

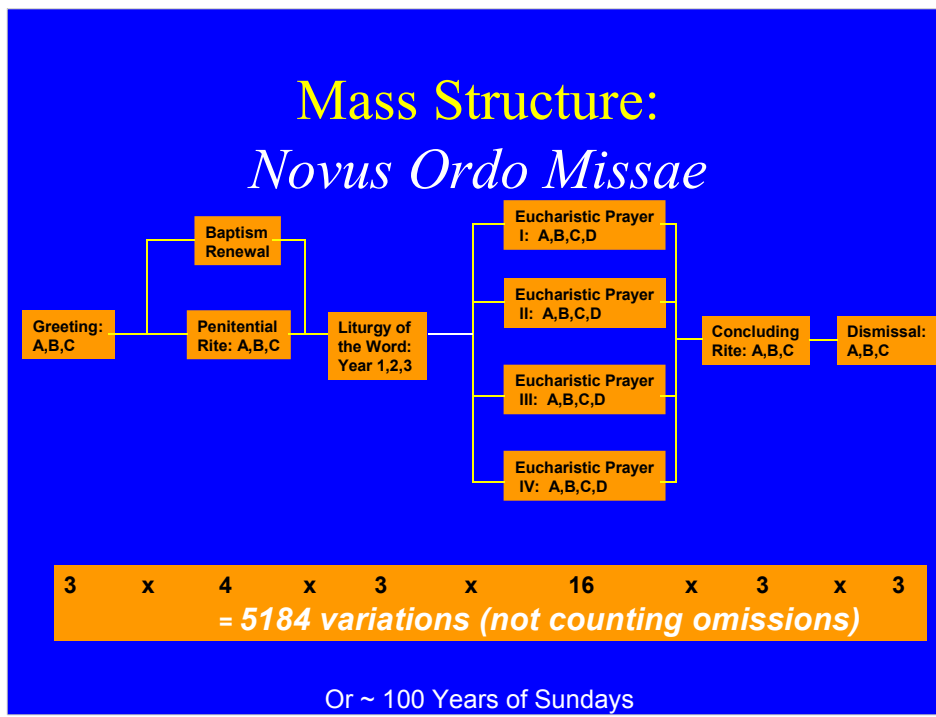
# A Comparison of the Two Forms of the Latin Rite

Mass Structures  
Orientation  
Language

The purpose of this presentation is to prepare you for what will very likely be your first Traditional Latin Mass (TLM). This is officially named “The Extraordinary Form of the Latin Rite.” We will try to do that by comparing it to what you already know - the *Novus Ordo Missae* (NOM). This is officially named “The Ordinary Form of the Latin Rite.”

In “Mass Structures” we will look at differences in form. While the TLM really has only one structure, the NOM has many options. As we shall see, it has so many in fact, that it is virtually impossible for the person in the pew to determine whether the priest actually performs one of the many variations according to the rubrics (rules) for celebrating the NOM.

Then, we will briefly examine the two most obvious differences in the performance of the Mass - the orientation of the priest (and people) and the language used. The orientation of the priest in the TLM is towards the altar. In this position, he is facing the same direction as the people, liturgical “east” and, in a traditional church, they are both looking at the tabernacle and/or crucifix in the center of the altar. The language of the TLM is, of course, Latin. It has been Latin since before the year 400. The NOM was written in Latin but is usually performed in the language of the immediate location - the vernacular.



