Mass intentions: Memorials, money and the meaning of the Eucharist

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MASS INTENTIONS

MEMORIALS, MONEY AND THE MEANING OF THE EUCHARIST

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Introduction

Despite its abusive history and problematic theological groundings, the system of Mass intentions was largely preserved amidst the sweeping liturgical changes wrought by the Second Vatican Council. Was this outcome an endorsement of the status quo or an unfortunate oversight? In this thesis I propose that the post-Conciliar Church's reform of the practice comes in the form of an at least implicit theological reorientation. The practice survives in most appearances but is recast internally. Thus, sound catechesis and sensitive administration can restore the practice to its place as a salutary form of lay participation in the Eucharist. The pursuit of this line of argument requires a review of the practical and theological history of the whole stipendiary system. The continuity and discontinuity of the preserved practice can then be ascertained and pastoral conclusions drawn.

The practice of Mass intentions surely has its devotees and critics. For many of the former it is a traditional and cherished way of sharing in the fruits of the Mass. For some of the latter, it is an irremediable and embarrassing vestige of a better forgotten backwardness. Arguably most Catholics are reasonably unperturbed if not entirely unaware of any controversy. Therefore, the following study will endeavor to clarify a practice whose origins, historical development and theological meaning are obscure to most. In doing so the work hopes to be of aid to church ministers who at times must navigate the minefields of what is for some a neuralgic matter. In a similarly practical way, the paper identifies some pastoral implications and opportunities involved.

From a purely academic perspective, the topic of Mass intentions affords a propitious vantage from which to engage the discipline of theology more broadly. It affords a lens into the

history of the liturgy, the priesthood and devotional life. It touches upon the always tricky question of grace and its dynamic in the Eucharist. Moreover, it highlights the crucial role that economic and social forces have played in shaping the life of the Church. Finally, it provides an ideal case study of the relationship between praxis and theology – how the way we pray influences the way we believe and understand.

I. ROOTS AND RISE OF THE STIPENDIARY SYSTEM

A. Eucharist of the early Church: f*rom many, one*

1. The Pauline model

The Eucharistic celebration of the early Church was marked by the centrality of thanksgiving and praise. "On Sunday everyone assembled to do what the Lord commanded his Church to do: to renew his commemoration, to thank God for all the great things that he has given us in his creation and, above all, in his son, to associate our thanks with the perpetual sacrifice which renews Christ himself in our midst."[1]

Moreover, Sunday worship embodied a regard for the needy – reflected in the reservation of the consecrated bread for the absent sick and in the sharing of excess offerings with the poor. In its grateful prayer and loving worship – which attended even to the lowliest – the Eucharist was deeply communitarian. Indeed, there was little place for the private or exclusive in this early Christian worship – for "the first and most essential function of the celebration of Mass" is "the homage of God's people to God, our Lord."[2]

In this way the Eucharist supplied the Church with a paradigm for righteous living in the Kingdom of God. St. Paul elaborates on this -- giving a deeper ecclesial sense to Eucharistic action. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul describes "an ecclesial act of table-sharing in which bread and wine are taken, blessed, and shared, and the poor are fed."[3] Gracious

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[1] Joseph A. Jungmann, "Mass Intentions and Mass Stipends," in *Unto the Altar: The Practice of Catholic Worship,* ed. Alfons Kirchgaessner (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 24.
[2] Ibid., 25.
[3] Francis M. Mannion, "Stipends and Eucharistic Praxis," *Worship* 57, no. 3 (May 1983): 195.

fellowship becomes an actualization of the Church, portraying and symbolizing a model of conduct to govern all transactions and relationships within the community. It was for this reason that Paul so caustically scolded the Corinthians for allowing division and selfishness to pervert their Eucharistic gatherings. Disregard for the poor and vulnerable was an affront to the very body of the Lord.

The Pauline influence on Eucharistic worship is evident in the post-apostolic and patristic eras.[4] The Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum* from the early part of the third century, for example, places charity at the very heart of the liturgical assembly. In fact the Bishop "is exhorted to sit on the floor and give up his throne to a poor man when he welcomes him into the gathering."[5] Similarly, Cyprian of Carthage scolds a rich congregant for offending against this central charity: "you should blush to come to the Lord's assembly without a sacrifice and to partake of the sacrifice offered by some poor person."[6]

Clearly, the Eucharist was, as Jungmann observes, far more than merely rhetorically the summit and source of the community's life. For the first several centuries of the Church, Sunday Mass "stood so much in the foreground that other customs were scarcely mentioned, indeed to a large extent did not exist at all."[7]

[4] This can be seen in the Eucharist of St. Justin Martyr in the second century. It is also evident in the baptismal Eucharist of Hippolytus some generations later.
[5] Manion, 196.
[6] Ibid., 197.
[7] Jungmann, *Unto the Altar*, 24.

2. Offerings – gifts of the people

The common offering of gifts was a central element of early Eucharistic practice. In time, its place in the liturgy would be formalized and governed.[8] St. Justin the Martyr mentions the practice of making Eucharistic offerings as early as 155 AD:

> Those who are well provided for, if they wish to do so, contribute what each thinks fit; this is collected and left with the president, so that he can help the orphans and widows and the sick, and all who are in need for any reason, such as prisoners and visitors from abroad; in short he provides for all who are in want.[9]

Since the 3rd century, it became the custom for the faithful to bring gifts of bread and wine and, later, other gifts for the needs of the Church and the priest. These would also express their bond with the altar. The gifts offered at the Sunday liturgical celebration "were the means of supplying the needs of the clergy and the poor, even the poor of other Churches."[10] The offertory was an occasion to *share* with the needy and a means of *participation* in the worship. The gift offered was considered as "a gift to God" or an oblation. "By the fourth century, an actual procession of all to make the offering is assumed by the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Synod of Elvira (c. 306): an offering was accepted of all but penitents, heretics, those openly living in sin."[11]

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[8] Timothy Fitzgerald sketches this remarkable trajectory whereby the offering grows in importance from: "the simplicity of Tertullian's day (late 2nd century), 'Each man deposits a small amount on a certain day of the month or whenever he wishes, and only on condition that he is willing and able to do so. No one is forced; each makes his contribution voluntarily'; to Cyprian's strong words (mid-3rd century); to Augustine's presumption of an offering as normal practice (late 4th century); to the 6th century, where for the first time penalties were imposed in some places for failure to bring an offering to Sunday Mass and to pay tithes" ["The Story of the Stipend, Part I: Offerings and Intercessions," *Liturgy 80* 16 (October 1985): 3.]

