

Mass Parts 20/52:

Mass Intentions



Each Mass has a primary intention and an infinite number of personal intentions. Throughout the Mass, everyone present can offer up different parts in prayer for different people and different intentions. I have about five different major parts of the Mass where I pray for family and other intentions. The primary intention, the name we read during the Intercessions, has more to do with law and money. Mass intentions are free, but there is a suggested donation of \$10. After the Mass is fulfilled, the \$10 stipend goes to the presider. The name doesn't have to be said out loud to be valid, and the intention also doesn't have to be for someone deceased. For the monetary donation, there can be only one intention, and a priest can only take one stipend per day, no matter how many Masses he says that day. Any extra money goes to the parish. If you would like a Mass offered for a loved one, simply call the parish office.

Prayers for the dead have more to do with our understanding of Purgatory. Yes, we still believe in Purgatory in the Catholic Church. There is a social as well as personal effect produced by every sin. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we are forgiven the sin, yet the affects can still remain, and for this we must be purified. The habit of sin needs to be overcome by the habit of virtue, so even though the sin is forgiven, the habit still needs to be broken. When we harm others, the affects can remain as well. Purgatory is a time of purification after death, where we face all the effects of our sin. This purification can be accomplished here on earth through prayer, fasting, service, etc; but it must eventually happen.

As far how our prayer affects those deceased: St. Augustine spoke of the very good in heaven who do not need our prayers, the very bad who are in hell and so cannot be affected by our prayers, and the not very good and not very bad in the middle. It is for those in the middle that we pray. We actually just pray for all the dead, for we make no decision in the church as to where people are in the afterlife.

Prayers for the dead are also scriptural. After a major battle in 2 Maccabees 12:38-46, we read:

Judas rallied his army and went to the city of Adullam. As the seventh day was approaching, they purified themselves according to custom and kept the Sabbath there. On the following day, since the task had now become urgent, Judas and his companions went to gather up the bodies of the fallen and bury them with their kindred in their ancestral tombs. But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. They all therefore praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection in mind; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be absolved from their sin.

-Fr. Kopp

Next Week: Preparation of the Altar