

RCIA
The Eucharist: Part I Liturgy of the Word
Session #9

"The ritual, sacramental action of thanksgiving to God which constitutes the principal Christian liturgical celebration of and communion in the paschal mystery of Christ. The liturgical action called the Eucharist is also traditionally known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is at the heart of the Church's life."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church
#2177



STRUCTURE AND FORMAT OF THE MASS

Part I

Introductory Rites

We enter the house of the Lord in praise – Entrance procession

We approach the Lord in humility – Penitential Rite

We Praise the Lord – Glory to God in the highest.

Liturgy of the Word

We Listen to the Word of God – Scripture Readings

We respond to the Word in Faith – Responsorial Psalm

We hear the Good News proclaimed – Gospel

We are encouraged to lead a Christian life – Homily

We profess our beliefs – Creed

We pray for the needs of all peoples – General Intercessions

Liturgy of the Eucharist

We bring and offer our gifts – Presentation of the Gifts, Prayers over gifts.

We praise the Lord – “Holy, Holy ...,” – Eucharistic Prayer

We welcome Jesus in his sacramental presence – Consecration

We remember our loved ones, living and dead

We affirm our faith – “Amen”

We proclaim the mystery of faith and unite in prayer – The Lord’s Prayer

We extend the peace of Christ to fellow believers – Sign of Peace

We express our unworthiness and beg for peace – “Lamb of God”

We receive Jesus in the Eucharist and give thanks – Communion

Concluding Rite

We receive the final blessing – that the Spirit be with us

We are challenged to live the Mass – “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.”

We respond generously – “Thanks be to God.”

PRINCIPAL MASS MATERIALS

Usually the vessels to be used in the liturgy are placed on a small table in the aisle and are brought to the priest during the Presentation of the gifts.

The *chalice* or cup, which must be made of durable or non-corrosive, non-absorbent material, is the most important vessel. During Mass, the wine in the chalice will be changed into the sacramental Blood of Christ. Each priest usually has his own chalice. There are generally several other cups on a table near the altar. These must meet the same requirements and are used for distribution of the precious Blood at communion. *Purificators* are liturgical napkins, used to wipe the lip of the cup after a person has received the sacred blood, and for drying the sacred vessel after it has been cleansed. A small flat dish called a *paten* holds the large **host** that the priest uses at Mass. This host is larger than the ones received by the congregation because it is easier to see when it is elevated at the consecration. In a cup like vessel called the *ciborium* are the quarter-sized hosts for the people’s Communion.

These wafers are usually made by pouring batter, made with flour and water, onto waffle irons inscribed with liturgical symbols. The thin flat sheets are cut out as hosts.

Cruets filled with water and wine are also brought up at the Presentation of Gifts. The altar is covered with a white linen cloth that drapes down the sides or covers the altar like a tablecloth. At least two beeswax candles burn near the altar during Mass. A crucifix on the altar, on a stand, or suspended on the wall, reminds us that the Mass reenacts the Paschal Mystery.

A white cloth about nine inches square, the corporal, is spread in the center of the altar. The chalice and ciborium are placed on it during Mass. A small bowl and finger towel, which the priest uses to wash his hands, are also on the altar or on a table nearby.

The Sacramentary is placed on the altar and contains the prayers the priest says during Mass such as Eucharist prayer and Concluding prayer, blessings etc. It is also used at the presider's chair. The Lectionary, carried in procession by the lector, contains the Scripture readings. It contains PROPER OF SEASONS both Sunday readings and Weekday Readings. Also PROPERS OF SAINTS and other divisions for various needs and occasions i.e. Thanksgiving, Memorial Day. It is placed on the lectern or ambo from which the Word of God is proclaimed. Hymnals and Missalettes that contain the hymns and mass prayers are usually provided for the congregation.

Since ancient days, the priest has worn vestments derived from the Romans as the distinguishing garb for Mass. An alb is a long loose garment reaching to the floor. The stole, the symbol of the priesthood, is draped around his neck. The chasuble, which means "little house," is a flowing colored outer garment. Its style and color vary with the seasons.

The priest who presides at liturgy is the celebrant. If more than one priest celebrates, the Mass is concelebrated and the priests are concelebrants. When a bishop officiates at a formal Mass, it is an Episcopal Mass. When the pope presides, it is a Papal Mass. These externals help us understand better what the Mass means. They also aid us in greater devotion.