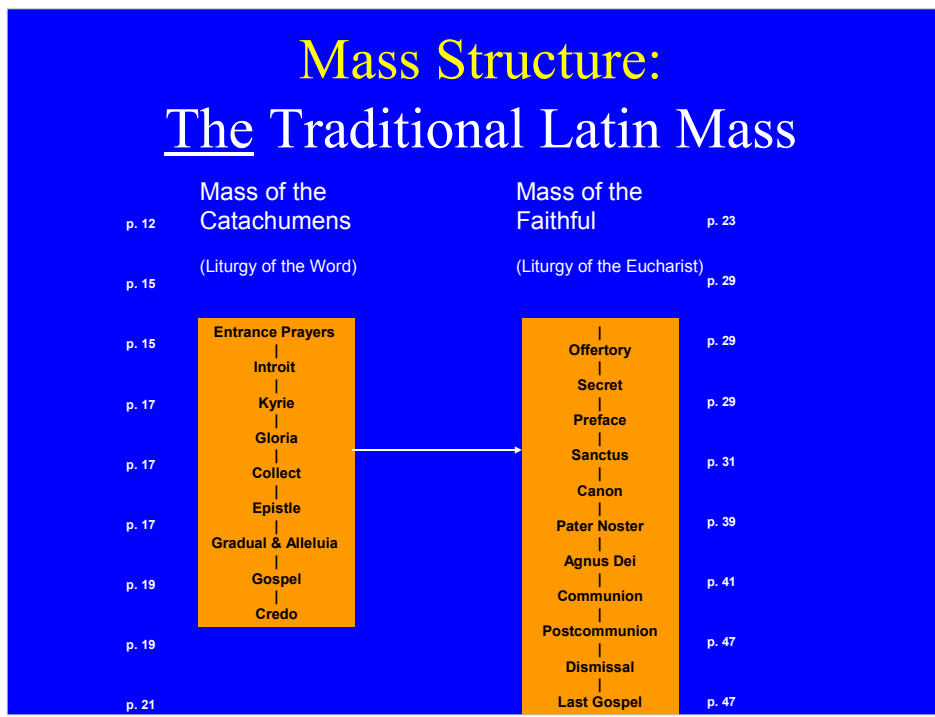
This is the Mass that most of you attend. The title means “New Order of Mass.” It is ‘new’ because it replaced, in 1970, a Mass that was 1500 years old, and, that is what its designers called it at the time of its introduction.

The new Mass is loaded with options! Besides the “normal” variation of the readings for the day, this Mass varies in content by its very structure and design. The variations shown are only those from the missalette. The presider has other options he may use depending on what his national bishop’s conference determines.

If you go to a different church from your normal one, there really is no way to know what to expect from the presider there. I have witnessed this Mass celebrated entirely in Latin. I have witnessed this Mass celebrated in English but with the priest facing the altar, not the people. I have been to this Mass where only the Consecration was delivered in Latin while the rest of the Mass was in English. All of these are at the choice of the priest and are variations in form not shown in the diagram above.

If you go to another country where the native language is not English, be prepared to be isolated from the local congregation, unless you speak the local language. If there is a missalette, it is also not in English. I have been to multiple *Novus Ordo* Masses in Germany and Italy, and one in China. I could not really “participate actively.”

