

Excerpted from the *Diocese of San Jose Clergy Personnel Policy*, revised May 2017:

## **206 Stipends and Mass Intentions**

The Church not only approves of, but also encourages, the custom of making offerings as a sign of the union of the baptized person with Christ and of the faithful with the priest whose ministry is performed in his favor. Canon 945 says that any priest who celebrates or concelebrates a Mass may accept an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention. In saying this, the canon gives the priest a right to do so. Insofar as this is a right, it is thus something that cannot be taken away or restricted. However, the diocesan bishop has the right to regulate it so that abuses are prevented.

To apply the Mass according to a definite or specific intention means that the celebrant or concelebrant cannot accept more than one offering for one Mass. It is the principle of *One Mass, One offering*. However, this does not exclude other intentions being prayed for which are not conjoined with an offering.

Although the offering is in no way to be taken as some sort of remuneration in exchange for the application of the Mass, once the priest commits himself to celebrate Mass for the intention of the donor by accepting the offering, a relation of justice is established. The donor acquires the right to have that Mass celebrated for his/her intention, with all the conditions set. The priest may, of course, decline to accept the offering. But once he accepts the offering, the basis of the relation of justice thus established is not the offering but its acceptance.

The law is also quite clear that an individual priest can only accept those Mass intentions which he can fulfill in a year's time (c. 953).

Once offerings are accepted, separate Masses are to be applied for the intentions of those who gave the individual offerings, even if the offerings are small (c. 948). Whoever has the obligations to celebrate and apply a Mass for the intention of those who gave an offering is bound in justice to fulfill this obligation, even if, without fault, he has lost the offering (c. 949).

It is highly recommended that priests celebrate Mass for the intention of the faithful, especially of the poor, even if they receive no offering (c. 945, §2).

A priest may accept a Mass offering for the intention of anyone, whether living or deceased, Catholic or non-Catholic. However, ancient Christian liturgical and ecclesiological tradition permits the specific mention in the Eucharistic Prayer only the names of persons who are in full communion with the Church celebrating the Eucharist.

The Metropolitan of the Province of San Francisco has set the amount of ten dollars (\$10.00) that is to be offered in the whole province for the celebration and application of Mass. A priest may not ask for an amount higher than this. However, a priest is free to accept an offering voluntarily given that is higher or lower than the established amount (cf. c. 952, §1).

If the sum of money is offered for the application of Masses and there is no indication of the number of Masses to be celebrated, the number is computed based on the amount of the offerings established in the place where the donor lives, unless the donor's intention must be lawfully presumed to have been different (c. 950).

Priests who dedicate themselves to ecclesiastical ministry deserve remuneration and have a right to it. The basis of this right is his dedication to the ministry. Consistent with the norms of law, priests who have an assignment from the Bishop of San Jose, receive, among other types of compensation, a salary as part of their sustenance. It is the policy of the Diocese of San Jose to pay the priests in such a way that their daily sustenance does not depend on the offerings made by the faithful for the celebration and administration of the sacraments. Stipends are not provided for the personal enrichment of the priest.

*Stipend* is understood as the amount of money received by the priest on occasion of the exercise of his priestly ministry either by celebrating a sacrament or sacramental.

*Offering* is understood to mean the gift, usually in the form of money, freely or gratuitously given by the faithful primarily out of their concern for the Church or her ministers and their desire to support its materials, given on the occasion of the celebration of a sacrament or sacramental.

The following is the policy of the Diocese of San Jose regarding offerings and stipends.

1. All offerings received on the occasion of funerals and the administration of the

Sacraments of Baptism and Marriage, as well as sacramentals, formerly known as “stole fees”, (i.e., house blessings, car blessings, quinceañeras, etc.) belong to the parish and must be turned over by the priest to the parish finance officer. A stipend may be retained by the priest who offers a funeral Mass, or the Mass for the intention of the bride and groom.

- a) In cases of funeral or nuptial Masses, the stipend is usually 1/5 of the offering, not to exceed \$50.00.
  - b) The customary offering to the parish at the time of a funeral is \$250. This is covered in a different policy (see Section 900 of the Clergy Personnel Policy, revised in February 2006).
  - c) All Souls’ Day offerings are equally divided among priests assigned to a parish or who regularly offer weekday Masses at the parish. Priests are expected to celebrate Masses for the intentions of the donors. In dividing the offerings among the priests, the parish has to be reimbursed for the expenses incurred on account of this (e.g., cost of envelopes, mailing, printing, etc.)
2. The priest who offers the Mass has a right to the stipend given for a Mass intention (c. 945, §1). Other equitable distribution of stipends may be made, as long as the clergy assigned to a parish agree in writing, a copy of which must be sent to the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.
  3. The Vicar for Clergy/Pastors are to be guided by the following schedule for Mass offerings for non-assigned priests. These guidelines are offered as a minimum. This amount is over and above the offering made by the donor who had asked for the Mass to be offered. Pastors are free to consider other factors, including transportation, in setting the rate for parish offerings.
    - (a) \$50 for one weekday celebration of the Eucharist
    - (b) \$100 for each weekend celebration of the Eucharist
  4. By virtue of his office, a pastor has an obligation to offer Mass for the people (*Missa pro populo*) entrusted to his care each Sunday and holy day of obligation; if he is legitimately prevented from this celebration, he is to apply Mass on these same days through another priest or he himself is to apply it on other days. If the obligation has not been satisfied, the pastor who has not satisfied the obligation to offer the *Missa pro populo* is to apply as many Masses for his people as he has missed as soon as possible (c. 534). It is recommended that parishes not accept Mass

intentions from the faithful on Sundays so that priests can apply their personal intentions and the pastor can fulfill his personal obligation regarding *Missa pro populo*.

5. Canon 948 states the separate Masses are to be applied for the intentions for which an offering, even if small, has been made and accepted. The practice of taking more than one offering for a single Mass or collective or multiple intentions, while not the norm, is permitted with specific restrictions:
  - a) The donors of the Mass offerings must be informed and agree to combine their offerings with others in a single Mass.
  - b) The time and place for the celebration are to be made public.
  - c) A priest may not celebrate Masses for collective intentions more than twice a week.
  - d) If the total amount of the offerings given for a collective intention exceeds the amount of the usual offering, the priest may only keep for himself the amount of the usual offering; the excess is to be given to the Ordinary for the purposes he has specified (c. 950, §1). The practice of collective or multiple intentions is not to be used to increase the income of the individual priest.
6. A priest who presides at more than one Mass on the same day may apply each for an intention for which an offering is given. On Christmas, a priest may keep offerings for three Masses celebrated. On all other days, he may keep only one offering, and give the others to purposes prescribed by the Ordinary. The offerings from binations and trinations go to the Ordinary for the purposes established by him.