

MASS OFFERINGS

INTRODUCTION: The Canon Law on Mass offerings is contained more particularly in Canons 945-958 with which all priests should be familiar and the Norms established by the Congregation for the Clergy on January 22, 1991, for “collective” intentions.

Pope Paul VI in an Apostolic Letter dated June 15, 1974, clearly expressed the theological basis for Mass Offerings. In making a Mass offering, “by which they contribute in a particular way to the needs of the Church and especially to the sustenance of its ministers ... The faithful unite themselves more closely with Christ offering himself as a victim, thus, deriving more abundant fruit from the sacrifice.” (See Canon 946) “Mass offerings can be understood as gifts to the Church or its ministers on behalf of some intention, much as a donation or bequest is made to any charitable institution in the name of some person, living or deceased.” (New Commentary, Paulist Press, published 2000, page 1130)

REGULATIONS FOR MASS OFFERINGS IN THE DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE

1. Individual Intentions according to Canon 948

Separate Masses are applied for the intentions for which an individual offering, even if small, has been given and accepted.

2. Collective Intentions according to 1991 Decree of the Congregation for the Clergy and Diocesan policy

The essential elements of this procedure are:

- a. Several offerings are made for several different intentions.
- b. The faithful are fully informed of and freely consent to the combining of their offerings with others into a single Mass, before the Mass for the collective intention is celebrated.
- c. It is necessary that the place and time for the celebration of this Mass be made public.
- d. Such Masses for collective intentions are not to be offered more than twice a week.
- e. The celebrant receives the amount of the usual offering established by the diocese.
- f. The total amount exceeding this offering for one Mass is to be sent to the diocese for the assistance of needy parishes.

3. Group Intentions in the Diocese of Lafayette

- a. With the knowledge, understanding, and consent of the faithful several offerings for several different intentions can be accepted.

- b. A single Mass is offered in the parish on a specific date for the group intentions.
- c. Individual Masses must be offered for these intentions based on the number of offerings in the group.
- d. The celebrant of the Mass in the parish receives the amount of the usual offering for one Mass established in the Diocese.
- e. The other offerings are to be sent to other priests, parishes, or missionaries; or to the diocese for distribution to retired priests or missionaries.

BINATIONS / TRINATIONS

A priest who celebrates several Masses on the same day can apply each to the intention for which an offering has been given, but subject to the rule that, except for Christmas, he is to keep the offering for only one Mass, and transfer the others to the Diocese for assistance to needy parishes. (cfr. Canon 951§1)

A priest who concelebrates a second Mass on the same day cannot accept an offering for it under any title. (cfr. Canon 951§2)

ACCOUNTING FOR MASS OFFERINGS

- 1. Ordinarily no more offerings for Masses should be accepted than can be satisfied within a year. (cfr. Canon 953)
- 2. It is the responsibility of the pastor to have a special book in which are noted accurately the number of Masses to be celebrated, the intention, the offering given and their celebration. (cfr. Canon 958)

This book is to be examined each year by the bishop or his delegate, usually at the time of the administration of the Sacrament of Confirmation and parish transfers.

- 3. An accounting of the Mass offering activity during the month, as well as the distribution of offerings for Masses, whether individual, collective or group intentions, is to be made at the end of each month.
- 4. The code numbers for the receiving and distribution of these funds is found in the **Clergy Handbook** section, entitled "Parish Finance Forms," of the Diocesan Policy Manual.

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