Church Latin Pronuntiatio

Church Latin, also called ecclesiastical Latin, is Latin said the Italian way. It's the sound of most choirs and of the Latin Mass. Classical Latin, the way Romans spoke, sounds a little different: the table shows both.

Vowels: ah as in father, eh as in bed, ee as in see, oh, oo as in moon. Keep them pure and short, with no glide at the end. Two vowels side by side are both said: DEH-ee, eh-LEH-ee-sohn. ae and oe are one sound, eh.

Spelling	In church Latin	Example	Classical	Church
c before e, i, ae, oe	ch as in church	caelum heaven, the sky	KYE-loom	CHEH-loom
c anywhere else	k	credo I believe	KREH-doh	KREH-doh
g before e, i	j as in gem	angelus angel	AHN-geh-loos	AHN-jeh-loos
sc before e, i	sh as in ship	descendit he came down	deh-SKEHN-deet	deh-SHEHN-deet
xc before e, i	ksh	excelsis the highest	ehks-KEHL-sees	ehk-SHEHL-sees
gn	ny as in canyon	agnus lamb	AHNG-noos	AH-nyoos
ti before a vowel	tsee, but not after s, t, x	tentationem temptation	tehn-tah-tee-OH-nehm	tehn-tah-tsee-OH-nehm
h	silent	hodie today	HOH-dee-eh	OH-dee-eh
h in mihi, nihil	k	mihi to me	MEE-hee	MEE-kee
ae, oe	eh as in bed	saecula ages	SYE-koo-lah	SEH-koo-lah
v	v as in voice	vobiscum with you	woh-BEES-koom	voh-BEES-koom
ch	k	Christe O Christ	KREE-steh	KREE-steh
j, or i before a vowel	y as in yes	Iesus Jesus	YEH-soos	YEH-soos

Stress: the syllable in capitals. Chant books mark it with an accent on longer words, like Dóminus.

Double letters are held a little longer, as in Italian: mis-sa, ho-san-na.

s is always s as in see. Some choirs soften it a little between vowels.

Local styles: choirs in German-speaking countries often use a German style instead, with c before e and i said ts.

No lines over the vowels: church books print Latin without macrons, the marks for long vowels you see in dictionaries, and so does this sheet. Some older books print j and oe: Jesus, justum, coelum. The sound is the same.

More Latin from Kitsumi: classical sounds and first words on Basic Latin words, everyday Latin on Latin phrases you already use, and the Latin of hospitals on Latin for medicine.

The Mass Missa

Two kinds of parts: the Ordinary keeps the same words every day: Kyrie eleison, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei, with the Benedictus sung after the Sanctus. Composers set these texts to music, so a Mass by Palestrina, Bach or Mozart sings them. The Proper changes with the day, like the Introitus.

Introitus een-TROH-ee-toos changes daily

a going in, the entrance

the entrance chant, sung as the priest comes in. Its words change with the day

Kyrie eleison KEE-ree-eh eh-LEH-ee-sohn Greek

Lord, have mercy

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Greek, not Latin: the only Greek in the fixed parts. Kyrie is Greek for Domine, Lord

Gloria GLOH-ree-ah

glory

Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

a hymn of praise for Sundays outside Advent and Lent, and feasts

Credo KREH-doh

I believe

Credo in unum Deum,

I believe in one God,

the Creed, said or sung on Sundays and great feasts

Sanctus SAHNK-toos

holy

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts.

Sabaoth is Hebrew: hosts, armies, the hosts of heaven

Benedictus beh-neh-DEEK-toos

blessed

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Hosanna in excelsis.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

follows on from the Sanctus; often its own movement in choir music

Agnus Dei AH-nyoos DEH-ee

Lamb of God

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis. … dona nobis pacem.

Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. … give us peace.

sung three times before Communion; the third ends dona nobis pacem

Ite, missa est EE-teh MEES-sah ehst

go, it is sent

Ite, missa est. Deo gratias.

