

Father's Notes

February 9, 2025

Perhaps you've seen Mass intentions listed in the bulletin, or heard an announcement at the start of Mass, something like: *"This Mass is offered for repose of the soul of..."* So, what are Mass intentions? From the earliest days of Christianity, the faithful regarded the importance and responsibility to pray for others, both the living and the dead (see 1 Cor 3:15, 2 Macc 12:46, 2 Tim 1:16-18). Inscriptions in Roman catacombs and early Christian writings show this. St. Augustine (d. 430) recorded the dying wishes of his mother, St. Monica in his Confessions: *"One thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be."*

So, what does this mean in the context of the Mass? Pope John Paul II taught, *"In the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice...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"* (Ecclesia de Eucharistia, 43).

The priest has three goals when celebrating Mass: First, to offer the Mass reverently and in accord with the norms of the Church. Second, to offer the Mass in union with and for the good of the whole Church. Third, to offer the Mass for a particular intention.

So, what are the particular intentions? Any person may ask for the priest to offer a Mass any number of reasons (an expression of gratitude, intentions for another person [e.g. birthday], but most commonly, the repose of a loved one's soul). Though not obligatory, usually a small donation is made to the parish, an amount of one's choosing. The money supports the parish, but that's not the point. Canon Law provides guidelines to ensure we uphold this practice in accord with the Church's understanding (CIC, 945-948).

If you would like to have a Mass celebrated for a particular intention, please stop by or call the office. Each week, per Church law, one Sunday Mass will be celebrated for the St. Philomena or St. Thomas parish community, both living and deceased (*Missa pro Populo*).

As an exercise of our priestly identity that comes to us from our Baptism, you and I have beautiful and privileged responsibility to pray for others. Who in your life, living or dead, needs prayers? It is very good to have that particular prayer lifted up within the prayer of Jesus Christ, our High Priest, at the Mass. *"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word"* (John 17:20).

Next week, I plan to further explain some of the guidelines the Church provides. More to come.



Father Todd O. Strange (Pastor)

+ St. Philomena Parish & School (Des Moines, WA)

+ St. Thomas Parish (Tukwila, WA)