

ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL AND MINNEAPOLIS
CLERGY BULLETIN

June 6, 1989

Volume XVI Number 5

MASS STIPENDS

Reverend and dear Fathers and Deacons,

The practice of accepting Mass offerings on the occasion of the celebration of special Masses has always existed in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. These offerings given by the members of the faithful are earmarked for the support of clergy and the works of the Church. In this Archdiocese the gifts received accrue to the parish or the institution where the priest lives.

The suggested offering has not changed in our Archdiocese since 1980, despite many other financial adjustments related to cost of service and cost of living. It now seems appropriate to follow the pattern of many other dioceses and make an adjustment based on the increased financial responsibilities of parishes and some mission needs beyond our Archdiocese.

For these reasons I decree that the suggested offering made on the occasion of the celebration of a Mass in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis will be seven dollars effective July 1, 1989. Before that date I ask you to explain to your parishioners the rationale for this increase.

Accompanying this Clergy Bulletin are suggestions that may help you catechize your parishioners about the purpose and the origin of the custom of accepting an offering on the occasion of the celebration of a Mass.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

/S/

Most Reverend John R. Roach, D.D.
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

/S/

Notary: Vincent Champine, OP

MASS STIPENDS: BACKGROUND MATERIAL

Reverend and dear Fathers and Deacons,

From very early days the laws and customs of the Church have considered Mass offerings a way of supporting the church's works of charity and its ministers.

The practice of receiving an offering in return for the priest praying for a special intention became prevalent during the early Middle Ages. The practice began and grew because of a perceived pastoral need. People were becoming passive during the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy; the responses of the congregation were being said by the servers; the reception of Communion became less and less frequent. The language of the Eucharist became a foreign tongue for most of the people. One of the ways the people were invited to become more actively involved in the Sacrifice of the Mass and the life of the Church was by making an offering; in this way they saw that they were helping the Church, and that their intentions would be prayerfully remembered often in their presence.

In our day Catholics often send a "Mass card" when a friend or relative dies. The offering made in the name of the deceased person is a sincere expression of sympathy and an act of charity. In making such an offering the mourner is aware that something concrete is being done for a loved one.

The donor making such an offering may also profit spiritually by making the memorial offering to promote the good works of the Church. It is also hoped that the donor will actively participate in this requested Mass. By doing so he or she shares actively in the work and ministry of the Church.

In this Archdiocese the donations given accrue to the parish or the institution where the priest ministers. This can be of particular financial help to smaller churches that have a limited income. Even more than in our Archdiocese, the financial support from stipends is critical to Church life in many lands.

Since the purpose of the offering is to help ministers and the works of the Church, it is a long standing practice in the Archdiocese to send surplus Mass donations to missionaries in foreign countries. Many of these missionaries live on Mass offerings. An increase in the suggested Mass offering will help them tremendously. In some countries where missionaries work the inflation rate is often as high as 80% to 150% a year. An increase in our suggested Mass offering can help offset some to the economic disadvantage.

In our Archdiocese priests have been encouraged to accept lesser offerings (given on the occasion of the celebration of a Mass) than the guidelines have suggested. I highly encourage you to continue this practice. I also urge you regularly to celebrate Mass for the intentions of the poor even when no offering is made.

The Church is very solicitous that money offerings made on the occasions of the celebration of a Mass be handled carefully and justly. For that reason the Revised Code of Canon Law in Canons 59 and the following carefully regulate the practice of accepting Mass offerings. You are urged to strictly follow the rules regarding Mass offerings.