MUSIC

Music and songs used in prayer and worship are sacramentals. Early Christians used the musical elements, exclamations, and responses popular in the temple and local synagogues. The Book of Psalms, the Jewish scriptural hymnbook, was always available to Christians. The Christian Scriptures record several ancient Christian hymns such as the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55), Benedictus (Luke 1: 68-79) and Nunc Dimititis (Luke 2:29-32). The Glory to God was already used in the 3rd century, as first in the daily morning prayer service. In the 4th and 5th centuries, congregations became larger and worship was done in churches and basilicas. Music began to be used to grace the opening and closing processions of clergy. In time, it was used also during other transition times of the Mass. The most famous of church music is Gregorian chant, a plain chant, popularized first by Pope St. Gregory the Great (540-604).

Since these early centuries, church music and instruments have evolved within the culture of peoples.

Requirements for liturgical music

The fact that a musical composition sounds passable and that it makes people – choir or congregation – happy, does not by itself make it sacred music. As Pope John Paul said some years ago: "It cannot be said that all music becomes sacred from the fact and at the moment in which it is inserted into the liturgy."

The Church has very explicit and clear criteria on what music may be used in liturgy, and also how it should be used. These criteria appear in our own time in the section on sacred music (Ch. 6) of the Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican Council II, and in numerous documents by the U.S. Bishops and others.

Briefly, any music must meet three tests before it may be used in the Eucharist or other official liturgies.

1: Is it artistic? It should be basically good music, in both composition and performance.

2: Is it liturgically correct? Among other things, the music must fit the liturgical seasons and feasts and **must give opportunity for the whole congregation to participate in those parts of the Mass which are theirs.** A solo "Our Father", or a response to the Preface ("Holy, Holy, Holy") sung by a folk group alone, would offend against this requirement.

3: Is it Pastorally appropriate? This means it helps a particular congregation at a particular time pray and worship God well together.

Liturgical styles of Music

There probably has been more disagreement about the appropriateness of various styles of music for worship than any other aspect of the musical life of Christianity/ Paul appears to have criticized the charismatic improvisation of songs in Corinth (1 Cor. 14:13-19). Augustine vacillated on the question of music in worship before grudgingly giving his approval. Charlemagne suppressed the liturgical music of his time, replacing it

with what is now called Gregorian chant. Luther made music central to worship, Zwingli forbade it, and Trent seriously debated banning all music but chant.

With reform of the Roman Catholic liturgy mandated by Vatican II, there has been a tremendous increase in the types and styles of music employed in worship. *Musicam sacram* (1967) addressed the question of musical style: “No kind of sacred music is prohibited from liturgical actions by the Church as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its individual parts, and does not hinder the active participation of people.” (M.S. 9)

Clarification of Terms

Various terms have emerged over the centuries or designating the music employed in the Church’s worship. The most common of these are: ***Church music, Liturgical music, Religious music, and Sacred music.*** Though often used interchangeably these terms are not synonymous. The ancient designation church music (*musica ecclesiastica*) has come to denote virtually any music employed within worship during the history of Christian churches. Liturgical music (*musica liturgica*) is a more recent formulation, infrequently employed in the literature before this century, which came to prominence in the 1960s as a specific term for music integral to the reformed liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council. Religious music (*musica religiosa*) currently serves as a popular label for any music that is perceived to have an explicit or implicit religious theme, be that Christian rock, Hindu chants or Afro-American spirituals. Sacred music (*musica sacra*) is at once the preferred term in universal documents of the Roman Catholic church for music composed for “the celebration of divine worship” (*Musicam sacram* [1967], n.4a) yet in common usage is a generic term for religious music, especially that which is considered art music.

A CLOSER LOOK AT PARTS OF MASS

ENTRANCE: personal and procession

Personal: Holy water – Reminder of baptism when sins washed away and made new in Christ.

Genuflecting (Western Church) Usually done before entering the pew. Sign of reverence & adoration to Christ's divine presence in the Blessed Sacrament (tabernacle). Sign of humility

Bowing (Eastern Church) Profoundly bowing always way of showing reverence & adoration. Sign of humility. Adopted from the Roman courts.

THE ALTAR IS A SYMBOL OF THE LORD. A BOW BEFORE THE ALTAR IS ALWAYS APPROPRIATE.

Kneeling – Sign of penance, supplication & adoration. Realization of Christ's divinity and our smallness.