[9] *First Apology*, 66-67.

[10] Colum Kenny, "Mass Stipends: Origin and Relevance," *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 64, no. 6 (July 1964): 843.

[11] Fitzgerald*, Part I*, 3.

Augustine's reflections on his mother Monica are illustrative of the practice's widespread adoption and devotional importance. "So constant in alms-deeds [*elemosynas*], so gracious and attentive to thy saints, not permitting one day to pass without oblation [*oblationem*] at thy altar, twice a day, morning and evening, coming to thy Church without intermission… interceding for the salvation of her son."[12]

Jungmann relates a story of Gregory of Tours (d. 594) about a woman who had the sacrifice offered daily for her deceased husband. As her offering she would bring some of the very best wine and present it, according to Gallic custom, to the sacristy before Mass. Upon realizing that the widow herself seldom received communion, the unscrupulous sub-Deacon who brought the wine to the priest during the Offertory began substituting cheap wine. His embezzlement continued until the day the widow came to communion and discovered the deceit.[13]

There was great variability in these early centuries regarding how the offerings were collected and presented and in what they might consist. From this earliest age, gifts were also given outside of the Eucharistic celebration. "One way of doing so, although probably associated sometimes with the liturgy, was the custom of offering tithes. This practice grew and became common by the 3rd century."[14]

The offerings came to be deeply connected with the practice and essential meaning of the Eucharist. Tertullian "conceived of the offerings of Christians as an exercise of their lay

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[12] *Confessions*, bk. V, ch. 9, no. 2.
[13] Jungmann, *Unto the Altar*, 26.
[14] Kenny, *Origin and Relevance*, 843.

priesthood. At this time the offerings of gifts and the receiving of communion were complementary acts which the faithful performed whenever they attended Mass. According to Tertullian, 'no one is compelled, but everyone spontaneously offers'"[15] St. Jerome identified the parallel with the Old Testament practice: "the tithes and first fruits, which were once given by the people to the priests and Levites, apply also to the people of the Church, who are committed not only to give tithes and first fruits, but also to sell all they possess."[16]

As noted, in time the gifts became monetary and were even made outside of Mass. Still "the donor could be understood as co-offering in the Mass in a special way through the gift, with and through the priest, even when the gift no longer served the communitarian function of the old offertory procession."[17] This is the early understanding and rationale of almsgiving. As Tertullian explains: "the money therefrom is spent not for banquets or drinking parties or good-for-nothing eating houses, but for the… poor, poor children who are without their parents and means of subsistence, for aged men who are confined to their house; likewise for shipwrecked sailors, and for any in the mines, on islands and in prisons."[18]

Although the symbolism was weakened by this monetization and by the increasing receipt of the gift outside of Mass, the turn to money and to the extra-liturgical offering did not immediately lead to exclusive intentions (i.e. the stipend proper). "Even when the Mass in question already had a definite intention and perhaps already contained an offertory procession (say, on behalf of a family who had asked for the Mass), anyone could include

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[15] Ibid., *Apologeticus*, 39.
[16] *In Malachiam*, 3:7.
[17] Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology, e*d. Robert J. Daly (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 112.
[18] Fitzgerald, *Part I*, 3.

himself in the Mass, according to the current practice, through a gift given beforehand or through joining in the offertory procession."[19]

Yet, this differentiation of gifts (i.e., no longer indistinguishable offerings of bread and wine) began to highlight the individuality of the offerers – which would have lasting and transformative effect on the offering and the Eucharist. By the end of the 12th century monetary offerings had become the universal form of giving with no more mention of bread and wine.[20]

3. Intercessions – prayers for the living and the dead

Intercessory prayer by the assembly had long been an integral part of the Eucharistic tradition. The first act of the newly baptized was to join in the assembly's intercessory prayer – "hearty prayers in common for ourselves and for the baptized and for all others in every place."[21]

Another crucial aspect of the Eucharistic *koinonia* of the early Church was the offering of gifts "in the name of the dead." In addition to being thanksgiving and adoration, the Mass is a sacrifice of atonement and of intercession – for it is the only sacrifice in the New Covenant. This is why it has been offered for special intentions since the 3rd century. "Since the dead were

[19] Jungmann, *Unto the Altar*, 28.
[20] Kenny, *Origins and Relevance*, 844.
[21] Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, ch. 65.

regarded as members of the Church, it was natural that they should be drawn into fellowship of the earthly worshipers by gifts offered 'in their name.'"[22]

Jungmann points to the account in the "apocryphal, half-gnostic" Acts of John (mid-second century) of the Apostle John breaking bread, offering prayers of thanksgiving and distributing the Eucharist to a group gathered around a tomb. Jungmann says this mirrors the custom of the Catholic Church at that time, as Tertullian attests to a bit later (*De cor*. ch.3). He explains: "as often as the anniversary [of the martyr's death] comes round we make offerings for the dead as birthday honors."[23] The disciples of Polycarp marked the anniversary of his martyrdom by celebrating the Eucharist at his grave.[24]

Jungmann also notes how there is ample evidence that, by the sixth century, the Eucharist was celebrated in private houses and chapels or small groups, and likely for a special intention. The entire third part of the Gelasian Sacramentary (the Roman Missal which dates from the sixth century) – after Propers of the Day and the Saints – is composed almost entirely of Votive Masses. "In the three variable prayers and often in the *Hanc Igitur* as well, there are more or less precise references to particular intentions which are stated in the titles: help in any trouble, in danger of plague; prayer for rain, for fine weather, for the blessing of children, for the sick, for the dead, in time of war, for peace; thanks and prayers for a birthday, at a marriage, on the anniversary of a priest's ordination, etc."[25]

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[22] Mannion, 197.
[23] Fitzgerald, *Part I*, 3.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Jungmann, *Unto the Altar*, 26.