# Mass Structure: The Traditional Latin Mass

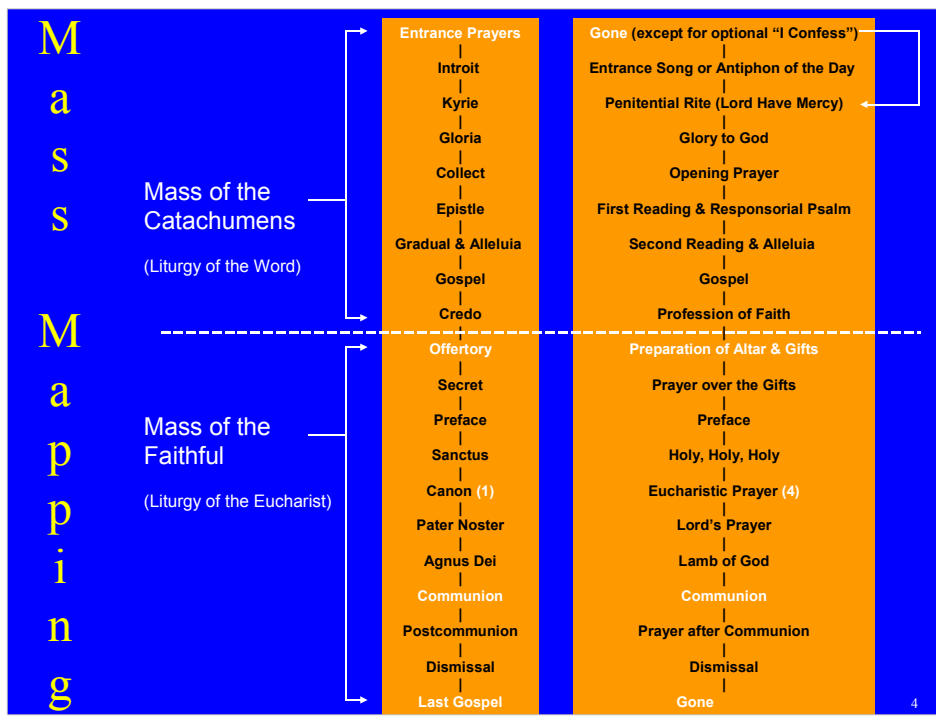


This is the structure of the TLM. It is monolithic by tradition. Its content has developed over time from the period when it was celebrated in Greek in the first two centuries to the time it became primarily in Latin (before the year 400). Small, incremental changes have been made to it over a millenium and a half until the last change was made to it in 1962. At that time, Pope St. John XXIII added St. Joseph's name to the Canon (the first and only non-martyr, other than our Blessed Mother, among the saints of the Canon).

Aside from the readings for the day, its content is fixed. And, there is only one set of readings for the liturgical year, unlike the three sets for Sundays and two sets for weekdays in the NOM. The page numbers refer to the pages in "Latin-English Booklet Missal" from the Coalition in Support of *Ecclesia Dei*. These, or something like them are usually available near the entrances of the locations that provide the TLM. Be sure you at least review one of these before going or before Mass begins.

There are very few options as we will see in a moment. (Seasonal variations occur, but those happen in the NOM as well.) There is no provision for the priest to improvise, therefore you find little variation from church to church. The language is always Latin, therefore you find little variation from nation to nation. It is truly "Catholic" as in universal through both time and space. I attended a Latin Mass in China - it was just like the one that I regularly attend in St. Louis - except for the sermon.

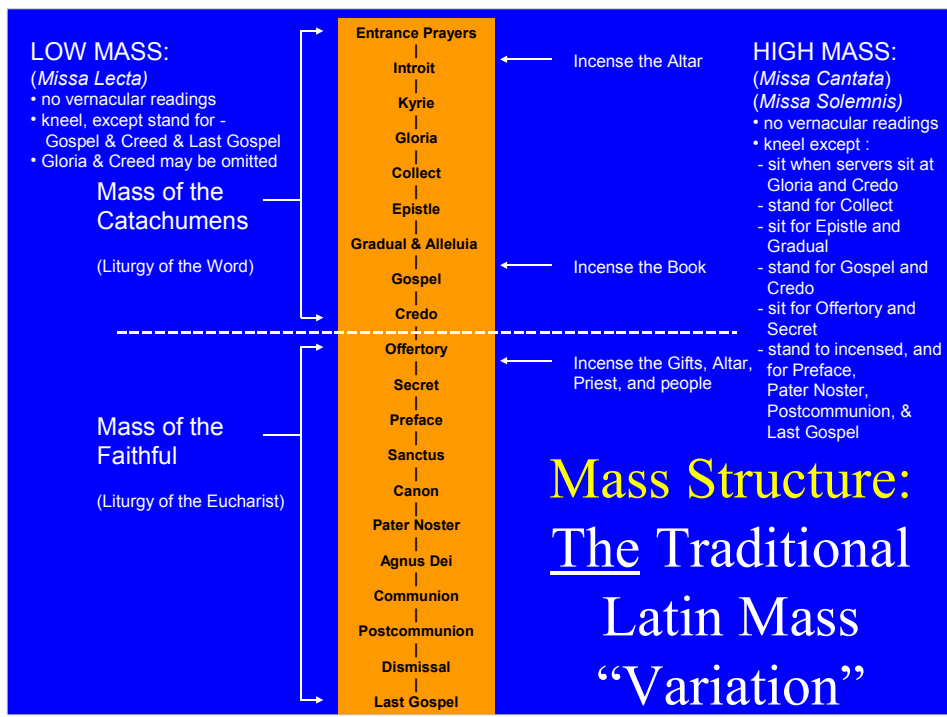
Let's see how these two Mass forms relate to one another.