Processional: Who's Who

A server with lighted censer, if incense is used

The servers with lighted candles & cross-bearer between them, if the cross is to be carried.

Acolytes and other ministers

A reader, who may carry the Book of the Gospels

The priest who is to celebrate the Mass.

Celebration should dictate the size and solemnity of procession

Formal entrance symbolizes the community's gatheredness to actively celebrate their faith life. With a prayerful attitude the community gathers in God's presence.

The priest and other ministers proceed through the gathered community as a sign that they come from the community.

Song unifies the assembly even more – in one voice of praise. The first joint action of the people in the celebration.

OPENING HYMN

Entrance of ministers traditionally accompanied with song

Selection of music and source can vary (cantor, choir, and assembly singing). May also enter without music, in silence.

Purpose of hymn/music –

- to open celebration
- To integrate people, ministers and mystery of celebration
- To deepen unity among people gathered
- To put people in frame of mind as worshipping community
- To introduce season / feast
- To accompany procession of ministers

Gesture: Open up book, find hymn, sing – biblical form of prayer/praise of God.

SIGN OF CROSS

Sign A 2nd century practice among Christians; not introduced into mass until medieval times.

Sign traditionally, a prelude to prayer

A form of self-blessing with baptismal overtone

Recalls: that all salvation comes through Christ's victory on the Cross

That all are initiated into the mystery of salvation – “In the Name of...”

That community assembled is first and foremost a baptismal community

Gesture: Forehead to Chest, Left shoulder to Right shoulder

Dialogue: Priest “In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

People “Amen”

GREETING

Most ancient practice of beginning the mass – a greeting by the presiding minister followed by an opening prayer.

Minister’s greeting and people’s response express: the presence of the Lord with all who are assembled (Lord in our midst). Also the mystery of the Church.

Traditional minister greeting: “The Lord be with you.”

From a greeting in Ruth 2:4

From a statement about God’s presence in community in Judges 6:12

Traditional people response: “And with your spirit.”

From a reciprocal greeting in Galatians (6:18)

Two variations (optional) in traditional minister greeting

- from 2 Corin 13:13 “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you...”
- from Gal 1:3 – “The grace and peace of God our Father be with you...”

Dialogue: Priest “The Lord be with you.” OR one of above two variations

People – “And also with you.”

INTRODUCTION

No evidence of such a practice in the early church

Introduction is an option today; frequently omitted

Presiding minister can introduce celebration in appropriate words; introduction is always to be brief. Example: introducing the feast day being celebrated, season, theme, saint memorial, etc.

Dialogue: none.

PENITENTIAL RITE

- For centuries, there was no penitential rite in the liturgy – the Eucharist itself was understood as the sacrament of reconciliation.
- Finally, a simple rite was located at the beginning of the Mass in light of Mt. 5:23-35 “reconcile first before offering your sacrifice”
- Four parts to the penitential rite:
 1. Priest invites people to recall their sinfulness
 2. A period of silent reflection
 3. Everyone proclaims their sinfulness before God in one of several ways *(below)
 4. The priest concludes with a prayer requesting forgiveness

Several ways for community to proclaim sinfulness

- a. Confessor prayer (I confess) all pray together
- b. Lord, Have Mercy acclamations – all repeat refrain
- c. Blessing and Sprinkling of people with water (as a visual reminder of baptismal forgiveness/ reconciliation – all sing and bless selves.

GLORIA

- The Gloria is an early Christian hymn of praise introduced into the liturgy in the 6th century for the whole assembly to sing.
- In later centuries, a choir sang elaborate settings of the hymn.
- ALL sing the Gloria. If not sung, the Gloria is recited by ALL.
- The Gloria is not used during Advent and Lent.

OPENING PRAYER

- In the early church liturgy after the procession, the presider began by calling the community to prayer. He said, “let us pray”.
- The community prayed in silence, and after a few moments the presider summed up, or collected, the community prayer. The prayer was called the “collect”.
- The structure of today’s opening prayer is
 - a. an address to God (naming a feast, mystery, or motive of prayer)
 - b. a petition (of a general nature) and
 - c. a conclusion (invoking the mediation of Christ)
 - d. ALL respond to the prayer: Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

- God speaking directly to His children – revealing the mystery of redemption and salvation, nourishing their spirit.
- Where “Christ is still proclaiming His Gospel” (*Constitution on the Liturgy, Article 33*)
- We need to know about someone, about their history, to know and understand them – so it is with God – so seeing His relationship with people in the past we know what kind of God He is – knowledge from the past runs to the present and into the future
- It continues to be a LIVING WORD, since Christ is THE WORD – and since a word spoken takes on a life of its own and can not be “recalled”

