



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER
IN THE FORM OF "MOTU PROPRIO"
LATINA LINGUA
OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF
BENEDICT XVI
ESTABLISHING
THE PONTIFICAL ACADEMY FOR LATIN

1. The Latin language has always been held in very high esteem by the Catholic Church and by the Roman Pontiffs. They have assiduously encouraged the knowledge and dissemination of Latin, adopting it as the Church's language, capable of passing on the Gospel message throughout the world. This is authoritatively stated by the Apostolic Constitution *Veterum Sapientia* of my Predecessor, Blessed John XXIII.

Indeed the Church has spoken and prayed in the languages of all peoples since Pentecost. Nevertheless, the Christian communities of the early centuries made frequent use of Greek and Latin, languages of universal communication in the world in which they lived and through which the newness of Christ's word encountered the heritage of the Roman-Hellenistic culture.

After the fall of the Roman Empire of the West, the Church of Rome not only continued to use Latin but, in a certain way, made herself its custodian and champion in both the theological and liturgical sectors as well as in formation and in the transmission of knowledge.

2. In our time too, knowledge of the Latin language and culture is proving to be more necessary than ever for the study of the sources, which, among others, numerous ecclesiastical disciplines draw from, such as, for example, theology, liturgy, patristics and canon law, as the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council teaches (cf. Decree *Optatam Totius*, n. 13).

In addition, precisely in order to highlight the Church's universal character, the liturgical books of the Roman Rite, the most important documents of the Papal Magisterium and the most solemn official Acts of the Roman Pontiffs are written in this language in their authentic form.

3. Yet in today's culture, the danger of an increasingly superficial knowledge of Latin may be noted in the context of the widespread weakening of humanistic studies. This is also a risk in the context of the philosophical and theological studies of future priests. Moreover in our own world, in which science and technology play such an important role, there is a renewed interest in the Latin culture and language and not only on those continents whose culture is rooted in the Greco-Roman heritage. This attention seems all the more meaningful since it not only involves academic and institutional sectors but also concerns young people and scholars from very different nations and traditions.

4. It therefore appears urgently necessary to support the commitment to a greater knowledge and more competent use of Latin, both in the ecclesial context and in the broader world of culture. In order to give relevance and resonance to this undertaking the use of didactic methods in keeping with the new conditions and the promotion of a network of relations between academic institutions and scholars is particularly appropriate so as to make the most of the rich and multiform patrimony of the Latin civilization.

To contribute to attaining these goals following in the footsteps of my venerable Predecessors, today, with this Motu Proprio, I establish the Pontifical Academy for Latin, under the Pontifical Council for Culture. It is governed by a President assisted by a Secretary, who are appointed by me, and by an Academic Council.

The Latinitas Foundation, erected by Paul VI with the Chirograph Romani Sermonis of 30 June 1976 is hereby replaced.

I order that this Apostolic Letter in the form of a Motu Proprio, with which I approve the attached Statutes ad experimentum, for five years, be published in L'Osservatore Romano.

Given at St Peter's in Rome on 10 November 2012, the Memorial of St Leo the Great, the eighth year of my Pontificate.

BENEDICTUS PP XVI