"In Augustine's time, communion between the living and the dead was still practiced by means of Memorial meals at tombs, at which the poor were often fed. These eucharists and agapes represented acts of communion in Christ between the living and the dead, a communion deepened and solidified because the poor members of the community were fed by the offerings made 'in the name of the dead.'"[26] As Augustine reasons: "there is no gainsaying that the souls of the dead find solace from the piety of their friends who are alive, when the sacrifice of the Mediator is offered for the dead or alms are given in the Church…. Accordingly, when sacrifices, whether of the altar or of alms, are offered for all the baptized dead, these are thanksgivings when made for the very good, propitiatory offerings when made for the not very bad, and at least some sort of solace for the living, even if of no help to the dead, when made for the very bad."[27]

So there is abundant evidence of small masses for special gatherings, circumstances and occasions. For example, Masses were celebrated in the prisons. As Cyprian writes: "we express the faithful inclination of our love here also in our sacrifices and our prayers, not ceasing to give thanks to God the Father and to Christ his Son, and as well to pray as to entreat…. For the victim who affords an example to the brotherhood both of courage and of faith ought to be offered up when the brethren are present." Masses were also celebrated at gravesides and in private homes – with possibly multiple intentions. "In both East and West the practice of 'domestic' eucharists becomes common …. Indeed, things got out of hand, for the Councils of Laodicea (c.360-390) and Seleucia-Ctesiphon (410) proscribe the practice outright, and the second Council of Carthage (c. 390) requires episcopal authorization for it. The practice

[26] Mannion, 197.
[27] *Enchiridion de fide, spe et caritate*, ch. 29, secs. 109-110.

continued, however. It lasted in the West in spite of all attempts to suppress it, until Session 22 of Trent (1562) finally succeeded in doing so."[28]

These semi-private and specially-occasioned celebrations of the Eucharist would seem to have been part of the worship life of the Church from its earliest days. Typically, the faithful would supply the requisite material offerings and often also make a donation to the presider.[29] Thus, there does appear to be a precedent in the early Church for the practice of Mass stipends. In both cases, special prayers were sought by individuals. Gifts were provided by the people and the Church's ministers derived support from those gifts. The similarities end there, however.

In the Pauline, post-apostolic, and patristic periods, "the Eucharistic transactions of bread, wine, and money took place out of the fullness of the Church as communion in Christ and gave expression to the bounty of the Church. Eucharistic *koinonia* involved the care of the poor and the dead; offerings of food and money found their radical identity in this involvement."[30] There was operative what might be called a principle of inclusion, by which Christians acted not in order to gain access to secret realities, but rather on the basis of their inclusion through the Holy Spirit in the communion of Christ. "Gifts of money were transacted in the fullness of communion and flowed from this communion as its embodiment and expression."[31]

"At this time there was no such thing as offering the Mass for particular persons in an exclusive, preferential way. All who offered – and this included all who were present, as well as

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[28] Robert Taft, "The Frequency of the Eucharist Throughout History," in *Can We Always Celebrate the Eucharist?,* eds. Mary Collins and David Power, *Concillium* 152, (1982): 14.
[29] Mannion, 197.
[30] Ibid., 198.
[31] Ibid.

those who were absent but sent their gifts, and the dead who shared in the gifts of their relatives and friends who offered for them – became part of the community for whom the priest prayed in the Secret. This prayer was always in the plural form, and asked the blessing of God upon all who took part in the sacrifice."[32] In other words, people made offerings not to gain access, but precisely because they had it.

B. Medieval transformation: *from offertory to stipend*

1. Development of the offering

Offerings were highly valued by the lay faithful. The gesture afforded them a privileged means of Eucharistic participation. This giving became simultaneously an expression of devotion and personal sacrifice, and a contribution to the material welfare of the Church and her ministers. Offerings were also motivated by "the desire to have one's particular interest placed before God by the priest who would act as representative of the donor by making the donor's intention his own in the prayer of the Mass."[33] Whereas in the ancient Eucharist, gifts of bread and wine were offered as part of a corporate act, the medieval offering became increasingly individualistic. Offerings were increasingly motivated by the special self-interests of the donor. Gift-giving in the context of the Eucharist was transformed – and with it the Eucharist itself.

[32] Kenny, *Origins and Relevance*, 843.
[33] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 112.

a. Intercessory benefit

(1) Reciprocity

The offertory that developed in 8th century Gaul, Spain, the British Isles and France came to epitomize this turn towards a more individualistic expression and understanding of the Eucharist. As the true forerunner of the stipendiary system, this strain of the evolving offertory became widely practiced in the West by the mid-9th century and was universally established by the 13th century. It was deeply influenced – not surprisingly – by its cultural milieu, especially the Germanic legal tradition which governed the giving of gifts. James Russell has written about this Germanization of the medieval liturgy. He describes an accommodationalist approach among Christian missionaries to the Franco-Germanic world, which shaped the evangelization of this region and in time influenced Christianity writ large. "To advance the process of Christianization among the Germanic peoples, its advocates sought to accommodate the religiopolitical and magicoreligious elements of Germanic religiosity."[34] Instead of directly confronting this opposing value system and attempting to radically transform it – an approach which almost certainly would have resulted in an immediate rejection of Christianity – "the missionaries apparently sought to redefine the Germanic virtues of strength, courage, and loyalty in such a manner that would reduce their incompatibility with Christian values, while at the same time 'inculturating' Christian values as far as possible to accommodate the Germanic ethos and world-view."[35]

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[34] James C. Russell, *The Germanization of Early Medieval Christianity: A Sociohistorical Approach to Religious Transformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 212.
[35] Ibid., 121.

While requests for a priest's prayers at the Eucharist – made with an offering – were hardly new, the introduction of more formal legal categories came to shape the nature and understanding of both Eucharistic offerings and intercessions. The early Church's offertory was rooted in "the old Roman notion of gift-giving which does not entail reciprocity. Gifts freely given are freely received without the obligation of recompense."[36] In this context, the priest was bound in charity – but not in justice – to remember the donor's intention. This changes as prevalent Germanic juridical notions are transposed into the liturgical life of the Church. Borrowing from this legal realm – where gifts remained recoverable unless sealed with a comparable gift – the exchange between the laity and priesthood came to be seen as a *quid pro quo*. "It belonged to the essence of a gift that it be sealed as unreturnable by a remuneration."[37] Here the gift was "instinctively understood to imply *reciprocity* of gift-giving."[38] It led to the view that the Mass "is a proper spiritual return from the priest who appropriated the gift for his use."[39]

