

Guidelines on Mass Stipends in the Archdiocese of Atlanta

cf. CIC 945-958

Revised 5 February, 2010

- Mass stipends are offerings given by the faithful when they request that a mass be offered for a specific intention. They are distinct from any gift that might be given to a visiting priest as an expression of thanks or as compensation for his time and travel.
- Only one stipend can be taken for each mass, and the mass must be offered for that intention, alone. A single intention may be for multiple individuals: e.g.: For the deceased members of the Knights of Columbus. If a priest wants to remember other intentions during the mass, he may do so in the prayers of the faithful or at the designated points in the Roman Canon. He should not take a stipend for those intentions, however. (cf. CIC 948)
- Under certain circumstances, collective intentions are permitted. For several mass intentions to be combined into a single mass:
 - (1) the donors must be informed of and consent to the combining of their offerings before the Mass for the collective intention is celebrated;
 - (2) the place and time for the collective Mass must be announced;
 - (3) the practice may not be observed more than twice a week;
 - (4) the celebrant of the “collective intention” may keep for himself no more than the usual amount of a single Mass offering (\$10) and must send any excess to the Archdiocesan Seminary Fund (see below.) (cf. Congregation for the Clergy – decree of February 22, 1991; *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* p. 1132)
- In each parish, the pastor has the obligation to offer one mass for the people of the parish on every Sunday and holy day of obligation, for which he should not receive a stipend. If a pastor has multiple parishes, he is obliged to only one mass for all of the people entrusted to him. If he has neglected this obligation, he should offer the number of masses that he has omitted as soon as possible. (cf. CIC 534)
- A priest should not refuse to offer a mass because a small amount of money is offered for the stipend. He can, however, place restrictions on how many intentions he is willing to take from a particular individual, or exclude intentions of questionable piety. (cf. CIC 948)
- Mass intentions are received by the individual priest, although they may be transmitted through the parish. This means that the priest should receive the stipend given for the mass he celebrates, unless the priests of a parish agree among themselves to divide their stipends in a different way. In that case, visiting priests should still receive the stipends for the masses they celebrate. (cf. CIC 955)
- While the province of Atlanta does not have an established norm for mass stipends, the custom of \$10 per mass should be followed as a guideline. If a sum of money is given for the celebration of masses, the amount should be divided by ten to determine how many masses should be offered for the intention. (cf. CIC 950, 952)
- A priest is only allowed to retain one mass stipend per day. Except on Christmas Day, if a priest offers more than one mass, the stipends for the additional masses should be sent to the Archdiocesan Seminary Fund: c/o Finance Office / 680 West Peachtree St. NW / Atlanta, GA 30308 (cf. CIC 951)
- A priest may not accept stipends for more masses than he can offer in a year's time. It would be prudent for parishes to follow this norm, as well. Also, a parish may reserve days on its calendar for urgent intentions that come up at short notice, such as deaths or natural disasters. (cf. CIC 953)
- If a priest or parish receives more stipends than they can make use of in a year, excess stipends can be sent to another priest or to the missions, unless the donor has requested otherwise. One agency that handles the transfer of stipends to mission priests is: Aid to the Church in Need, 725 Leonard Street, P.O. Box 220384 Brooklyn, NY 11222 Tel: 800-628-6333 Excess stipends may also be sent to the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, 2625 Highway 212 SW, Conyers, GA 30094 (cf. CIC 954)
- Should a priest or parish discover that they have held intentions for more than a year, the extra intentions, including the stipend given, should be sent to the ordinary. In the Archdiocese of Atlanta, these stipends should be sent to: Office of the Archbishop, Archdiocese of Atlanta, 680 West Peachtree St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30308 (cf. CIC 956)
- Proper records should be kept of mass stipends received, together with the moment when they are fulfilled or transferred. The books may be inspected by the ordinary or his representative at a parish visitation. (cf. CIC 955, 958)
- Mass Stipends are taxable income for federal and state income tax, as well as Social Security tax purposes.