Structure

Movement between proclamation and response

1 st reading (Old Testament)	Proclamation	Sit
“Thanks be to God”	Response	
Responsorial Psalm	Response	
2 nd Reading (New Testament)	Proclamation	
“Thanks be to God”	Response	
Gospel Acclamation	Proclamation	Stand
Gospel	Proclamation	
“Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ”	Response	
Homily	Proclamation	Sit
Profession of Faith	Response	Stand
General Intercessions	Response	Stand

First Reading

- Taken from the Old Testament and stands in relation to the Gospel – most times – on all Sundays and Solemnities of the Lord, except during the Easter Season.
- Shows that we, too, share in the story of the Jewish people
- We express our involvement in the proclamation of the reading through the concluding acclamation ‘THANKS BE TO GOD’ a sign of our assent
- We sit to TAKE IN THE WORD – to ‘digest’ it to chew on it.

Responsorial Psalm

- Our response to the first reading – to the Word of God by using the Word of God – a response to the spoken word.
- Should be sung to aid in understanding the psalm’s spiritual meaning and also because the genre of the psalms is as lyrical compositions.

Second Reading

- Generally difficult to connect with the first reading and Gospel
- Selected from one of the New Testament Letters (i.e. Paul’s Letters, the Acts of the Apostles, the Book of Revelation.
- Usually a continuous reading from a particular book and may have no connection with the other two readings – except during specific liturgical seasons when the selection is based upon the mystery being celebrated (i.e. Easter – First Epistle of Peter – implications of Baptism)
- WHY HAVE IT? To appreciate the particular characteristics of the various books – to become more appreciative of the entire word.
- We SIT, just like the first reading, to TAKE IN THE WORD, TO DIGEST IT, TO LET IT TAKE HOLD IN OUR MINDS.
- We respond at the conclusion of the proclamation with the Proclamation: “Thanks Be To God” to express our assent to what has just been proclaimed.

Gospel Acclamation

- The Alleluia or, as the liturgical season requires, the verse before the Gospel, is also a ‘rite or act standing by itself.’ It serves as the assembled faithfuls’ greeting of welcome to the Lord who is about to speak to them and as an expression of their faith through song.
- The Alleluia or the verse before the Gospel must be sung and during it all stand. It is not to be sung only by the cantor who intones it or by the choir, but by the whole congregation together.
- The Alleluia is NOT SUNG during lent because of its paschal connotations (life, suffering, death, resurrection).
- Alleluia from the Hebrew means “Praise Yahweh”
- This is an ACCLAMATION – A JOYFUL SHOUT – that we are ready to hear the Lord.
- We stand as a sign of readiness, “of baptismal dignity, or resurrection with Christ.”

Gospel

- Stand – show reverence
- “although God speaks to us in the totality of the Scriptures, it is especially in the proclamation of the gospel that the Lord Jesus is present in his word.”
- This is the only proclamation where there may be a procession or other sign of honor. It varies according to the solemnity of the occasion i.e. incense, candles, procession.
- **DIALOGUE**
 - Minister: The Lord be with You
 - People: And also with you.
 - Minister: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to....
(tracing the sign of the cross on the book, then making the triple sign of the cross expressing that our minds are receptive to Christ’s word, our lips are to profess the word, and our hearts are to love the word.)
 - People: Glory to you Lord
(making the triple sign of the cross as the minister, on the forehead, lips and heart.)
- at the conclusion the minister pauses and then proclaims, “The Gospel of the Lord.”
- The people respond, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.”
- The minister kisses the book and says quietly, “May the words of the Gospel wipe away our sins” – which practice dates to the Middle Ages.
- The book is then put in a place of honor or left open or closed on top of the ambo.

Homily

- Sit – take in how God’s Word applies to our everyday life – our concrete needs & circumstances
- A continuation of God’s Word to a converted and a converting people
- How God’s saving deeds, the manifestation of Christ, continues in our lives today.
- The minister should NOT make the sign of the cross at the beginning or ending of the homily – this destroys the essential link between the readings and the homily.

