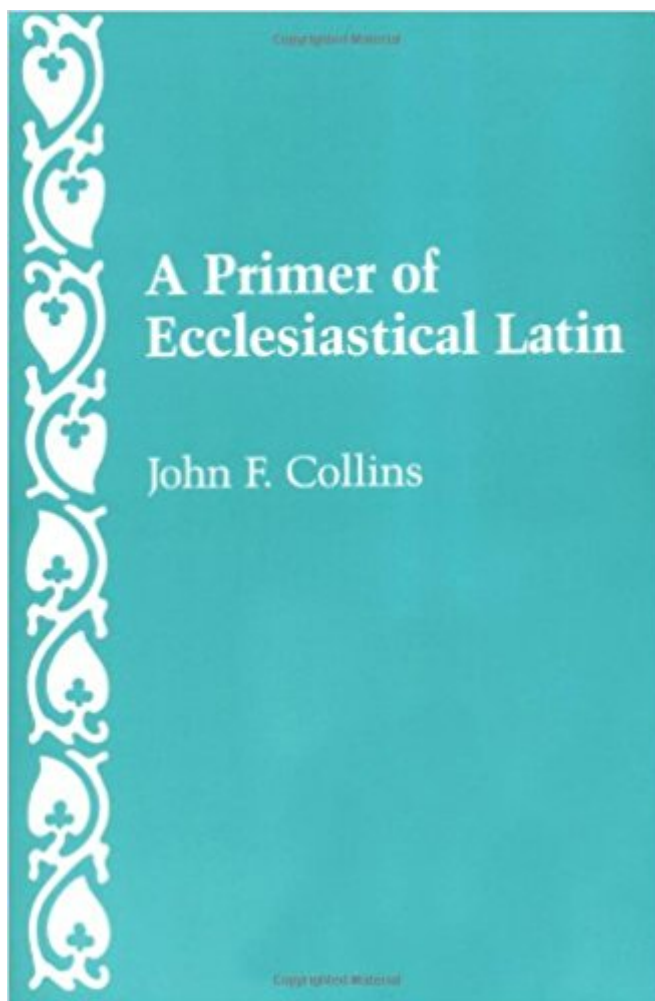


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# A Primer Of Ecclesiastical Latin



## Synopsis

The chief aim of this primer is to give the student, within one year of study, the ability to read ecclesiastical Latin. Collins includes the Latin of Jerome's Bible, of canon law, of the liturgy and papal bulls, of scholastic philosophers, and of the Ambrosian hymns, providing a survey of texts from the fourth century through the Middle Ages. An "Answer Key" to this edition is now available. Please see *An Answer Key to A Primer of Ecclesiastical Latin*, prepared by John Dunlap.

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## Customer Reviews

Text: English, Latin --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Written for those charged with the responsibility of teaching the Latin of the Church, this book aims to give the student within one year the ability to read ecclesiastical Latin. It includes the Latin of Jerome's Bible and that of canon law, liturgy, scholastic philosophers, Ambrosian hymns, and papal bulls.

This is a great book for students of theology who need to learn Latin for the purpose of theological writings, as opposed to non-theological Latin poetry, plays, and philosophy. I had previously been using Moreland & Fleischer's "Latin: An Intensive Course." While Moreland and Fleischer's book is a good option, Collins worked far better for me. The fact that Collins uses theological topics for all of the exercises kept me much more interested than Moreland and Fleischer, where I was translating a

lot about wars, sailors, swords, and queens...One note is that Collins does not introduce the subjunctive mood until halfway through the book, and waits about that long to introduce pronouns as well. If you're following along with the book, this doesn't matter very much. But if you try to translate Latin without finishing the book, you may regret not coming to these chapters sooner. Moreland & Fleischer, on the other hand, introduce these topics immediately (which can be challenging). In conclusion, I highly recommend this book over any other, especially for theology students who need to read Latin!

For anyone desiring to learn Ecclesiastical Latin, the "official" theological and liturgical language of Western Christendom, John F. Collins's *A Primer of Ecclesiastical Latin* is the standard textbook to accomplish this goal. Employing traditional pedagogical techniques, such as noun and verb paradigms as well as translation and composition exercises, Collins's *Primer* is intended for a two-semester college or seminary class. As Collins himself notes, "Of the thirty-five units of instruction in this text, perhaps twenty may be covered in one semester and fifteen in the next; this leaves approximately three to four weeks for continuous reading of selected original texts (such as Mark's Gospel)." This timeframe can easily be used (or adapted) for self-study as well. Collins's *Primer* begins with an overview of the pronunciation of Ecclesiastical Latin, which, in many cases, differs significantly from that of Classical Latin, the language of Vergil, Caesar, and Cicero. These variations, in fact, give Ecclesiastical Latin a marked "Italian" flavor. Chapter-by-chapter, each of which builds upon the prior, Collins then introduces the basic elements of Latin syntax and grammar as well as necessary vocabulary. Since Ecclesiastical Latin was developed by the early Christian Church, its vocabulary contains a number of words that were adapted from Classical Latin or invented all together for Church usage. A good example of the latter is "consubstantialis," an adjective meaning "of the same nature," which is crucial in defining the relationship among the Persons of the Holy Trinity in the Christian Creeds. Additionally, Collins introduces unmodified passages of the Vulgate Bible (the "official" Latin translation of the Catholic Church) and selections from liturgical texts in the earliest translation exercises. Indeed, by Chapter 21, sizable selections of each are offered for student translation. Following the concluding chapter of the text (Chapter 35), moreover, Collins includes a "Further Readings" section, which offers entire chapters of Luke's Gospel, the Order of Mass (*Ordo Missae*), and classic Christian poems from the Middle Ages. Lastly, the *Primer* contains a comprehensive and invaluable Latin-English/English-Latin Dictionary, for which the student of Ecclesiastical Latin will be extremely grateful; most available Latin dictionaries feature Classical Latin vocabulary usage only. I highly recommend Collins's *A Primer of*

Ecclesiastical Latin, published by the Catholic University of America Press, to all students of theology as well as students of medieval and Renaissance history. The Catholic University of America Press also publishes a useful answer key to the exercises contained in the Primer (available separately).

This book is well organized and has enough reading material from every age of the Church, at the back of the book, to test your understanding as you go, so that you don't pass out with boredom from the simple sentences at the ends of the early chapters. I think if you want to get going reading ecclesiastical Latin and work through the book as presented, this is a good book. It does assume you'll commit the material of each chapter to memory as you go. If you've had prior experience with Latin this book serves as a really good review. It's a spare format, and could use a little more drill at the end of each chapter. I resent the lack of an answer key in the book, and that one has to buy the answer key separately. Still, if you pay attention you can be reasonably sure if your answers are correct. One reason I gave it only four stars is the peculiarly modern (as in post VatII) tone the drill sentences seem to have. For example, the word for priest is given in the glossary as "sacerdos" but you will see the word "minister" used instead nearly every time "priest" would have been the right word. This is quite in keeping with the modern idea of the priest as a mere presider or minister, rather than one who offers a sacrifice. The phrase "people of God" also turns up quite a bit in the practice sentences. I find myself wishing there were more pre-Vatican II theology presented in the material rather than the dispiriting modernist pap that is now current. Traditionalists take note.

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