

MASS INTENTIONS

What does it mean to have a Mass “offered” for someone?

Any individual may ask a priest to offer a Mass for several reasons: for example, in thanksgiving, for the intentions of another person such as on a birthday, or as is most common, for the repose of the soul of someone who has died. One must never forget the infinite graces that flow from the Sacrifice of the Mass which benefit one's soul.

In his encyclical “*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*,” our beloved Pope Saint John Paul II, taught, “In the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the Church prays that God, the Father of mercies, will grant His children the fullness of the Holy Spirit so that they may become one body and one spirit in Christ. In raising this prayer to the Father of lights, from whom comes every good endowment and every perfect gift, the Church believes that she will be heard, for she prays in union with Christ her Head and Spouse, who takes up this plea of His Bride and joins it to His own redemptive sacrifice” (No. 43).

When a priest offers Holy Mass, he has three aims in mind: First, to offer the Mass reverently and validly in accord with the norms of the Church. Second, to offer the Mass in union with the whole Church and for the good of the whole Church. Third, to offer the Mass for a particular intention, such as the repose of the soul of someone who has died. Therefore, the effects of the Mass bring certain benefits or fruits. The general fruits of the Mass are the effects upon the whole Church that is, to the living faithful as well as the poor souls in purgatory. For this reason, in the Canon of the Mass (the Eucharistic Prayer), a special mention is made for both the living and the dead.

The special ministerial fruits of the Mass are applied to the particular intention of the Mass, that is, “for whom this Mass is offered.” The intention of the Mass is also determined by various factors: The Church may stipulate the particular intention; for example, all pastors are required to offer one Mass on Sunday for the intentions of the living and deceased parishioners of a parish. A priest may also have his own particular intention in offering a Mass, such as the repose of the soul of his parents. Finally, a person may ask a priest to offer a Mass for a particular intention. In this case, it is customary to give an offering of \$10 to the priest who is celebrating the Mass. In so doing, the Faithful have the privilege of joining their own sacrifice to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass thereby obtaining an even greater abundance of spiritual fruit. Canon 946 states that “the Christian faithful who give an offering to apply the Mass for their intention contribute to the good of the Church and by that offering share its concern to support its ministers and works.” The intention, commonly called “the intention of the Mass,” that intention is often announced in the parish bulletin at least one week before, and then it is sometimes also announced at Mass.

When we face the death of someone, even a person who is not Catholic, to have a Mass offered for the repose of his soul and to offer our prayers are more beneficial and comforting than any other sympathy card or bouquet of flowers. To have a Mass offered on the occasion of a birthday, anniversary or special need is appropriate, beneficial, and appreciated.

Contact the parish office to have a Mass offered for your chosen intention, 410-486-5400 or charlesst@comcast.net, or drop a ‘Mass Intention’ envelope into the collection basket. Please note the intention or name of the individual you would like a Mass said for, whether they are living or deceased, and a preferred date if you have one in mind.