This slide is an attempt to map the TLM to the NOM. Besides the parts that were simply deleted, not all of this mapping actually works very well. This is something of a “forced fit” to help explain the TLM in NOM terminology.

#### Key differences include:

- In the **Entrance Prayers**, the priest prepares himself to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass by praising God in Psalm 42 and confessing his unworthiness for the task at hand before he goes into (Introit) the altar of God. The servers and priest alternate verses of the Psalm. And the servers answer or complete or repeat the priest’s prayers on behalf of the people. In a few places the people also say the servers’ responses. This has been labeled a “Dialogue Mass.” But the content is the same.
- The **Offertory** of the TLM has been eviscerated in the NOM. Its prayers were deleted and the two Jewish meal blessings (“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation.....”) were inserted in their place.
- The **Canon** is very close to Eucharistic Prayer number one, except for a few very important words. But in line with the variable nature of the NOM, it has four Eucharistic Prayers to choose from.
- The **Communion** has been significantly altered in the NOM. Where there was a communion of the priest and then of the people in the TLM with more prayers accompanying each, the NOM has one collective Communion. Where only the Body of Christ is distributed in the TLM, on the tongue and kneeling, both species may be distributed in the NOM to the hand and standing. Where only a priest or deacon could distribute Communion, now Extraordinary Ministers are, in most places, commonplace.
- The **Last Gospel** is the beginning of St. John’s Gospel, which recounts how God became Man. This was the essential beginning of the Sacrifice that was to come and that has just been made again in an unbloody manner on the altar. Like the Consecration, where God becomes present among us, appearing to be only bread and wine, the Incarnation describes God becoming present by taking on human nature. It is said in every TLM. Those who attend the NOM hear it only once, as the Gospel for Christmas Day.



The TLM has a basic version, called a Low Mass, and a slightly more elaborate version called a High Mass. The latter has chant and incense. The former does not. If a Deacon assists the priest, the High Mass is called a *Missa Solemnis*, if not, it is called a *Missa Cantata*. But, High or Low, with the exception of the prayers for incensing, the structure is the same and the content is the same. You know as soon as you walk into church which version is going to occur. For a Low Mass, two candles are lit. For a High Mass, six are lit for the *Missa Solemnis* and four (or six) for a *Missa Cantata*.



If we take the basic structure of the TLM (without the incense prayers), we can map the actions of the priest and servers to the structure. On the left we see where the priest prays. On the right, we see what the servers do. This one-page summary is not a complete breakdown of the actions of the priest and servers, but it does indicate the primary actions that each carries out during the course of the Mass.

Note the locations: the foot of the altar, the center of the altar, the Epistle side, and the Gospel side. These locations have significance in the TLM. The foot of the altar is below the altar. It is the entry to and exit from the “Holy of Holies.” In a church designed for the TLM, the tabernacle is at the center of the altar. This is where the Real Presence is reserved. The priest and servers begin the Mass at the foot of the altar with prayers that acknowledge their unworthiness to be there and asking God to pardon their sins and hear their prayers. The Epistle side is on the right when you are facing the altar. From the point of view of the tabernacle, however, the Epistle side is to its left and the Gospel to its right. Consider what we say in the Creed - “He is seated at the right hand of the Father...” He, being the Word (Son) of God. The Gospel side and thus the text of the Gospels are in the place of honor at the right hand of the tabernacle. So, the early readings are done at the Epistle side and the server must move the book to the place of honor for the Gospel. (The priest will later slide it closer to the center of the altar for the Offertory and Canon (Eucharistic Prayer).) After Communion, the server moves it back to the Epistle side for the last variable readings for the day. The symbolism goes farther. When the priest says the Gospel, he does not face the altar directly, but turns slightly to his left. In the past, most churches were oriented so that the altar was at the eastern wall of the building. If the priest turned toward his left, he was turning toward liturgical “north.” This tradition dates from the days of the barbarian invasions of the empire and represents the preaching of the Gospel to the forces of darkness from the North.