CREED

- After the homily and maybe a brief period of sitting, the priest will stand and will begin: “We believe in one God,…”
- We stand and join in
- Stand – proclaim our faith, our “YES” to God’s Word and how it applies to our life, our ‘YES’ of faith in all God has done, is doing, and will do.
- Called the “Symbol of Faith” because a compilation of our beliefs – an explicit expression of our beliefs since the celebration of the Word and Eucharist also articulate, express and affirm our faith

- “...serves as a way for the people to respond and to give their assent to the word of God heard in the readings and through the homily and for them to call to mind the truths of faith before they begin to celebrate the Eucharist.”
(*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*)

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

- Remain standing – our way of commending to the Lord the world, which we as the community are sent to serve.
- STRUCTURE: intro. Prayer, petitions, response, closing prayer
- The priest will give a brief introduction (i.e. “Let us Pray”) generally from the presider’s chair, inviting those initiated into the faith to lift their hearts in prayer.
- The minister expressing our prayers does so at the ambo, or lectern, where the readings are proclaimed.
- The prayers are commonly phrased in the following manner: “For all who lead the Church, that they... We pray to the Lord... or We pray....
- We most commonly respond by saying “Lord, hear our prayer” although the response may vary (it may also be sung)
- “Enlightened by God’s word and in a sense responding to it, the assembly of the faithful prays in the general intercessions as a rule for the need of the universal Church and the local community, for the salvation of the world and those oppressed by any burden, and for special categories of people” (General instruction of the Roman Missal)
- in the general intercessions “the people exercise their priestly function making intercession for all”
- intercessions are made for the following intentions: the needs of the universal Church, the world, nation, and civil authorities, the needs of the oppressed (in any sense), and the needs of the local community (GIRM)
- the priest will conclude the intercessions with a prayer.

GENERAL INTENTIONS

These prayers are properly called the “general intercessions” since they extend beyond the needs and concerns of the local assembly. They are frequently called the “prayers of the faithful” since in ancient times the catechumens were in some areas dismissed before these prayers: in other regions, however, the dismissal took place afterwards, as it does today. The Lord’s Prayer, moreover, is more accurately the “prayer of the faithful.”

The general intercessions have the following structure:

1. The presiding minister addresses the assembly and relates the intercessions to the mystery being celebrated, to the feast or season, or to some particular aspect of the scriptures which have been proclaimed.
2. The deacon or in his absence another minister announces a series of intentions with the assembly after each intention.
3. After a brief period of silent prayer the presider addresses the Father, summarizes the intentions, and asks God to look favorably upon the prayers of the assembly which, in turn, responds Amen.

Since the Church is both local and universal, at least one intention is usually taken from each of the following categories:

1. the needs of the Church
2. public authorities and the salvation of the world
3. those oppressed by any need
4. the local community

Examples of intercessions are found in the Appendix to the sacramentary to serve as models guiding the parish community in composing intercessions which are not only universal and local but also current to the changing events of the world. The intentions may vary in number and may be directed to other needs or problems, and they may be spontaneously offered by members of the assembly in accord with their spiritual disposition or according to a special occasion, for example a marriage ceremony.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal (45)

“In the general intercessions of prayer of the faithful, the people exercise their priestly function by interceding for all mankind. It is appropriate that this prayer be included in all Masses celebrated with a congregation, so that intercessions may be made for the Church, for civil authorities, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind, and for the salvation of the world.”

CHOPPING UP THE BIBLE

Consider this challenge: Take the whole Bible and figure out how to cut it up into bite-sized pieces that can be used over 156 Sundays, plus a few dozen major feast days. Take into account the seasons of the liturgical year, as well as 2000 years of previous ways of doing the same thing. Then, when you have all the Sundays and major feasts figured out, decide how to divide what’s left into about six hundred weekdays to create a two-year list of readings for daily Mass. Add to that another whole set of Masses for special needs and occasions, including weddings and funerals, all of which need a number of readings for different circumstances.

In the process, of course, you will have to decide which verses of the Bible are most important and which ones we should never read out loud in church. You have to determine how long each reading should be and where to start and stop each passage. Then you have to choose appropriate psalms for the responsorial psalm after the first reading and appropriate verses for the acclamation before the gospel.

Those are just some of the challenges faced by those who created the book of readings that we call the lectionary. In making their decisions, they used two main patterns for choosing readings.

Generally the first reading is from the Old Testament, though during Easter season it comes from the Acts of the Apostles. The second reading is from the New Testament letters or the Book of Revelation, and the third text is from one of the four gospels. For major feasts, like Christmas and Easter, all the readings are chosen to fit the feast, so they all fit together well.