Obviously, this transactional understanding of the offering in turn heightened the expectation of the intercessory benefit from one's own generosity. "There emerged a growing sense of the Eucharist as a privileged act by which God's aid might be sought for various personal favors, as well as benefits for the living and the dead. This resulted in a concentration on the priest as the subject of the Eucharist, and on the priest's acts of offering and

[36] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 112.
[37] Edward Kilmartin, "The Genesis and Medieval Interpretation of the Mass Stipend," in *The Finances of the Church,* eds. William Basset and Peter Huizing (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 105.
[38] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 112.
[39] Kilmartin, *Genesis and Medieval Interpretation*, 105.

consecration as *the* central dynamics of Eucharistic transactions."[40] Gifts and offerings "were no longer transacted *out of* the fullness of Eucharistic *koinonia* in the body of Christ, but rather made *in order to* gain access to Eucharistic realities extrinsic to the self-definition of Christian believers. The priest was increasingly seen as the mediator of this access, as having power over the blessings of the Eucharist."[41] Gifts were given to priests now not to support them as cherished members of the community, but rather as purveyors of graces out of reach to the laity.

The *Regula Canonicorum* of St. Chrodegang, Bishop of Metz (743-66) is the first formal approval and regulation of the practice of exchanging alms for intercessory prayers at Mass -- indicating that such transactions were "in existence for some time and yet novel enough to require ecclesiastical approbation."[42] Notably, while priests were permitted to accept alms for Masses, the document makes no mention of (let alone prohibits) the acceptance of plural gifts and the remembrance of plural intentions in the same Mass.

In the second version of the *Regula,* promulgated around 900, priests were instructed to share excess alms and prayer requests with "the society of priests in order that the intentions of the offerers might be more quickly and easily fulfilled."[43] This instruction to pass on the offerings to other priests suggests that the donors were likely not expected to attend these Masses – and therefore would be unaffected by the transfer. The expeditious celebration of the Mass, rather than potential pastoral care at a particular Mass, would appear to be the Church's

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[40] Mannion, 200.
[41] Ibid., 201.
[42] Edward Kilmartin, "The One Fruit or the Many Fruits of the Mass," in *Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 21 (Yonkers, New York: CTSA, 1966) 38.
[43] Ibid.

principal concern in this matter. Most tellingly, this revision of the *Regula* "seems to indicate that the priest is presumed to offer the Mass *exclusively* for the benefit of the donor of the gift."[44]

(2) Exclusivity

This turn towards the exclusive offering would in time become universal as people came to believe that plural offerings and prayers diluted their efficacity. "Once the idea became common that by making an offering one could share in a preferential way in the intention for which the priest celebrated the Mass, the custom of private Mass offerings spread. Private Mass for the exclusive benefit of a single donor became 'a well-established custom' during the 10th and 11th centuries."[45] At least as early as the 11th and 12th centuries, it was common for people to make offerings for Masses to be said "on the occasions of weddings, funerals, birthdays, and anniversaries."[46] The sense grows that offerings associated the donor more intimately with the Mass, and presumably, therefore, with its graces. It is not surprising then that the desire for *exclusivity* – that is, a single offering with a single intention – grew. The underlying notion was that the fewer intentions, the greater benefit to those few – or that one. In this increasingly exclusive, individualistic liturgical practice, congregational common offerings became obligatory only on the major feasts of the year – if then.

Of course, this development marked a dramatic change from the earliest practice of the Eucharist. The inclusive sense of Christian life embodied and fostered by liturgical practice was slowly eroded – supplanted by a principle of exclusion. In a sense it was a return to a pre-

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 39.
[46] Kenny, *Origin and Relevance*, 844.

Christian notion of sacrifice, liturgy and priesthood, "whereby liturgical acts would be seen once again as a means of gaining temporary access to sacred realities to which the baptized had no constitutional access."[47] The move to exclusivity of a single donor and intention seems “to imply that there is a special propitiatory and impetratory value intrinsic to the Mass prior to any consideration of the devotion of those participating in Mass" or that of the donor/intention.[48]

b. Participatory access

Another admittedly related reason for the rise of the exclusive Mass offering is the development of the liturgical ritual itself that narrowed lay access to and engagement with the Eucharist.[49] In time the Mass stipend became “virtually the only ritual means for the Christian people to gain access to the most cherished graces of the Eucharistic sacrifice."[50]

The Mass “began to appropriate the style and ethos of Imperial ceremony. This gave rise to a set of symbols that would result in the transference to Christ of regal categories, and thus to a changed relationship between Christ and believers. The latter began to be seen more as servants and unworthy dependents, and there arose as a result a growing sense of unworthiness and awe in the face of the *mysterium tremendum*, as the Eucharist was increasingly called."[51] Meanwhile, the priest’s role grew in its centrality as “a personal authority in itself” rather than “a charism within a community of believers.” He becomes "the

[47] Mannion, 199.
[48] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 115.
[49] Of course, it is difficult to say with any precision how much the evolution of Christian worship precipitated the rise of the exclusive Mass offering. Each surely influenced the other in a complex evolutionary process.
[50] Mannion, 203.
[51] Ibid., 200.

sole actor reenacting the drama of salvation on a sacred podium or stage called the sanctuary,' offering' on behalf of his people, rather than with his people."[52]

There was a breakdown in early Eucharistic practice. People refrained more and more from communion at the Eucharistic gatherings. By the late 4th century, John Chrysostom laments how some receive communion so seldom – once each year or even only every other year. "Those with a pure conscience, from a pure heart, with an irreproachable life, let such draw near continually…. These things I say, not as forbidding you the one and annual coming, but as wishing you to draw near continually."[53] Ironically, even while there were now many more Masses, there were fewer communicants. The transformation in the notions of common giving and sharing in the Eucharist signaled "a profound modification not only of the dynamics of Eucharistic participation, but of the manner in which Eucharistic realities would be perceived as accessible thereafter."[54]

With the discontinuance of frequent Communion, less bread and wine were necessary for the celebration of the Eucharist, and by the 7th century even this bread and wine "were no longer used as material for the consecration, but each Church or monastery prepared Its own supply."[55] The turn to unleavened bread had an even greater impact on the diminution of the offering of gifts of bread and wine than did the reduced frequency of lay communication.

