

WHAT IS A MASS INTENTION?

When we gather to celebrate the Eucharist we are giving thanks to God for all that God has given to us and especially for all that God has done for us in sending Jesus, the Son of God, to share our life so that we may become one with him and share in God's life.

In the Prayers of the Faithful we pray as a community for our own needs and intentions. In the Eucharistic Prayer we also pray for those who have died because we believe that we all are one in Christ in the Communion of Saints. When the priest, as the leader of the assembly, says "Let us pray" he is inviting us to support each other in prayer as we place all our intentions before God.

The custom of asking a priest to offer a Mass for our particular intention or for someone who has died is based on an older understanding of the Mass and the role of the priest. In the Middle Ages the people were passive spectators at Mass and usually did not even receive Communion. In that historical context making a donation was seen as a way for the people to be part of a Mass. The offering was called a Mass stipend (a fee for a service) but today it is usually called a Mass Intention. Those offerings were the only source of income for the clergy. Therefore, they were given as a donation of food or money to enable priests to live.

In Australia priests receive a salary that comes from the Sunday 1st collection but that is not true in every country. In some countries the people are too poor to contribute to parish collections and therefore the priests have no set income and rely on donations.

Here at St Mary's Concord more Mass Intentions are requested than can be offered in the parish and so most of the donations or offerings for Masses are sent to priests in Mission countries who are in need. Those priests offer Masses for the intentions of the donor.

In recent years many Mass Intentions have been sent to John Andersen, a Sydney priest working in Peru. John still receives his salary from Sydney so he gives the "offerings" to his bishop to distribute to local priests who do not receive any other income.

It is worth knowing that our Mass offerings are helping communities in Peru and other places. Those priests and their communities pray for our intentions in their Masses.

Paul Crowley

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