

18th Week Ordinary Time

Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time 2019: Mass Intentions

I would like to revisit the Church's teaching on Mass Intentions. I will be using four main documents: An Apostolic Letter from Pope Paul VI (1974), The Code of Canon Law (1983), a Decree on Mass Stipends from the Congregation for the Clergy (1991), and an article by Fr. John Dunn, JCD/PhD, [A Review of the Law on Mass Offerings for Newly Ordained Priests](#) (2007). Each one of these documents will address the problem of abuses in the practice of making offerings for Mass and will acknowledge the goodness of such offerings. The abuses continually resurface throughout the history of the Church. These abuses are even found in the Bible. The several abuses originate either from the people making the Mass Offerings or from the priests who receive Mass Offerings. I will start by naming the abuses. Then we can understand the purpose of each set of documents. The abuse that I feel presents the greatest danger is the abuse of thinking that you can "buy" the Mass for your personal intention. In the Mass, we offer ourselves in communion with the Sacrifice of our Lord. We all share in the priestly office of Jesus. Many intentions are present at every Mass. The 1983 Code of Canon Law (Canon 901) states very simply: "A priest is free to apply the Mass for anyone, living or dead." While this canon is more a revision of the 1917 Code of Canon Law, nonetheless, Canon 901 declares the freedom of the priest in applying the Mass. No one can "purchase" or "buy" a Mass. Sometimes a person will ask to have Mass said on the special anniversary of the death of a loved one. Why would that person make an offering? Pope Paul VI begins his Apostolic Letter with a long sentence that answers that question. We will need to read that sentence in parts. "A long-established tradition in the Church is that the faithful...add to the Eucharistic Sacrifice a form of sacrifice of their own..." The Eucharistic Sacrifice consists of the bread and wine placed upon the altar. The faithful would bring their own offerings as well. But why would they bring their own form of sacrifice? "A long-established tradition in the Church is that the faithful, desiring...to participate more intimately in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, add..." A desire to participate in the Eucharistic Sacrifice more intimately created a tradition of adding their own personal form of sacrifice. We can see that this desire is not a desire to "buy" the Mass. This desire effects the participation of the faithful, not of the priest. We will move slowly as we uncover the other abuses as well.