By the time of Alcuin (d. 804), unleavened bread became the common form of Eucharistic bread. "Some German monasteries required the monk grinding the grain to wear

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[52] William Dalton, "Mass Stipends, Mass Offerings, Mass Cards," *The Furrow* 41, no. 9 (September 1990), 502-3.
[53] Fitzgerald, *Part I,* 4.
[54] Mannion, 200.
[55] Kenny, *Origin and Relevance*, 844.

alb and humoral. The monk-bakers did the same and bakers for this bread were to be deacons at least, if not priests."[56] It was this turn to unleavened bread,

> more than anything else, that signified the reemergence of Old Testament ideas about priesthood and liturgy. The motivation behind this change was to remove Eucharistic bread and its production from the sphere of the earthly and the profane and to ensure its worthiness for the Christian cult. The result was the ritualization of the process of producing Eucharistic bread and the restriction of its production to the clergy and to monasteries. In this way the people were excluded from the process of preparing and providing bread for the Eucharist. With this development, the people's role was curtailed once more, this time at the level of the originating action which the preparation and provision of material gifts for the Eucharist represents.[57]

While seemingly a minor change from one type of bread to another, this development had widespread consequence. How could it "not but shape and effect restrictive conceptions about redemption, holiness, and access to God?," asks Mannion.[58]

The experience and expression of the Eucharist had indeed changed. With the turn toward exclusive offerings, the Mass was valued increasingly as a vehicle for privileged and private intercession and blessing. Objective and mechanistic notions of the Eucharist overshadowed the subjective and affective dimensions of communal Christian worship. The lay faithful were no longer considered as co-offerers. Rather, they contributed their devotion as the priest offered for them and directed the resultant graces by his will and in regard to the donor's request. The Eucharist became "an indissoluble whole accomplished by the priest as mediator between God and the people."[59] Moreover, contritional and supplicatory motivations supplanted the older ones of gratitude, adoration and communion. Penance over thanksgiving, self-seeking over community, exclusion over inclusion – and the priest as the center of it all.

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[56] Fitzgerald, *Part I*, 5.
[57] Mannion, 201.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Kilmartin, *Genesis and Medieval Interpretation*, 109.

2. Ecclesial reaction

Despite the many changes in the offering – its increasing monetization, extra-liturgical reception and intercessory motivation – the Church in Rome seemed to have retained more of the symbolism of the gifts of the early Eucharist. The offerings of the faithful expressed their co-offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice with and through the presider. "The meaning of this practice derives from the understanding of the celebration as a constellation of prayers and action in which each participant had a role to play in the realization of the one sacrificial worship."[60] The offertory procession is a symbolic expression of the "integration of the donor into the prayer of sacrifice of praise which the priest pronounces in the name of all. It signifies the real co-offering of the participants on the level of the eucharistic rite."[61]

From the 9th to the 13th centuries – when the Frankish strain of the offertory was developing into the stipend system proper – Roman and other ecclesial authorities repeatedly railed against the turn to exclusivity in the offering and the general privatization of the Mass. The Church reaffirms that the Mass is Christ's sacrifice – a sacrifice of infinite value and therefore available to broad prayerful intercession. Implicit in these expressions and reactions is the conviction that the benefits of the Mass are received according to the devotion of the donor and the "capacity of those for whom the Mass is offered."[62]

"Against the Gallican custom [the Synod of Rome of 826 under Pope Eugene II] stressed that the priest should, under no circumstances, refuse the gifts of all who come to the Mass. For he must be there for all as 'mediator of God and humanity,' otherwise it might appear that

[60] Ibid., 110.
[61] Ibid., 108.
[62] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 40.

the 'Redeemer was not able to accept the prayers of all and loosen the bonds of all sins.'"[63] The Synod of 853 under Pope Leo IV similarly instructed priests not to allow the gift or entreaties of one donor to persuade them to refuse the gifts of others for the same Mass. In other words, no one was to monopolize the Mass. Kilmartin sees in this type of reaction – and in the still-existing offertory procession – evidence that between the 9th and 11th centuries "there was a strong conviction among churchmen that the Mass is able to embrace the intentions of all without prejudice to anyone."[64]

Pope Alexander II (d. 1072) criticized the practice of multiplying Masses for "money and flattery," stressing that "one Mass suffices since Christ died and redeemed the whole world."[65] While Alexander II makes no formal prohibition on accepting alms for celebrating for the intentions of donors, he takes a clear swipe at the practice that seems at odds with the Pope's soteriological expression about the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice. Peter Damian (d. 1073) decried the practice, which ridiculously suggests that the same Christ who died for the salvation of the world would now be offered for the exclusive benefit of the donor and the enrichment of the priest.[66]

Walafrid Strabo (d. 845) urged attendance at the Mass for which offerings were made "so that one may be able to present with the gift the devotion required for the reception of the gift."[67] He noted the error of preferring exclusivity as offerer – for "Christ died for all and there

[63] Canon 17 in Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 113.
[64] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 40.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 41.

is one bread and cup which is offered by the universal Church."[68] He insisted that even those who did not offer and communicate, but joined in the faith and devotion of those who did, also received benefit from the Mass.

The Church's concern was clear – yet the theological reasoning behind its reservation was scantly expressed. Despite the rejection of exclusivity in Mass offerings and intentions, "no appeal [was] made to the original meaning of the offertory procession nor is any reference made to the Roman legal principle of free donation without recompense."[69] No formal mention was made of any distinction between *ex opere operato* and *ex opere operantis* blessings – that is between the graces produced by the Mass of itself and those dependent upon the intention of the celebrant. Moreover, none of these ecclesial interventions spoke of whether there are fruits derived *ex opere operato* independent of the devotion of the Church and subject to application by priests. While calling attention to potential abuses, none of them rejected the practice of alms-for-prayers outright. Such offerings and prayers were rightly multiplied – in light of the infinite grace of Christ's sacrifice and the devotional capacity of all to receive Christ's grace.

