

Church remains 'patroness and protector' of Latin

By C.S. Morrissey
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How old is the Pontifical Academy for Latin?

Trick question! Pope Benedict XVI just created it Nov. 10, by issuing a special document "motu proprio" ("on his own initiative"). Written in Latin, the document is called *Latina Lingua* (*The Latin Language*). By creating this academy, Pope Benedict has revealed in writing his intent to promote vigorously the study of Latin and its literature.

"Because it has the power of transmitting the message of the Gospel to the entire world," writes Pope Benedict, "the Latin language has continuously received the great esteem of the Catholic Church and the Roman Pontiffs, who have carefully taken pains to make this language widely known, inasmuch as they consider it their own language."

"After the fall of the Roman Empire in the west, the

Roman Church has not only continued to use the Latin language, but she has also effectively become the patroness and protector of this language, both in theology and the liturgy, as well as in the realm of education and the transmission of knowledge."

Pope John XXIII codified 50 years ago (in his apostolic constitution *Veterum Sapientia*) the importance of Latin for the Church. So too Pope Benedict now emphasizes that the knowledge of Latin is today still necessary for a proper understanding of liturgy, theology, and canon law.

However, "in today's culture, in which humanistic literary studies have been in decline, there is the danger that knowledge of Latin will be only superficial, something which is noticeable even in the theology and philosophy programs of future priests," he warns.

But, "on the other hand," there is hope, because even



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Burning lamps and an inscription are seen at St. Peter's tomb in the Vatican. The Latin inscription acknowledges the inauguration of the new "confessio" in 1615 by Pope Paul V. The Vatican recently established a new Latin Academy.

"in our world in which science and technology hold pride of place, there is still found a renewal in the study of the Latin language and culture," notes the Pope,

"and not only on those continents which have their own cultural roots in the Greek and Latin patrimony.

"This fact is particularly noteworthy, because not

only does this fresh interest involve the realm of universities and education, but it is spreading even among young people and inquiring minds from the most diverse nations and traditions."

The new Pontifical Academy for Latin will report to the Pontifical Council for Culture. It replaces the *Latinitas* Foundation established by Pope Paul VI, because Benedict XVI apparently wants the new academy to coordinate a more effective promotion of Latin.

Professor Ivano Dionigi, appointed its first president for a five-year term, and Father Roberto Spataro, SDB, appointed its secretary, will see that the academy produces publications, hosts conferences, organizes seminars, and raises awareness about Latin using new media.

St. Thomas Aquinas is a prime example of a truly great thinker who wrote beautifully in crystal-clear

Latin. Around the world, universities and seminaries benefit from promoting the study of all the best Latin authors, especially Aquinas.

In our own backyard, Archbishop Miller will be celebrating the feast day of Thomas Aquinas (Monday, Jan. 28) at Redeemer Pacific College in Langley, where he will say Mass and visit with students.

In anticipation of Aquinas's feast day, I will host two Thomas Aquinas Study Circle seminars Jan. 26 at Redeemer Pacific College (10 a.m. to noon, and 7 to 9 p.m.), where readings from Aquinas will be studied both in the original Latin and in English translation, with discussion open to all.

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