

Updated Mass Intentions:

From the very beginnings of the Church, it was customary for the faithful to **donate the bread and wine** to be used in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. In time, **offerings of money** were substituted for the actual bread and wine. Money given in excess of what was necessary for the procuring of the bread and wine was used to assist the poor and, eventually, to support the clergy. Thus, it became customary for the priest to accept from the faithful a donation (formerly called a “stipend”) in return for remembering a **specific intention in the celebration of a Mass**. Through this voluntary offering, the **donor seeks spiritual benefits that God may bestow upon the persons or concerns that are specially held in prayer at the Mass**. What is more, the *Code of Canon Law* (canon 946) notes that the **donor himself benefits**: “Christ’s faithful who make an offering so that Mass can be celebrated for their intention, contribute to the good of the Church, and by that offering they share in the Church’s concern for the support of its ministers and its activities.”

According to the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Mass “is quite properly offered according to apostolic tradition not only for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other needs of the faithful who are **living**, but also for those who have **died** in Christ but are not yet fully purified” (Session XXII, Chapter 2). In his *Pastoral Letter on the Christian Burial of the Dead* (2 November 2000), then-Bishop Raymond Burke emphasized the latter: “The age-old custom of making an offering so that Mass may be **celebrated for the eternal rest of the deceased** is to be commended . . . (Indeed) there is no more effective means to **express our love and provide spiritual help** for those who have died than to have the Mass offered for the eternal repose of their souls” (9-10).

The **deep faith and ardent charity of the parishioners of Saint Mary** manifests itself in the numerous Mass offerings you donate to the parish, especially for your beloved dead. However, this abundance creates a serious problem insofar as **your requests for Mass intentions far exceed the number of Masses offered at Saint Mary**. When requesting Mass intentions please have consideration for your fellow parishioners who also desire to have Masses offered in our parish for their intentions. So, for example, instead of requesting a separate Mass for each individual you may request one Mass offered for multiple persons.

Therefore, **in order to encourage the orderly flourishing of this pious practice in our parish**, please keep the following in mind:

1. Universal Church discipline as contained in the *Code of Canon Law* (canons 945-958) as well as legislation of the Wisconsin Catholic Conference and that of the Diocese of La Crosse strictly regulates the offerings made for the celebration of Mass.
2. As your Pastor, I am “obliged to apply a Mass for the people (*pro populo*) entrusted to (my care) on each Sunday and holy day of obligation” (*Code of Canon Law*, 534). Take consolation in the fact that every Lord’s Day and holy day of obligation a Mass is offered for all of you who are parish members of Saint Mary.
3. The suggested amount of the Mass offering, as determined by the Bishops of Wisconsin, is

ten dollars (\$10.00). These monies are deposited in a separate account of our parish called the Mass Offering Account. Should the donor offer more than the suggested amount for the Mass, that excess – unless specified otherwise – is deposited in the parish Friendship Fund (Fund for Works of Charity) to be used for the assistance of the needy. Note that no one is denied the celebration of a Mass for a particular intention based on inability to make an offering.

4. Offerings for Masses that cannot be celebrated at Saint Mary within one year must be forwarded to the Mission Office of our Diocese. Thus, priests in the missions who lack Mass offerings (see *Code of Canon Law* 953, 956) will offer these Masses in a timely manner.
5. Traci Campion is our staff member who processes your Mass intention requests. The preferred method to request a Mass intention is to use the envelopes labeled for that purpose that are already included in your annual offertory envelope packet. You may also use a plain envelope that is clearly marked “Mass intention” to identify its contents. The envelope may be placed in the offertory collection basket or mailed to the parish office.
6. In the Mass intention envelope include the intention itself (indicating the person is deceased by a “+” before the name), who is requesting the Mass, your contact information, the monetary offering (with checks made out to “Saint Mary Parish”), and a desired date (if there is one). For example, “One Mass for +Nemo Klutz requested by the Klutz Family on any weekday. You may reach me, Susie Klutz, at 715.000.0000 or susieklutz@email.com.”
7. The scheduling of Mass intentions at Saint Mary is on a first come, first served, basis.
8. Mass intentions may be requested up to twelve months in advance.
9. Each parishioner may request a maximum of ten Mass intentions to be celebrated at Saint Mary in a twelve-month period. Only one of these may be for a Mass of the Lord’s Day (Saturday Vigil or Sunday).
10. Please note that the scheduling of a Mass intention reserves that date for your intention should a parish Mass be celebrated on that day. It does not guarantee that a Mass will in fact be celebrated on that day at Saint Mary. If Mass is not able to be celebrated at Saint Mary on the reserved date, you will be notified in a timely manner and the intention will be rescheduled.
11. Effective January 7, 2017, ordinarily the 8:30 Mass on Sunday and holy days of obligation is offered *pro populo*, that is, for the intention of the parishioners of Saint Mary. Should you request a specific intention for that Mass your consent to combine your intention with the *pro populo* intention is presumed.
12. Prior to the celebration of each parish Mass, the priest celebrant consults the official listing of Mass intentions in the sacristy. From this authorized register the priest celebrant forms his intent to offer the Mass for the requested intention. It is this – the priest celebrant’s intent – that determines the intention for which the Mass is offered, not what may be read (or occasionally misread) in the Prayer of the Faithful.

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us! Blessed Solanus Casey, pray for us!

Father Kevin C. Louis, STL