C. Consolidation: *from practice to theory*

1. Thirteenth century

The 13th century was a time of real change in the approach of ecclesiastical authorities and theologians with regard to the acceptance of alms and the exclusivity of intentions. No

[68] Ibid.
[69] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 105.

more substantive opposition to the exclusivity and privatization of the Mass was expressed. Ecclesial authorities everywhere officially sanctioned the practice. By the beginning of the 13th century the stipendiary system was universal in the West – "firmly established in the procedure defined so as to correspond to the demands of Roman law for exactitude in legally significant proceedings and relations."[70]

By offering the priest an honorarium in advance, obligating the priest to celebrate the Mass for an exclusive intention, the Mass stipend "was, thus, an *extra-Eucharistic* transaction directed toward *obtaining* a special benefit from the Eucharist available only through the exclusive mediation of the priest."[71] To avoid the charge of simony, the gift was described as a gratuity to support priests and as a reward for their labors. Thomas Aquinas presented the alms as a freewill contribution to the livelihood of the priest (*S.T*. II, q. 100, a. 2 ad 2). This became the prevalent view. In fact, it gave rise to the use of the very term *stipendium* for the gift – from the word for the wages of a soldier.

Theologians of this era addressed the practice and its appearance of simony by crafting a Eucharistic theology whose purpose was deliberately justificatory and served to entrench it for centuries. Scholastic theology fashioned three key features of what became common Catholic theological thinking about the Mass stipend:

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[70] Kilmartin, Genesis and Medieval Interpretation, 106. As evidence of the prevalence and acceptability of stipended, exclusive-intention Masses, Jungmann cites the financial penalty declared in 1317 by a Council in Florence upon any priest who said anniversary Masses on Sundays and feast days rather than the prescribed Mass of the day. In 1342 an instructor in Wurzburg who criticized the stipend system as simoniacal was forced to recant and swear to its acceptability. [cf. *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development, Vol. I,* trans. Francis A. Brunner, C.SS.R. (New York: Benziger Brothers, Inc., 1955), 131]. "Altarists" were common everywhere. These priests exclusively said Mass and prayed the Divine Office. In 1521 Strasbourg had 120 full-time Mass-sayers. Henry VIII suppressed nearly 2,400 such Mass foundations.

[71] Mannion, 202.

> (1) With the Church's approval of exclusive offerings, blessings were believed to be derived *ex opere operato* – i.e., independently of the devotion of those in attendance.
>
> (2) These fruits were limited both intensively and extensively and were shared according to the capacity of the recipients.
>
> (3) Since the priest had the power to consecrate the bread and wine, he had authority as well over these fruits. [72]

2. Fruits of the Mass

The practice of exclusive Mass offerings arose within and decisively shaped an evolving Eucharistic liturgy. For the most part very little theological reflection was expressed on the matter – even in those ecclesial pronouncements that condemned the practice or sought to minimize its potential abuses. Beginning in the 12th century, however, theologians began to ponder the seminal question that the practice of exclusive Mass offerings begged – how did the Mass effect its blessings? What were they and who received them? Were they infinite or could they be partitioned and directed somehow?

Peter Lombard (d.1160) considered the respective circumstances of a deceased poor man who receives the prayers of common suffrages alone and those of a rich man who additionally has private alms offered for Masses. He identified two possible scenarios. In the first, the rich man is helped more than the poor man who receives only common suffrages. In the second the rich man is released more quickly, but not more fully, from suffering. (IV Sent. D. 45, c.4) Praepositinus of Cremona (d. 1210) added a third option in his *Summa Theologiae*: "the special prayer made for the rich man helps the poor man also and sometimes more, just as a

[72] Kilmartin*, Eucharist in the West*, 106.

candle gives illumination according to the power of the eye to use it."[73] While this *light* metaphor argued poetically against any exclusivity in the Mass and stressed the role of one's internal disposition in receiving grace, this view was rejected. Guido of Orcelles (d. 1225) in his *Summa de Sacramentis,* argued that the Sacrament of the altar is the true light of the world and as such helps the poor and rich alike. The sacraments "are a general remedy and thus efficacious for the whole world."[74]

Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274) discussed the efficacity of suffrages in detail in IV *Sent*. D. 45, q. 2, a. 4. In this work Aquinas reasoned that suffrages are efficacious as satisfaction only for the one for whom they are applied and that the satisfactory value is allotted according to divine justice. While "the power of Christ which is contained in the sacrament is unlimited, the effect to which the sacraments is ordered is limited."[75] The sacrament is limited *before* its application to men – not limited first by the faith and devotion of the donors and recipients of their prayers. Curiously, Aquinas offered a different opinion in his *Summa Theologiae*. "In itself the Mass is sufficient to satisfy for all punishments. Nevertheless it operates in a limited fashion in behalf of those for whom it is offered or for those who offer according to the quantity of their devotion."[76]

Bonaventure (d. 1274) argued that the Mass has a limited efficacity (unlike the cross) arising *not* first from the disposition of the recipients. While the sacrifice of the Mass is the same as that of the Cross, "nevertheless the distinction must be made between the way that

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[73] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 47.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 48.
[76] S.T. III, q. 79, a. 5; a. 7, ad. 2, in Ibid., 49. Kilmartin actually reasons that Aquinas might possibly have believed that two Masses were as valuable as one!

the sacrifice of Christ operates on the Cross and in the Mass. On the Cross the value of the sacrifice flowed forth in fullness; in the Mass it has a determined effect."[77]

The Council of Lambeth (1281) declared that "*ex opere operato* the same fruits come from a Mass whether it is said for one or 100 – and this fruit does not depend on the devotion of the offerers."[78] The Council reasons that although the sacrifice, which is Christ, is of infinite power, nevertheless it does not operate the full plenitude of its immensity in the Mass. Otherwise, it would never be necessary to offer more than one Mass for a particular soul. "It operates rather by a certain distribution of its fullness which is infallibly given."[79]

John Duns Scotus (D. 1308) offered in *Quaestio* 20 of his *Quodlibetales* the first "truly systematic theological explanation of the measure of the limited fruits of the Mass." [80] He asked a new question: Could the Mass be seen to constitute a *new* oblation by Christ? No, he answers. It is impossible to harmonize the idea of a new oblation with the once-and-for-all sacrifice of the cross. He argued that the sacrifice of the Mass is offered *directly* by the Church but only *indirectly* by Christ. If Christ were the proximate offerer of the Mass then the Mass would have the same value as the sacrifice of the cross. Rather, the direct offerer of the Mass is the Church militant in union with the priest and assisting congregation.

