

Liturgical language

The official liturgical language is Greek. Besides, according to the treatise by Sylvia of Aquitaine, "Peregrinatio ad loca sancta" composed in the 4th century, in the early years of the Church the official liturgical language was Greek, while use of other languages in the Liturgy appeared when the Holy Scriptures began to be translated into them, as the purpose of translation was they be read and interpreted to the people during the Liturgy. It was for this reason that the earliest liturgical language both in Rome and in Africa was Greek, in which language even the early bishops of Rome (up until Pope Victor), as well as the theologians of Africa had composed their writings. According to the treatise by Sylvia, the Greek language was also used in ecclesiastic psalmody, and it is furthermore a known fact that for the first time, at Arles, France, the Bishop of Caesaria (522-527) had decided that some chant in Greek while others chant in Latin, in order to enliven their common chanting; so that even during the 6th century the liturgical language was Greek in the West also. However, in some places, as of the 4th century, the Latin language was exclusively in use, which is why Sylvia upon hearing only the Greek language in Jerusalem during the rituals and describing them for those in the West, she would sometimes translate the names of the rituals and the sacred chants. Sylvia also observed that even if the Bishop of Jerusalem knew another language, he was obliged to always preach the Word of God in Greek. If, among the audience, there were some who did not know Greek, then one of the presbyters (priests) would translate what had been said, into the Syrian-Chaldean language; thus, the pilgrims coming from the West would be privately informed of the Bishop's words by their compatriots who were familiar with the Greek language.

Sylvia also mentions that the preaching of the divine word in

the ancient era was the par excellence duty of the Bishop, which was the reason that the Diocesan Throne was called the "tutorial throne".

"The reader having finished (the Scriptural passage) says Justin the philosopher and martyr, "His Eminence would then verbally provide the admonition and supplication, by expounding its benign content".

And while in some places the presbyters would also preach the divine word, in Jerusalem however, the following, age-old stipulation was upheld: "After the Gospel had been read, all the presbyters and deacons and all the laity would remain totally silent, and then, each of the presbyters – but not all of them – would exhort the people. And last of all would be the bishop, as befits a Governor" writes Sylvia. So that according to this particular custom, the presbyters would speak first, in order, and after them would be the bishop, interpreting what had been read and edifying the people. In other congregations, where the kerygma of the divine word was permitted to the presbyters also, the Bishop would speak first and then the presbyter, albeit this order would occasionally vary; however, the custom of Jerusalem was not prevalent elsewhere.