

**Did you know that Martin Luther felt that having diverse styles of worship was important for evangelism and growth of the church? Read on...**

### **Luther's Liturgical Reforms:**

**A side-by-side comparison of Luther's Latin Mass (1523) and Luther's German Mass (1526)**

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In 1523 Martin Luther reformed the late medieval liturgy of the Mass. He called it *Formula Missae* or the Latin Mass. Luther used the purity of the Gospel (the doctrine of justification) as his main criteria for reforming the late medieval Latin Mass. Luther recognized the need for further reform of the church's liturgy, hinting at this already in the text of his Latin Mass.

In 1526 Luther further reformed the church's liturgy. He called it *Deutsche Messe* or the German Mass. Luther composed his German Mass to provide worship in the language of the people, primarily for those who were less educated and less experienced in theological matters.

What is probably the most surprising element of Luther's reforms of the late medieval liturgy of the Mass, is that he did not select a single form and hold it up as the ideal liturgy to be followed by all Christians. Luther actually wrote against this.

What Luther in fact did was to evaluate the needs of the Wittenberg community he served, and then provide God's people there with these two services. He did not hold up either service as more "authentic" than the other. Neither did he look down on those who displayed a need for the traditional forms they had grown accustomed to. Instead Luther ran these two very different services right alongside each other in the service of the Gospel in Christ's church.

#### **The Latin Mass . . . . . The German Mass**

Introit / Psalm	Spiritual Song (or Psalm in German)
Kyrie eleison[1]	Kyrie eleison (three times)
Gloria in excelsis[2]	
Prayer (or collect)	Collect
Epistle	Epistle
Gradual (two verses)	German Hymn (by choir)
Alleluia[3]	
Sequence[4]	
Gospel	Gospel (read facing the people)
Nicene Creed[5]	Creed (sung in German)
Sermon[6]	Sermon (on the Gospel)
Preparation of bread & wine	
[...]	Paraphrase of Lord's Prayer
Preface	
[...]	Exhortation to communicants
Blessing of bread & wine	Consecration of bread
... i.e., Words of institution	

[...]	Elevation of Body of Christ
[...]	Distribution of Body of Christ
Sanctus	Sanctus (in German)
[...]	Consecration of wine
[...]	Distribution of Blood of Christ
[...]	Sanctus (in German)
Benedictus	
Lord's Prayer	
Peace	
Agnus Dei[7]	
Post-communion collect	Thanksgiving Collect
Salutation	
... i.e., "The Lord be with you," etc.	
Benedicamus domino	
Benediction[8]	Aaronic Benediction

[1] Here Luther allowed for "various melodies for different seasons."

[2] Luther gave the option to the local pastor to "decide to omit [the Gloria in excelsis] as often as he wishes."

[3] Luther argued for the singing of the Alleluia during Lent, Holy Week, and on Good Friday. "For the Alleluia is the perpetual voice of the church, just as the memorial of His passion and victory is perpetual."

[4] A sequence refers to a medieval musical arrangement that follows "in sequence" in the liturgical order. The term sequence also referred to the harmonic sequence of the music. Luther made this element of the liturgical order a choice of the local pastor.

[5] The singing of the Creed for Luther was a matter that "should also be left in the hands of the bishop." Luther referred to the local pastor as "bishop."

[6] Here Luther argued that the sermon should come before the reception of the Lord's Supper; ". . . it might be argued that since the Gospel is the voice crying in the wilderness and calling unbelievers to faith, it seems particularly fitting to preach before mass." Luther referred to the administration of the Sacrament of the Altar as "the mass."

[7] During the singing of the Angus Dei, according to Luther, the presiding minister was to "communicate, first himself and then the people."

[8] Luther wrote, "I also wish we had as many songs as possible in the vernacular which the people could sing during mass, immediately after the gradual and also after the Sanctus and Agnus Dei. . . . But poets are wanting among us, or not yet known, who could compose evangelical and spiritual songs, as Paul calls them [Col. 3:16], worthy to be used in the church of God."

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