# Liturgical Orientation



**Worship God  
(versus Deum)**

**Celebrate Community  
(versus populum)**

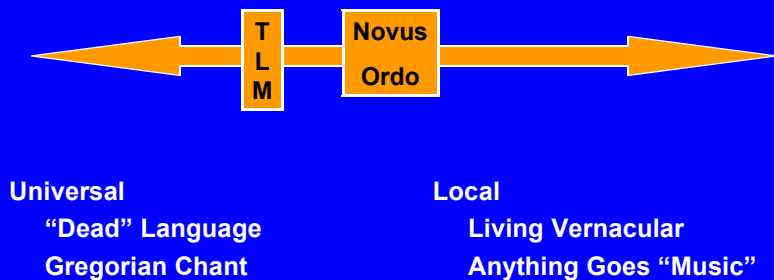
Where is the tabernacle?  
Architectural consequences  
Novus Ordo design (facing the altar)

From *The Spirit of the Liturgy* by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger:

“In what direction should we pray during the Eucharistic liturgy? (p.76) ... Because of topographical circumstances, it turned out that St. Peters faced west. Thus, if the celebrating priest wanted - as the Christian tradition of prayer demands - to face east, he had to stand behind the altar and look - this is the logical conclusion - toward the people... The liturgical renewal in our own century took up this alleged model... (p.77) This is, of course, a misunderstanding of the significance of the Roman basilica and of the positioning of its altar, and the representation of the Last Supper is also, to say the least, inaccurate. In the earliest days of Christianity, the head of table never took his place facing the other participants. Everyone sat or lay on the convex side of a C-shaped table, or of a table having the approximate shape of a horseshoe. The other side was always left empty for the service. Nowhere in Christian antiquity could anyone have come up with the idea that the man presiding at the meal had to take his place versus populum. The communal character of a meal was emphasized by precisely the opposite arrangement, namely, by the fact that everyone at the meal found himself on the same side of the table... (p.78)... Now the priest ... becomes the real point of reference for the whole liturgy... Less and less is God in the picture. More and more important is what is done by the human beings who meet here and do not like to subject themselves to a “predetermined pattern”. The turning of the priest toward the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is locked into itself. The common turning toward the East was not a ‘celebration towards a wall’; it did not mean that the priest ‘had his back to the people’;.... For just as the congregation in the synagogue looked together toward Jerusalem, so in the Christian liturgy the congregation looked together ‘toward the Lord’.... They did not lock themselves into a circle, they did not gaze at one another, but as the Pilgrim People of God they set off for the Oriens, for the Christ that comes to meet us ... (p.80). A common turning to the east during the Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of something accidental but of what is essential. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a question of dialog, but of common worship, of setting off toward the One who is to come. What corresponds with the reality of what is happening is not the closed circle, but the common movement forward expressed in a common direction for prayer.” (p.81)

I could say that in the *Novus Ordo Missae*, if the tabernacle is at the usual place, the priest turns his back to God. Some new churches have moved the tabernacle “offstage” to avoid this. Instead of being the focal point of the church, the tabernacle occupies an ancillary position to the table. In fact, the *Novus Ordo* was not designed for the priest to be facing the people – it has been permitted for the priest to assume this direction.

