

MASS OFFERINGS

>Mass Offerings (2 October 1978; Greteman)

1. One of the most ancient Catholic customs, frequently approved by the highest authorities of the Church, is the practice of the faithful giving offerings to priests and requesting in return that holy Masses be offered for their various intentions.
2. Even in the first centuries of the Church, before money was a common medium of exchange, the early Christian people brought gifts of corn (wheat), fruits, milk, honey, etc., for the support of the priest and for the poor. Such offerings were never made at the same time as the offering of bread and wine which served for consecration in the Mass. (Cihr--Sacrifice of the Mass, p.540)
3. From this ancient custom was gradually developed the practice of giving Mass stipends for the special application of the "ministerial fruit of the sacrifice of the Mass." In a spirit of true Catholic faith, the faithful request priests to offer Masses for their special intention, for their deceased relatives or friends, and for many other good causes. The offerings made on such occasions contribute to the support of the priest who accepts the obligation of offering the Mass or Masses requested. By Church law priests are permitted to accept no more than one Mass offering each day, and pastors ordinarily may not accept an offering on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation when they are required to offer Mass for their people.
4. The request of the faithful to have holy Mass offered for their intentions has been regarded as a mark of their faith in the divinity of Christ and in His Real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. The Mass in Catholic teaching is the renewal, in an unbloody manner, of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. It is interesting to note that throughout history the enemies of the Church often tried to dissuade Catholic people from this expression of their faith in the value of the holy Mass. It is said that after World War II one of the best evidences the Catholic people of Germany could offer as a proof that they had not been affiliated with the anti-Christian Nazi movement was that they had continued to have Masses offered for their intentions during those dreadful years when this Catholic practice had been officially frowned upon by the Nazi overlords.
5. The most recent papal document approving and encouraging the ancient practice of Mass offerings is contained in the Apostolic Letter of June 15, 1974, by the late Pope Paul VI entitled "Firma In Traditione." Pope Paul wrote:

This practice by which the faithful unite themselves more closely with Christ offering himself as a victim thus deriving more abundant fruits from the sacrifice (of the Mass), has not merely been approved but has been positively encouraged by the Church. It is regarded as a sign of the union of the baptized person with Christ and of the faithful with the priest who exercises his ministry for their good.

6. In the light of this constant tradition, and considering the faith of the people of this diocese, it is not surprising that in most of our parishes there are more requests for the offering of holy Masses than our priests can fulfill. This is as it should be, because such surplus Mass offerings benefit the priests in missionary countries to whom these Mass offerings are sent, and who faithfully offer the Masses requested. For many years the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, which is formally established in every diocese, has transmitted surplus Mass offerings to missionary priests serving in many parts of the

world.

7. By virtue of Canon 831 it is the duty of the bishop to determine the ordinary amount of the Mass stipend or offering in his diocese. The bishop in doing so is to consider the economic condition of the times as well as the customs of the Catholic people. For more than fifty years the ordinary stipend, in our diocese, for the so-called "high Mass" has been \$5.00. Today, when the distinction between the high Mass and low Mass is no longer so clear, and when the Church encourages singing, if possible, at all Masses, there is no longer a valid reason for a different stipend regulation for the so called "low Mass." Moreover, it is already the custom of the great majority of our people to make an offering of \$5.00 when they request a Mass for their intention. By this letter, therefore, I hereby determine that the ordinary offering for a Mass in this diocese, without any distinction of high or low Mass, will be \$5.00.
8. Because economic conditions in missionary countries are greatly different from those in the United States, it is possible for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith to distribute Mass intentions, especially to priests in Africa and South America, when those requesting the Mass make a donation of only \$2.00 or even of only \$1.00. In every case the Church Law requires that whatever offering is made must be sent in its entirety to the priest who offers the Mass. In addition, therefore, to Mass requests that are to be fulfilled by priests in our own diocese, it is suggested that Catholic people make additional Mass offerings to be sent to missionary priests, even though it may be necessary to make a smaller offering than the diocesan norm indicates.
9. Further, in our own diocese, in order that the poor will not be deprived of the opportunity of having Masses offered for their intentions on special occasions, the pastors of our parishes have been instructed to accept such Mass requests from the poor for a lesser offering than indicated in the diocesan norm or, if necessary, even without any offering.
10. The above schedule does not affect the offerings ordinarily made for funerals or wedding Masses. The Diocesan Synod of 1931 determined the ordinary offering on such occasions to be \$15.00. In the changed economic condition of today, the faithful who are able to do so frequently make a somewhat larger offering. It is respectfully suggested that when very elaborate and expensive arrangements are made for the celebration of weddings, an additional generous offering should also be made by the family to the parish or to some diocesan or national charity.
11. It is my hope and prayer that throughout our diocese, there will be a greater appreciation of the spiritual value of the Mass. Not only are we encouraged to assist at Mass as frequently as possible, but we should also be willing to associate ourselves more intimately with this divine sacrifice and with the priestly office, by requesting Masses for our intentions, and especially for our departed relatives and friends.
12. The effective date for the new regulation regard to Mass stipends will be Monday, October 16, 1978. Stipends received before that date must be governed by the regulation that has been in effect for several years.

