



LATIN PRAYERS AND HYMNS

Of its very nature, Latin is most suitable for promoting every form of culture among peoples. It gives rise to no jealousies. It does not favour any one nation, but presents itself with equal impartiality to all and is equally acceptable to all.

The Church - because it embraces all nations and is destined to endure to the end of time - of its very nature requires a language which is universal, immutable, and non-vernacular. Modern languages are liable to change, and no single language is superior to the others in authority. Thus, if the truths of the Catholic Church were entrusted to an unspecified number of them, the meaning of these truths would not be manifested to everyone with sufficient clarity and precision. There would also be no language which could serve as a common and constant norm by which to gauge the exact meaning of other renderings. But Latin is indeed such a language. It is set and unchanging. It has long since ceased to be affected by those alterations in the meaning of words which are the normal result of daily, popular use.

Finally, the Catholic Church has a dignity far surpassing that of every merely human society, for it was founded by Christ the Lord. It is altogether fitting, therefore, that the language it uses should be noble, majestic, and non-vernacular. In addition, the Latin language can be called truly catholic. It is a general passport to the proper understanding of the Christian writers of antiquity and the documents of the Church's teaching. It is also a most effective bond, binding the Church of today with that of the past and of the future in wonderful continuity.

*Various Excerpts from Pope John XXIII, Veterum Sapientia
(An Apostolic Constitution on the Promotion of the Study of Latin),
February 22, 1962*