Go, it is sent. Thanks be to God.

the dismissal and the people's answer. The word Mass comes from this missa

The answers: the priest says, the people reply

Priest	People	
Dominus vobiscum. The Lord with you.	**Et cum spiritu tuo.** And with your spirit.	no verb in the Latin: be is understood
Oremus. Let us pray.		before a prayer said by the priest
Sursum corda. Hearts upward.	**Habemus ad Dominum.** We have them to the Lord.	in the dialogue before the Sanctus
Gratias agamus Domino Deo nostro. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.	**Dignum et iustum est.** It is worthy and just.	word for word, let us do thanks: gratias agere is to give thanks
Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum. The peace of the Lord be always with you.	**Et cum spiritu tuo.** And with your spirit.	sit is may it be

Domine, non sum dignus, ut intres sub tectum meum: sed tantum dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea.

Lord, I am not worthy that you should come in under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul will be healed.

said by everyone before Communion

Common prayers Orationes

How to read them: the Latin is the standard text, as printed in prayer books and missals. Under each line, what it says, kept close to the Latin so you can match the words. Latin often leaves out is and are: Dominus tecum is the Lord with you.

Gloria Patri Glory be to the Father

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,
As it was in the beginning, and now, and always,

et in saecula saeculorum. Amen.
and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Signum Crucis the Sign of the Cross

In nomine Patris,
In the name of the Father,

et Filii,
and of the Son,

et Spiritus Sancti.
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.
Amen.

Pater Noster Our Father

Pater noster, qui es in caelis,
Our Father, who are in heaven,

sanctificetur nomen tuum.
may your name be made holy.

Adveniat regnum tuum.
May your kingdom come.

Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in caelo et in terra.
May your will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth.

Panem nostrum quotidianum da nobis hodie,
Give us today our daily bread,

et dimitte nobis debita nostra,
and forgive us our debts,

sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.
as we also forgive our debtors.

Et ne nos inducas in tentationem,
And do not lead us into temptation,

sed libera nos a malo. Amen.
but free us from evil. Amen.

Ave Maria Hail Mary

Ave Maria, gratia plena,
Hail Mary, full of grace,

Dominus tecum.
the Lord with you.

Benedicta tu in mulieribus,
Blessed you among women,

et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Iesus.
and blessed the fruit of your womb, Jesus.

Sancta Maria, Mater Dei,
Holy Mary, Mother of God,

ora pro nobis peccatoribus,
pray for us sinners,

nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.
now and at the hour of our death.

Amen.
Amen.

Spelling: some books print quotidianum as cotidianum, the same word. Pater noster puts our after Father; Latin often does that with my, your and our.

Words you hear and see Verba

Heard in the Mass and in choir music: the pink line is how to say it, the church way. Three of them, amen, alleluia and hosanna, came into Latin from Hebrew.

Dominus
DOH-mee-noos
lord, master; the Lord
from domus, house: the master of the house

Deus
DEH-oos
God
Dei, Deo, Deum: page 5

Spiritus Sanctus
SPEE-ree-toos SAHNK-toos
the Holy Spirit
spiritus is also breath, wind

ecclesia
ehk-KLEH-see-ah
church: the people and the building
from Greek ekklesia, a gathering

sacerdos
sah-CHEHR-dohs
priest
sacer is holy

missa
MEES-sah
the Mass
from Ite, missa est, page 2

gratia
GRAH-tsee-ah
grace
gratias, plural: thanks, as in Deo gratias

pax
PAHKS
peace
Pax Domini, page 2

lux
LOOKS
light
lux aeterna, eternal light, in the Requiem

requiem
REH-kwee-ehm
rest
a Requiem is a Mass for the dead, named after its first words, Requiem aeternam, eternal rest

amen
AH-mehn
truly, so be it
Hebrew, kept as it was

alleluia
ahl-leh-LOO-yah
praise the Lord
Hebrew hallelu yah, praise God. Left out during Lent

hosanna
oh-SAHN-nah
a shout of praise
Hebrew, first meaning save us, we pray

in excelsis
een ehk-SHEHL-sees
in the highest
Gloria in excelsis Deo

saecula saeculorum
SEH-koo-lah seh-koo-LOH-room
ages of ages
in saecula saeculorum: for ever and ever

Letters on buildings, crosses and graves

IHS	Jesus, in Greek letters	the first three letters of his name in Greek capitals, iota, eta, sigma. Later also read as Iesus Hominum Salvator, Jesus, Saviour of mankind
INRI	Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews	on the cross in paintings and on crucifixes
AMDG	Ad maiorem Dei gloriam to the greater glory of God	the motto of the Jesuits
D.O.M.	Deo Optimo Maximo to God, the best and greatest	over church doors and on monuments; the words come from an old Roman dedication
A.D.	Anno Domini in the year of the Lord	years counted from the traditional year of Jesus' birth. Careful writing puts it first: AD 2026
R.I.P.	Requiescat in pace may he or she rest in peace	on graves

A little grammar Grammatica

One word, five endings: Latin shows a word's job with its ending, not with word order. Dominus changes its ending all through the prayers. Learn these five and you will spot them all through the Mass.