In Ordinary Time, outside the major festal seasons, a different principle comes into play. We read through the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, one each year, in what is called a semi-continuous reading. We don’t read every verse, but we work through the gospel chapter by chapter. John’s gospel is used most often during the Easter season in all three years.

The first reading is then chosen to relate the gospel passage, and the psalm is chosen to respond to that first reading. The Second reading, though, is also a semi-continuous reading of other New Testament books, especially the letters of St. Paul. This means it goes its merry way, not necessarily linked to the other readings but giving us another set of ideas to ponder.

The goal of this rather complicated structure is simple: to expose us to more of the Bible than we used to hear in church. Before 1970, the lectionary had only one year's worth of readings; now there is a three-year cycle for Sundays and a two-year cycle for weekdays.

The reason for this, of course, is that Christians look to the Bible as the source of wisdom and as a way to meet the Lord. Beyond our use of the scriptures in church, we should really be reading them at home, too. The more familiar we are with the Bible and the characters and stories it contains, the more we will benefit when we hear the readings at Mass. (Fr. Lawrence E. Mick –*Three Minute Liturgical Catechesis*)

MASS STIPENDS / MASS INTENTIONS

Stipend: an offering (the preferred term today) given on the occasion of requesting a Mass, for those oppressed by various needs, for all mankind, and for the salvation of the world." special remembrance in the Eucharist. It is to be distinguished from a stole fee, which is a voluntary offering on the occasion of the administration of sacraments and sacramentals other than the Eucharist. The custom originated in the offerings of bread and wine by the people at the Eucharist (mentioned already by Justin Martyr in the second century). An offering of money eventually replaced such offerings. It came to be a supplemental means for the financial support of the clergy. Canon 848 insists, however, that the poor and the needy are never to be denied access to the sacraments because of their lack of material resources.

In feudal times, the nobles erected the churches, and often the liturgy was celebrated in their private chapels. The Mass soon became the personal worship of the priest, while the people were permitted to be onlookers. The people no longer brought gifts to share, but they still wished to benefit from the spiritual graces of the Mass. To guarantee a part in the blessing, the laity offered sums of money so that the celebrant would pray for their intentions.

Abuses crept in and resulted in the buying and selling of spiritual favors. The Council of Trent condemned this sin of **simony**. However, the stipend continued to contribute to the support of the priest and is not intended to pay for a Mass.

Understanding of Mass Stipends today:

The Eucharistic Liturgy is always celebrated in union with the Church throughout the world. It is also celebrated for the intention of the universal Church. In the early Church, the assembly would offer at the Eucharistic Liturgy the necessary items for the celebration of the Eucharist, namely bread and wine. They would also make other offerings to be given for the poor or the support of the priest. The custom of making offerings for the support of the priest continued for some time, in this way, the priest would be free to carry out the service of the Church to the community.

As time passed, people would make certain requests for prayers in making their offering. An offering for certain sacramental functions performed by the priests came to be called "a Stipend." In some places, prayer requests for which a stipend would be offered was announced, especially during the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. The

custom most Catholics are familiar with today is the custom of making an offering to the priest or parish with the request that a special remembrance be given to the one “for whom the Mass is offered.”

Actually, the Eucharistic Liturgy is still celebrated primarily for the universal Church – the whole human family, living and dead. Even should a priest wish to do so, he could never narrow down that worldwide embrace as Jesus renews his sacrificial offering in the person of His church on earth. No amount of offerings can change this. But another intention can also be remembered. Besides making an offering for a specific intention, a person should not overlook the more important action of assisting at the Eucharistic Liturgy for that intention. An offering for a Eucharistic Celebration does not pay for someone else to pray in our place. It is an offering with the idea that the priest and the assembly will pray along with us! In many Churches, the priest has stopped announcing the intention because the primary intention is the universal Church. This is done to avoid the impression that the Eucharistic Liturgy is primarily for the intention requested, which it is not.

If a Catholic wishes to have the priest remember someone in a special way at the Eucharistic Liturgy, he or she simply calls the priest and makes the request. An offering is ordinarily given. The priest will often note the intention in the weekly bulletin.

Donations are given at the time of other sacramental celebrations, such as weddings, funerals, and baptisms. Where an offering cannot be made, the priest may never refuse a sacrament. No one “buys” a sacrament or no one “buys” a Mass.