>Contact Diocesan Office before sending stipends to unknown priests (13 December 1983; Fr. Dennis Schnurr, Chancellor (Soens))

1. Pastors and priests are kindly asked in all instances to contact the Diocesan Office for the Propagation of the Faith before forwarding Mass stipends to priests who are otherwise unknown to them.

>Decree Governing the Acceptance and Application of Mass Offerings (20 August 1996; Soens)

The following particular law is hereby decreed:

1. The customary Mass offering of \$5 remains in effect and all intentions are to be calculated on that basis unless the donor has voluntarily designated a larger offering or is only able to give a smaller offering [can. 945,2, can.948, can.952, 1 and 2].
2. The priest may retain an offering for one Mass only on any given day, except Christmas [can.951, 1 and 2].
3. Pastors are strictly obligated to celebrate the **Missa pro populo** (Mass for the people) each Sunday and Holyday of Obligation, with no monetary offering being taken for that Mass [can.534, 1 and 2].
4. Pastors may celebrate Mass with “Collective Intentions” only under the following conditions [cf. **Mos Iugiter**, Art. 2 and 3].
 - a. when the donors have been previously and explicitly informed and have freely consented to having a single Mass celebrated for their intentions;
 - b. when the time and place of the Mass have been made public in advance of its celebration;
 - c. never more than twice a week and always in the parish church;
 - d. with the celebrant retaining only the customary \$5 offering, the excess being consigned to the diocesan bishop or to a specific charitable or ecclesiastical purpose to which he has given explicit and previous consent.
5. Mass offering funds are to be separately maintained from other parish funds, preferably in a checking account from which the priest may draw the appropriate amount on a regular basis.
6. Pastors are to have a special register in which to accurately note Mass intentions and offerings [can.955, 3 and 4, can.958, 1] and which is to be made available for inspection by the diocesan bishop or his delegate [can.958,2].
7. Priests are to observe all other canonical requirements regarding Mass offerings, e.g., avoidance of trafficking [can.947], numbers of intentions to be accepted [can.953], Masses without offerings [can.945,2], transfer of offerings [can.954, can.955], and the obligation to fulfill Mass intentions [can.948, can.949].
8. Given from the Central Catholic Offices of the Diocese of Sioux City and promulgated on this, the 20th day of August, 1996.
9. +Most Reverend Lawrence D. Soens, Bishop of Sioux City
10. Rev. Kevin C. McCoy, Chancellor

Collective Mass Offerings charity designation (17 December 1996; Soens)

1. If the parish of the collective Mass stipends is supporting a school, then the extra stipends are to be given to that school to help defray the tuition of a needy school.
2. If the parish is not supporting a school, the extra stipends are to be sent to the Religious Education Media Center, Central Catholic Offices, P.O. Box 3379, Sioux City, IA 51102-3379.