also be singing common and traditional Catholic hymns.

This use of Latin will not exclude the use of English in the majority of the Mass. The students will be taught to sing the penitential rite which is customarily sung in ancient Greek (e.g. *Kyrie eleison*). They will also be taught the Latin for the Holy Holy (*Sanctus*), and the Lamb of God (*Agnus Dei*). The majority of the prayers, the readings, the homily, and the majority of the songs will be in English.

Latin is fitting because the Church is universal; a community made up of many ethnic, and national identifications, and generations. We offer the Mass to God as his one and universal Church. Pope St. John XXIII wrote that Latin is "a most effective bond, binding the Church of today with that of the past and of the future in wonderful continuity."

One of the most beautiful things I've ever experienced is going to a Mass in Rome where the congregation was made up of people from all over the world. Despite our differences in culture and language, we were all able to sing parts of the Mass and hymns together in Latin. This is one of the reasons the Church still encourages us to learn parts of the Mass in the universal language of the Church. So that we have unity in our prayer. A document on music from the Vatican, quoting the Second Vatican Council, emphasizes the responsibility of pastors by saying "Pastors of souls should take care that besides the vernacular 'the faithful may also be able to say or sing together in Latin those parts of the Ordinary of the Mass which pertain to them'" (*Musicam sacram*).

Your children are so capable of learning and adapting. Now is the best time in their lives to implement this Church discipline so that they will be familiar with it as they move into adulthood. They will quickly learn these sung prayers. This will unite them to Catholics throughout the world and to the holy saints throughout time. It will also provide them with familiarity of the beautiful and important Latin language. Pope St. Paul VI wrote, "The Latin language is assuredly worthy of being defended with great care instead of being scorned; for the Latin Church it is the most abundant source of Christian civilization and the richest treasury of piety." More recently, in 2017, addressing academics and Latin teachers, Pope Francis said that they should "know how to speak to the hearts of the young, know how to treasure the very rich heritage of the Latin tradition to educate them in the path of life, and accompany them along paths rich in hope and confidence."

Despite these minor changes for the students, the Mass will still be the Mass. They will still be taught above all of God's love for them. We will continue to be gentle with the children as we educate them to come to and participate fully in the Mass. All grade levels will be gift bearers. We will have 8th Grade banner bearers and are forming a liturgy team of middle school students who will serve as lectors and readers. All students will still be encouraged to join the choir and assist with the Mass as altar servers. We will continue to celebrate the beloved traditions of the Most Blessed Sacrament school community, even as we newly embrace timeless Catholic tradition.

I promise to *try* to always preach well to them in terms they can understand and appreciate. I want nothing more than to help your children become saints through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in his Church. I cannot promise I will do everything the way everyone is accustomed to. Every priest is different, just like every person, and change of style and personality is inevitable. The one thing that has not changed is that you have a pastor who loves you, your children, and the Church. I ask you to trust that this genuine love is the motivation of what I do as a pastor. I will not be perfect, for that I ask for your patience and prayers.

Totus Tuus,