# Liturgical Language



Latin is unchanging. Meaning is fixed, stable. The vernacular is constantly changing. Liturgy in the vernacular will always be trying to “catch up” with the times (or correct translations). For example, before about 1953, the word “gay” was an adjective and a synonym for the word “merry”. Not so today. This prompts obvious questions:

- Should liturgy proclaim the truth of the faith in a constant way throughout the ages or should it try to fit that truth into many moving vernacular targets in order to make it more “accessible”?
- If we opt for “accessible”, to what age level should the grammar and vocabulary be directed? How far do we “dumb down” the liturgy?

The late Alfons Cardinal Stickler, a *peritus* (expert) at Vatican II, said the following in “The Attractiveness of the Tridentine Mass” in the summer, 1995, issue of the The Latin Mass magazine:

“The fathers of the Council (of Trent) knew very well that most of the faithful assisting at the Mass neither understood Latin nor were able to read translations. They were generally illiterate. The fathers also knew that the Mass contains a great deal of instruction for the faithful. Nevertheless they did not agree with the view held by Protestants that it was necessary to celebrate the Mass only in the vernacular. In order to provide instruction for the faithful, the Council ordered that the old custom (Latin) approved by the Holy Roman Church—the mother and teacher of all churches—be maintained everywhere, and that care should be had for souls in explaining the central mystery of the Mass.”

In short, don’t dumb it down, educate the faithful about the Mass. A similar argument can and has been made for the appropriate kind of music for worship.

To conclude this Introduction, let’s look at what the pope, now saint, who convened Vatican Council II had to say about language in the final Apostolic Constitution of his papacy.



## Liturgical Language

### *Veterum Sapientia* 02/22/62

- Pope John XXIII called for a council in 1959
- He released an encyclical, *Veterum Sapientia*, on February 22, 1962
- He convened Vatican Council II on October 11, 1962 (Its sessions were all conducted in Latin, the universal language of the Church.)
- His intent regarding Latin in this encyclical was consistent with his predecessors, and reflects the mindset of the Church as Vatican Council II opened.

From *Veterum Sapientia* (emphasis mine):

“The wisdom of the ancient world, enshrined in Greek and Roman literature, and the truly memorable teaching of ancient peoples, served, surely, to herald the dawn of the Gospel which God’s Son, ‘the judge and teacher of grace and truth, the light and guide of the human race,’ proclaimed on earth.... Thus the inauguration of Christianity did not mean the obliteration of man’s past achievements. Nothing was lost that was in any way true, just, noble and beautiful. The Church has ever held the literary evidences of this wisdom in the highest esteem. She values especially the Greek and Latin languages in which wisdom itself is cloaked, as it were, in a vesture of gold. ...But amid this variety of languages a primary place must surely be given to that language which had its origins in Latium, and later proved so admirable a means for the spreading of Christianity throughout the West. 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 favor any one nation, but presents itself with equal impartiality to all and is equally acceptable to all. Nor must we overlook the characteristic nobility of Latin formal structure. Its ‘concise, varied and harmonious style, full of majesty and dignity’ makes for singular clarity and impressiveness of expression. For these reasons the Apostolic See has always been at pains to preserve Latin, deeming it worthy of being used in the exercise of her teaching authority ‘as the splendid vesture of her heavenly doctrine and sacred laws.’ She further requires her sacred ministers to use it, for by so doing they are the better able, wherever they may be, to acquaint themselves with the mind of the Holy See on any matter, and communicate the more easily with Rome and with one another. Thus the ‘knowledge and use of this language,’ so intimately bound up with the Church’s life, ‘is important not so much on cultural or literary grounds, as for religious reasons.’ These are the words of Our Predecessor Pius XI, who conducted a scientific inquiry into this whole subject, and indicated three qualities of the Latin language which harmonize to a remarkable degree with the Church’s nature. ‘For the Church, precisely 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’ . . . In the exercise of their paternal care they (the bishops) shall be on guard lest anyone under their jurisdiction, eager for revolutionary changes, writes against the use of Latin in the teaching of the higher sacred studies or in the liturgy, or through prejudice makes light of the Holy See’s will in this regard or interprets it falsely.”