

Diocese of Amarillo: Policy on Mass Offering and Honorarium

Introduction

According to the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church, it is good and lawful that the Christian faithful make a Mass offering for the purpose of support of the ministers, maintenance of apostolic works, and for spiritual communion with the sacrifice of the Mass. There are three kinds of fruits or effects when the Mass is celebrated: 1) benefits to the entire Church; 2) benefits to the celebrating priest himself; 3) benefits toward the specific intention. It is within the context of this noble tradition of the Church that this policy seeks to establish an orderly guideline for these practices and customs in the Diocese of Amarillo. All previous policies concerning Mass offering and honorarium is hereby abrogated.

Definition

- **Mass intention** – the priest is free to apply Mass intention for anyone, Catholic or non-Catholic, living or dead (c.901). The specific intention of the Mass becomes the intention of the celebrant.
- **Mass offering** (stipends or Latin *stips*; cf.cc.945-958) – monetary offering for a Mass to be celebrated for a specific intention. It is not a tax, tribute, or economic retribution for service rendered.
- **Trafficking** – any appearance of the buying and selling of Mass offering is strictly prohibited (c.947).
- **Honorarium** – a compensation to the minister as an expression of gratitude, friendship, or respect. Out of genuine concern, the Christian faithful is obligated to provide for the decent and dignified support of the Church’s ministers. Consequently, in a most profound sense of justice, the minister is entitled to an honorarium, keeping in mind a Christian faithful who cannot offer an honorarium due to poverty or financial limitations.

By virtue of their baptism, the Christian faithful are called to a life of charity and justice in imitation of Christ. This call finds its most authentic expression when priests live out a life of perfect charity and justice because by their ordination, they are configured in the person of Christ. In this way, the priest truly becomes another Christ (*alter Christus*) for his people. Hence, it goes without saying that the honorarium may be reduced or completely waived at the discretion of the priest out of a sense of Christian charity and justice whenever the person is not able to offer an honorarium.

Among the different species of honorarium are the following that are applicable to the office of the priest:

- **Stole fee** – Mass coverage, weddings, anniversary Mass, funeral liturgies, communal reconciliation service with individual confessions, baptism, and quinceañera. The amount of stole fee for the bishop on the occasion of his visitation to the parish or diocesan entity is offered at the discretion of the parish priest or the coordinator of the function after having consulted with the office of the bishop.
- **Speaker fee at an engagement or function** – talk at a parish, diocesan function, retreat, religious community, or an association of the faithful.

Schedule of Mass Offering and Honorarium

- \$5.00 minimum **offering** per Mass intention
- \$50.00 **honorarium** per Mass or liturgical celebration
- \$100.00 minimum **honorarium** per wedding, wedding anniversary Mass, quinceañera
- \$100.00 **honorarium** per funeral
- \$25.00 **honorarium** per baptism
- \$75.00 minimum **honorarium** per speaking engagement. This **honorarium** does not apply to several talks given in an entire day or over a period of more than one day. In this circumstance, the priest and the entity should negotiate the fee in advance.

Policy

- Each parish must have a checking account set up exclusively for the purpose of Mass offerings. A check is written to the priest at the end of each month for all the intentions fulfilled.
- Each parish must have a register to record accurately the Masses to be celebrated for which offerings are designated, the amount of offering given, and the intention. This register is to be examined by the ordinary or dean at the time of the parish visitation.
- Priest may keep only one Mass offering (\$5) for one intention per day, except for Christmas Day. When a priest celebrates more than one Mass on the same day, he may keep one offering (\$5) for an intention that he applied, while the other offerings for intentions that he fulfilled on the same day are to be transmitted according to the objective as established by the ordinary (c.951). In the diocese of Amarillo, these second Mass offerings are to be given to local charities.
- Priest who concelebrates at the only Mass for that day can take an offering for a specific intention. Priest who concelebrates in a second Mass on the same day cannot accept a

second offering. The second offering must be applied to the objective as established by the ordinary which is to be given to local charities.

- Priest can offer a Mass for one specific intention with one offering. However, he may offer a Mass for several intentions as requested by one donor who specifically made one offering for these intentions.
- Priest cannot offer one Mass for several intentions by several donors who made several offerings.
- Celebrant (diocesan bishop or parish priest) who is obligated to celebrate Mass for the people (*pro populo*) on Sunday and holy days of obligation by virtue of his office cannot take an offering for that Mass. However, he can take an offering for a second Mass with a specific intention.
- Priest can celebrate a Mass for a specific intention without an offering. It is recommended that the priest celebrates Mass for an intention of a Christian faithful who cannot make an offering because he or she is poor. In this situation, it is important that the priest keeps before his eyes the supreme law of the Church which is the salvation of souls.

Date

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