

A Pastor's Perspective

January 17, 2021 Bulletin



Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In last week's bulletin, I detailed the obligation to prayer taken on by both deacons and priests on the day of their ordination. In this week's bulletin, I want to highlight how in fulfilling his obligation to celebrate the sacraments, especially by offering the Eucharist/Mass, a pastor has a particular responsibility to pray for all his parishioners.

If we listen carefully to the prayers offered at Mass, we quickly discover that our petitions are addressed to the Lord on behalf of all Catholics, as well as all Christians, all people of faith and good will, and in fact, for every person; we pray for all the living and all the deceased. Of course, the prayers of the church on earth are joined to those of all the angels and saints who are taking part in the heavenly liturgy.

Because we believe in the power and the efficacy of our prayers and sacrifices for those who have died (see 2 Maccabees 12:43-46), the Catholic faithful often request that a Mass be offered for another person, which is known as a Mass intention. When requesting such an intention, it is customary for that person to make a monetary offering, known as a Mass stipend, which accompanies the request for prayers. The offering is not "buying a Mass" but it is an expression of love and charity, done in a spirit of sacrifice and in solidarity with the priest who will offer the Mass intention on that person's behalf. This act expresses our firmly-held faith in the saving power of the Lord's work of redemption from the cross, which is made present in every celebration of the Eucharist.

When reading the bulletin, you have probably noticed the intentions for particular individuals, usually those who have died. But have you ever noticed that every Sunday or holy day has one Mass that is offered for "All Parishioners" (it is sometimes listed as "For the People" or "Pro Populo")? What is the reason for this intention? The Code of Canon Law states that "*after a pastor has taken possession of his parish, he is obliged to apply a Mass for the people entrusted to him on each Sunday and holy day of obligation.*" This Mass intention must be offered by the Pastor himself; he is not permitted to assign it to another priest. It is his act of love and charity on behalf of all the people entrusted to his spiritual care to offer this Mass. If the pastor is away from the parish for any reason (i.e., retreat, illness, vacation, etc.), he may offer the intention wherever he is, even if it is outside the parish boundaries, and he is also permitted to offer the intention at a later date if he is impeded from offering it on the day on which it has been scheduled.

As the pastor of St. Paul the Apostle Parish, it is both a privilege and a grace to remember "all parishioners" whenever I offer the "pro populo" Mass. Be assured that I also bring your joys, hopes, cares, and concerns to the Lord in my daily celebration of Mass, as well as in my private prayers and while fulfilling my obligation of praying the Liturgy of the Hours throughout each day.

Peace and blessings,
Msgr. Andrew