Scotus believed that every Mass infallibly produced fruits "which are a participation in the graces derived from the sacrifice of the cross."[81] While this position was not new, he argued it differently from other theologians. They would insist that Mass produces fruits just as

[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 50.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 166.
[81] Ibid., 167.

the other sacraments do – *ex opere operato*. For his part Scotus grounds the infallible effect of the Mass on the "concept of the application of the devotion of the saints of the universal militant Church who associate themselves with the Masses of the world. Since there are always some saints in the Church on earth, their participation in the Masses of the world by their intention secures the infallible efficacy of each Mass for the living and the dead."[82] Even the Mass of the sinful priest remains valuable for the fact that the whole Church – i.e., its holy members (intentionally united with all the Masses everywhere) – actually offers each Mass. The Church offers Christ "victim of the cross, before the father in order to plead the merits of his passion for the welfare of the world."[83] The one limiting condition on the efficacity of the offering is "the corporate holiness of the Church" which "determines the measure of acceptability of each Mass."[84]

Scotus identified a tri-partite distribution of the Eucharistic fruits. "In the Mass the Church prays for herself (*generalissime*), for the priests (*specialissime*) and for the particular intention for which the Mass is celebrated (*specialiter*)."[85] The fruits of the Mass are not bestowed automatically, but "rather received according to the capacity of those to whom they are applied."[86] Since the fruit is limited, it is divided among the number of persons for whom the Mass is applied.

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[82] Ibid.
[83] Kilmartin, *One Fruit*, 51.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid., 52.
[86] Ibid.

"It is [Scotus's] theological orientation that determined the teaching about Mass stipends and its practice up to the 20th century."[87]

> (1) The offering for the celebration of the Mass for a particular intention was viewed as a contribution to the livelihood of the priest;
>
> (2) the fruit infallibly derived from the Mass and applied to the intention of the donor of the offering was considered to be limited in itself by the limited devotion of the offering Church, and limited by the receptivity of the beneficiary;
>
> (3) the fruits of the Mass were distinguished from one another on account of differences of origin and application.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Cardinal Cajetan (the Dominican Thomas de Vio, 1468-1534) gave a new direction to the consideration of the Mass and its fruits. Cajetan strove to "harmonize the infinite value of the Mass, the limited effect and the practice of the Church."[88] He reasoned that since the sacrificial gift is Jesus Christ who offered himself, then the Mass is of unlimited value *ex opere operato*. The value of the Mass as worship of God is unlimited. But as pertains to one's derived benefit, this is "limited according to the devotion of the offerers and those for whom it is offered."[89]

Cajetan furthermore emphasized the unity of the sacrifices of the Cross and the Mass. In each the "victim" is Christ. The difference comes in the manner of the offering – a bloody offering on the Cross and the bloodless one in the Mass. "The one sacrifice of Christ is preserved in the mode of sacrifice (*immolatitio modo*) through the daily renewal of the

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[87] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 168.
[88] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 54.
[89] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 163.

Eucharist according to the institution of Christ. That Christ is the proper offerer in the Mass is occasionally stated by Cajetan."[90]

3. Reformation and Trent

Dogmatically, Luther questioned the sacrificial character of the Mass and the notion that its graces could be applied to anyone. He had a special ire for the practice of stipends, which he judged to be indefensible, simoniacal, and superstitious. His reaction was categorical: "Since such countless and unspeakable abuses have arisen everywhere through the buying and selling of Masses, it would be prudent to do without the Mass for no other reason than to curb such abuses, even if it actually possesses some value in and of itself."[91]

His *95 Theses* – although admittedly addressed to the practice of indulgences – illuminate his contempt for the stipendiary system. For example, he ridicules the notion that the Church could direct God's will: "It is certain that when money clinks in the money chest greed and avarice can be increased; but when the Church intercedes, the result is in the hands of God alone" (no. 28).[92] He condemns as profiteering the solicitation of offerings from the grieving for their already redeemed departed: "Why are funeral and anniversary masses for the dead continued and why does he [the pope] not return or permit the withdrawal of the endowments founded for them, since it is wrong to pray for the redeemed"(no. 83)?

In his *67 Articles*, Zwingli takes aim at the fruits of the Mass by denying that the Mass is a sacrifice in the first place: "That Christ, having sacrificed Himself once, is to eternity a certain and valid sacrifice for the sins of all faithful, wherefrom it follows that the mass is not a

[90] Ibid., 164.
[91] Kenny, *Origin and Relevance*, 845.
[92] *The Protestant Reformation: Major Documents*, ed. Lewis W. Spitz (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 36.

sacrifice, but is a remembrance of the sacrifice and assurance of the salvation which God has given us" (no. 18).[93]

Of course, the Council of Trent vigorously defended the value of the Mass (even in and of itself), while condemning the commercialism surrounding it: "As regards avarice, absolutely morbid conditions of compensations of whatever kind, bargains, and whatever is given for the celebration of new Masses; also those importunate and unbecoming demands, rather than request, for alms and other things of this kind which border on the simoniacal taint or certainly savor of filthy luchre" (*Sess*. 22, *Decretum de observandis et evitandis in celebration missae*).

While forbidding the most egregious abuses, Trent left the practice and its underlying theology in place. "If anyone says that the sacrifice of the Mass is one only of praise and thanksgiving; or that it is a mere commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross but not a propitiatory one; or that it purifies him only who receives, and ought not to be offered for the living and the dead, for sins, punishments, satisfactions, and other necessities, let him be anathema" (Session 22, Chapter IV, Canon 3).

D. Summary

In the era from the 9th through the 13th centuries, the practice of Mass stipends became deeply established in the life of the Church. The system was only sporadically challenged and, even then, only to root out abuses, not to abolish or completely delegitimize it. By the 13th century the theological buttressing for the practice had become commonly accepted.

> (1) Fruits flow from the Mass independently of the dispositions of those present (at least by way of stipend donation) and participating in a particular Mass.

[93] Ibid, 47.

