

Will We Go Back to Mass in Latin?

No, not at all! In fact, my Latin skills are far from great. I have never said Mass in Latin, and I have to humbly admit, I could not even if I was forced too, my pronunciation and comprehension are terrible. Nonetheless, celebrating Holy Mass *ad orientem/Deum* is not going back. In fact, it is going forward.

When we celebrate Mass all in the same direction, priest and people, we are really just doing what the Roman Missal tells us to do. Now, the Roman Missal is the big red book that the altar server holds and from which all of the prayers of the Mass are said. (On a side note - except for the homily and the prayers of the faithful, every word of the Mass is found in the Roman Missal; being a priest is easy!) The Missal has words written in black, those are the words the priest “says/prays” out loud. There are also words in red, these are the instructions on “how to” say Holy Mass - what to do. It gives instructions on the posture of the priest’s hands, the color of vestments, when incense is used etc. In a simplified sense, all that the priest has to do is “say” the black words and “do” the red words.

The Roman Missal, and we all know it was recently re-translated 5 years ago, still tells the priest to “face the people.” Why does it ask the priest to face the people, unless the priest is not facing the people? So, the book from which Mass is celebrated, presumes that the priest is celebrating *ad orientem/Deum*. The times where it asks the priest to turn and face the people are as follows:

After the offertory and preparation of the gifts: “Pray brothers and sisters that my sacrifice and yours will be...”

Prior to the Sign of Peace: “The peace of the Lord be with you...”

At the showing of the host prior to communion: “Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins...”

Notice how all three of these are during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Celebrating Mass *ad orientem/Deum*, only affects the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

One of the accomplishments of the Second Vatican Council was a renewal of the Liturgy. All of the sacraments were revised/updated and much good has come from the revisions. Prior to the Council much of the Mass was celebrated *ad orientem*, much more than just the Eucharistic prayer. When the Mass was revised, however, the union of posture between the priest and people facing the same direction during the Eucharistic Prayer was maintained, at least in the instructions, the red wording instructing the priest on how to pray the Mass. The option was given to celebrate Mass facing the people and most parishes took it as a rule and never promoted nor preserved the beauty of celebrating Mass facing the East/the Lord.

Please recall the goal of us introducing this here at All Saints is NOT to make Mass “facing the people,” seem lesser, bad, or liberal. That is not the point! The point is to have a deeper appreciation for the beauty and the fullness of our liturgical tradition and history. Just as it is an option to use bells, incense or to have singing at Mass, it is a valid option to celebrate Mass *ad orientem/Deum*. By taking this option we grow in our understanding of the Mass and our appreciation of it.

I do not like to look at this as going backwards or being “traditional.” I like to look at it as being faithful to the Roman Missal, taking all the options, experiencing the richness of our faith and doing something new. So, will I start saying Mass in Latin- NO. I would be better off saying Mass in Italian, but that is not happening either. Thank you for your patience and may we keep awaiting the coming of the Lord together, for He will come from the East!