Form	Its job	English	Where you've seen it
Dominus	the one who does it	the Lord	**Dominus vobiscum** p.2 · **Dominus tecum** p.3
Domine	calling to him	O Lord	**Domine, non sum dignus** p.2
Domini	of	of the Lord	**Pax Domini** p.2 · **in nomine Domini** p.2 · **Anno Domini** p.4
Domino	to, for	to the Lord	**Gratias agamus Domino** p.2
Dominum	the one it's done to; after ad, to	the Lord	**Habemus ad Dominum** p.2

Deus works the same way

Deus	the one who does it	God	**Dominus Deus Sabaoth** p.2
Dei	of	of God	**Agnus Dei** p.2 · **Mater Dei** p.3
Deo	to, for	to God	**in excelsis Deo** p.2 · **Deo gratias** p.2
Deum	the one it's done to; after ad, to	God	**Credo in unum Deum** p.2

Calling out to God: Deus has no separate calling form; the prayers use Deus itself, or Domine.

Asking: the command form

ora pro nobis
pray for us
orare, to pray

dona nobis pacem
give us peace
donare, to give

miserere nobis
have mercy on us
misereri, to have mercy

da nobis hodie
give us today
dare, to give

dimitte nobis
forgive us
dimittere, to forgive

libera nos a malo
free us from evil
liberare, to free

Asking one person: drop the -re of the dictionary form: orare, ora; dimittere, dimitte. miserere is the odd one: it looks like a dictionary form, but it is the command of misereri. nobis is to us or for us; nos is us.

Wishes: the Pater Noster asks in a softer way: **sanctificetur**, may it be made holy, **adveniat**, may it come, **fiat**, may it be done.

Seasons and feasts

Adventus
Advent, the season of four Sundays before Christmas
arrival, coming

Nativitas Domini
Christmas
the birth of the Lord

Quadragesima
Lent, the forty days before Easter
the fortieth

Pascha
Easter
from Hebrew pesach, Passover

Pentecoste
Pentecost, the fiftieth day of Easter
Greek for the fiftieth

Practice Exercitatio

6 · twenty lines · answers at the bottom

How: say the word the church way, say what the Latin means, or name the part of the Mass from its English. Say each answer out loud, then check the small print at the bottom.

1	Say it the church way	pacem	2	Say it the church way	dignum
3	Say it the church way	regnum	4	Say it the church way	gratias
5	Say it the church way	caelis	6	Say it the church way	sanctificetur
7	Say it the church way	benedicta	8	What does it mean?	Dominus vobiscum
9	What does it mean?	Oremus	10	What does it mean?	dona nobis pacem
11	What does it mean?	ora pro nobis	12	What does it mean?	Deo gratias
13	What does it mean?	lux	14	What does it mean?	in excelsis
15	Which part of the Mass?	the chant as the priest comes in	16	Which part of the Mass?	Lord, have mercy
17	Which part of the Mass?	Glory to God in the highest	18	Which part of the Mass?	I believe in one God
19	Which part of the Mass?	Holy, holy, holy	20	Which part of the Mass?	Blessed is he who comes

Answers

1 PAH-chehm
2 DEE-nyoom
3 REH-nyoom
4 GRAH-tsee-ahs
5 CHEH-lees
6 sahnk-tee-fee-CHEH-toor
7 beh-neh-DEEK-tah
8 the Lord with you
9 let us pray
10 give us peace
11 pray for us
12 thanks be to God
13 light
14 in the highest
15 Introitus
16 Kyrie eleison
17 Gloria
18 Credo
19 Sanctus
20 Benedictus

Meet a word you don't know? In Kitsumi, hover any word in subtitles to see what it means.