

Ecclesiastical Latin

Ecclesiastical Latin refers to the pronunciation and usages of Latin by the Catholic Church. In some respects, such as pronunciation, it differs from the Latin spoken by Caesar, Seneca and Cicero, called Classical Latin. Classical Latin is what classics departments in major universities teach, and is also the Latin taught on language tapes, unless Ecclesiastical Latin is specified. A characteristic difference would be the pronunciation of *regina coeli*. In Classical Latin the "g" is hard and the "c" sounds like "k". In Ecclesiastical Latin, which is defined as Latin spoken as Italian would be pronounced in Rome, the "g" is soft and the c has a "ch" sound.

The following pronunciation table is adapted from the *Liber Usalis*, one of the former chant books for Mass and Office. Its introduction to Gregorian Chant is also invaluable.

Vowels

A	<i>A</i> is pronounced as in the word <i>Father</i> , never as in the word <i>can</i> . We must be careful to get this open, warm sound, especially when <i>A</i> is followed by <i>M</i> or <i>N</i> as in <i>Sanctus, Nam</i> , etc.
E	<i>E</i> is pronounced as in <i>Red, men, met</i> ; never with the suspicion of a second sound as in <i>Ray</i> .
I	<i>I</i> is pronounced as <i>ee</i> in <i>Feet</i> , never as <i>i</i> in <i>milk</i> or <i>tin</i> .
O	<i>O</i> is pronounced as in <i>For</i> , never as in <i>go</i> .
U	<i>U</i> is pronounced as <i>oo</i> in <i>Moon</i> , never as in <i>custom</i> .
Y	<i>Y</i> is pronounced and treated as the Latin <i>I</i> . (see above)
	The pronunciation given for i , o , u , gives the approximate quality of the sounds, which may be long or short; care must be taken to bring out the accent of the word. e.g. <i>mártyr</i> = <i>márteer</i> .
Double Vowels	As a general rule when two vowels come together each keeps its own sound and constitutes a separate syllable. e.g. <i>diéi</i> is <i>di-é-i</i> ; <i>fílii</i> is <i>fíl-i-i</i> ; <i>eórum</i> is <i>e-ó-rum</i> .
OU AI	The rule of each keeping its own sound applies to OU and AI . e.g. <i>prout</i> is <i>pro-oot</i> ; <i>coutúntur</i> = <i>co-oo-toón-toor</i> ; <i>áit</i> is <i>ah-eet</i> .
AE OE	However, AE and OE are pronounced as one sound, like E above. e.g. <i>caelum</i>
AU EU AY	The two vowels form one syllable but both vowels must be distinctly heard. The principle emphasis and interest belongs to the first which must be sounded purely. If on such a syllable several notes are sung, the vocalization is entirely on the first vowel, the second being heard only on the last note at the moment of passing to the following syllable.
EI	EI is similarly treated only when it occurs in the interjection: <i>Hei</i> = <i>Hei</i> , otherwise, <i>Mei</i> = <i>mé-i</i> , etc.

QU NGU	U preceded by Q or NG and followed by another vowel as in words like <i>qui</i> and <i>sanguis</i> , keeps its normal sound and is uttered as one syllable with the vowel which follows : <i>qui</i> , <i>quae</i> , <i>quod</i> , <i>quam</i> , <i>sanguis</i> . But notice that <i>cui</i> forms two syllables, and is pronounced as <i>koo-ee</i> . In certain hymns, on account of the metre, this word can be treated as one syllable.
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Consonants

C	C coming before e , ae , oe , i , y is pronounced like <i>ch</i> in <i>Church</i> e.g. <i>caelum</i> = <i>che-loom</i> ; <i>Cecília</i> = <i>che-cheé-lee-a</i>
	CC before the same vowels is pronounced <i>T-ch</i> . e.g. <i>ecce</i> = <i>et-che</i> ; <i>siccitas</i> = <i>seét-chee-tas</i> .
	SC before the same vowels is pronounced like <i>Sh</i> in <i>shed</i> e.g. <i>descendit</i> = <i>de-shén-deet</i>
	Except for these cases C is always pronounced like the English K e.g. <i>cáritas</i> = <i>káh-ree-tas</i>
	CH is always like <i>K</i> (even before E or I) e.g. <i>Cham</i> = <i>Kam</i> , <i>máchina</i> = <i>má-kee-na</i>
G	G before e , ae , i , y , is soft as in generous e.g. <i>mági</i> , <i>génitor</i> , <i>Regína</i>
	GN has the softened sound given to those letters in French and Italian. e.g. (French) <i>agneau</i> , <i>signor</i> , <i>monsignor</i> The nearest English equivalent would be N followed by y . e.g. <i>Regnum</i> = <i>Reh-nyoom</i> ; <i>Magnificat</i> = <i>Mah-nyeé-fee-caht</i>
H	H is pronounced K in the two words <i>nihil</i> (<i>nee-keel</i>) and <i>mihi</i> (<i>mee-kee</i>) and their compounds. In ancient books these words are often written <i>nichil</i> and <i>michi</i> . In all other cases H is mute.
J	J , often written as I (e.g. <i>juris</i> or <i>iurus</i>), is treated as Y , forming one sound with the vowel which follows it. e.g. <i>jam</i> , <i>iam</i> = <i>yam</i> ; <i>alleluia</i> = <i>allelóoya</i> ; <i>major</i> = <i>ma-yor</i>
R	When with another consonant, care must be taken not to omit this sound. It must be slightly rolled on the tongue (<i>carnis</i>). Care must be taken not to modify the quality of the vowel in the syllable preceding the <i>R</i> . e.g. <i>Kyrie</i> : Say <i>Kée-ree-e</i> not <i>Kear-ee-e</i> <i>sapere</i> : Say <i>sáh-pe-re</i> not <i>sah-per-e</i> <i>diligere</i> : Say <i>dee-lée-ge-re</i> not <i>dee-lee-ger-e</i>
S	S is hard as in the English word <i>sea</i> , but is slightly softened when coming between two vowels. e.g. <i>misericórdia</i>
T	T is like the English T , except as below.
	TI standing before a vowel and following any letter (except S , X , T) is pronounced <i>tsee</i> . e.g. <i>patientia</i> = <i>pa-tsee-én-tsee-a</i> <i>gratia</i> = <i>grá-tsee-a</i> <i>constitutio</i> = <i>con-stee-tú-tsee-o</i>

	laetitia = <i>lae-tée-tsee-a</i>
	TH is always simply T . e.g. <i>Thomas, catholicam</i>
	X is pronounced ks , slightly softened when coming between vowels. e.g. <i>exercitus</i>
X	XC before e, ae, oe, i, y = KSH . e.g. <i>excelsis</i> = <i>ek-shél-sees</i>
	Before other vowels XC has the ordinary hard sound of the letters composing it. e.g. <i>excussorum</i> = <i>eks-koos-só-room</i>
Y	A Latin vowel, pronounced like I .
Z	Z is pronounced dz . <i>zizánia</i> .
B, D, F, K, L, M, N, P, Q and V: Pronounced as in English	
Double consonants must be clearly sounded. <i>bello</i> = <i>bel-lo</i> ; <i>terra</i> = <i>ter-ra</i>	

Answered by Colin B. Donovan, STL

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