> (2) The source of these fruits is either the act of Christ and also the act of the holy members of the Church who unite themselves with the Masses of the world, or simply the act of the holy Church.
>
> (3) There are three distinct fruits which flow from the Mass independently of the devotion of those present and participating in a particular Mass. These fruits are generally termed *fructus specialissimus, specialis (medius)* and *generalis*. The first comes to the priest as celebrant, the second comes to the person to whom the priest applies it and the third comes to the Church at large. [94]

How much things had changed from the understanding and practice of the early Church's Eucharist! "The range of ecclesial and liturgical experience within which the Eucharistic offerings operated went from being that of an inclusive ecclesial and liturgical order to that of a clericalized and exclusive order to which the people had access only in the manner of outsiders."[95]

It is hard to overemphasize the role the stipendiary system came to play in the liturgical life of the Church – indeed in the socio-economic fabric of second millennium Europe. Susan Nicassio has studied the 18th century wills and testaments of decedents in the northern Italian city of Modena.[96] Her findings are startling with respect to the importance of Mass stipends – to givers and receivers alike. Her discoveries are worth quoting at length:

> [O]ver ninety percent of Modenese who made wills throughout this period left Mass obligations... Rarely did anyone, even a noble, leave bequests for the poor or the city as such... Almost without exception a Modenese facing death or the idea of death hastened to ensure that as many Masses as possible would be offered for the salvation of his or her soul. Throughout this period, despite

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[94] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 57.
[95] Mannion, 204.
[96] Susan V. Nicassio, "For the Benefit of My Soul: A Preliminary Study of the Persistence of Tradition in Eighteenth-Century Mass Obligations." *The Catholic Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (April 1992):, 175-186.

> enlightened reforms by Church and state like, it is not unusual to find the whole of an estate sold to pay for Masses.
>
> Samuel Cohn notes the custom of testators leaving their own souls as their universal heirs (an ingenious solution to the problem of not being able to take it with them).
>
> It becomes obvious that the Mass obligations must have been an extremely important factor in the economic, social, and religious life of the city. At a conservative estimate, some 81,600 persons could be expected to have died in the parishes of Modena between 1690 and 1810. If these people made wills similar to those we have considered, they would have left bequests for more than 11 million Mass obligations – 110,000 per year, more than 9,000 each month, or at least 300 each day. These figures can be at least double, since we have not included perpetual obligations or obligations left to heirs to decide or based on property to be sold or otherwise not enumerated.
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> A Modenese parish characteristically depended on Mass obligations for a considerable portion of its income. When, for example, Don Battista Araldi was forced to give up the parish of Sant' Agata in 1773, the accounts show that he was fulfilling obligations for almost 2,000 Masses a year, providing an income of about 200 lire a month. This was not, of course, an unusually large number of such bequests for a parish to hold. It is, however, a substantial number, representing about six Masses per day.

The Mass stipend had become the way of the Church – shaping the form of the Eucharistic celebration, the piety of the faithful and the economic life of Europe. This pervasive and largely unquestioned role would endure for centuries to come.

II. REAPPRAISAL AND REAFFIRMATION

After centuries of scant theological development and sparse magisterial intervention with regard to the thriving and hugely important stipendiary system of the Western Church and (increasingly) its missions, the 20th century marked a decided turn in affairs. Theologians began to examine the Mass and its relationship to the Sacrifice of the Cross more deeply. They began to explore the question of its dynamic, with a reverential eye to the infinite and once-and-for-all redemptive value of Calvary. Talk of its objective fruits yielded ground to consideration of the subjective dimension of the Eucharist. These theological stirrings would come to influence and inform the sweeping liturgical and juridical reforms that followed in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. No two scholars advanced this theological conversation around the nature and value of the Eucharist more than the Jesuits Maurice De la Taille and Karl Rahner.

A. Theological challenge: *reconsidering Eucharistic practice*

1. Maurice De la Taille

The early 20th century scholarship of Maurice de la Taille had a profound and lasting impact on Eucharistic theology. By examining the notion of sacrifice in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and in apostolic and patristic reflection on the Eucharist, De la Taille identified a continuity between Jewish ritual sacrifice and the Mass – the sacrifice of the New Covenant.

His work is rife with intellectual and practical implications – especially for the stipendiary system. De la Taille argued that stipends (as offerings) are intrinsically related to

the sacrifice of the Mass and not simply alms given directly to the priest. From De la Taille's perspective of the Eucharistic sacrifice, the stipend is seen in continuity with the common offering of the early church. It is potentially just as salutary as the early Christian practice and no more inherently simoniacal than that practice's Old Testament antecedent. Moreover, the Mass stipends of today are substantially identical with the common Mass offerings of the early Christian communities. The effect of De la Taille's work was to "circumvent the mechanistic 'fruits of the Mass' schema,"[97] while giving the stipendiary system a "more reverential setting."[98]

a. Continuity in sacrifice – *from old to new*

De la Taille describes how, under the Old Law devout Jews would bring sheep to be sacrificed and ritually offered to God by the priest, who would pour its blood on the altar.[99] Through this ritual act, the sheep became God's possession – for God was the owner of all the gifts spread on the altar. As God's guest, the priest was permitted to keep a portion of the sacrificial offering for himself.[100] "For it was a fixed principle enunciated in the Mosaic legislation on the priesthood of the Old Law and reaffirmed by St. Paul, that those who 'serve as assistant to the altar have their share in the altar offerings' (Corinthians 9:13; cf. Numbers 18:8, 30f; Deuteronomy 18:1 ff)."[101]

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[97] Fitzgerald, *Part I,* 2.
[98] D.J. Leahy, "Talking About Mass Stipends," *The American Ecclesiastical Review* 102, no. 4 (April 1940): 301.
[99] De la Taille's description of Old Testament sacrifice has been criticized for a certain reductionism. There were indeed many forms of sacrifice in the Old Testament.
[100] In the case of sin offerings, the priest took the entire offering. In holocausts, no one received anything.
[101] Edward Gilpatric, "Mass Stipends and Mass Intentions," *Worship* 38, no. 4 (March 1964): 195.

This priestly portion was “not remuneration from men but rather a table companionship with the God whose altar he served."[102] While the priest ritually offered the sacrifice, it was likewise truly offered by the one who supplied the sheep, and he was in no sense paying the priest with the surplus portion of his offering. “[H]e merely, by handing over the victim, gave a mandate to the priest to offer, and what was left over after the sacrifice was no longer his private property, because by divine law it was given to the priest."[103] In other words, there was no hint of simony.

De la Taille argues that this deeply operative sense of sacrifice would and did quite naturally color the sacrifice of the Eucharist. "Surely, if the Jew under the Old Covenant were capable of making an offering to God, we may reasonably expect that a Christian under the New Dispensation should be able to do much more; and if the priest of the Old Law was God's table companion, his modern counterpart shares in the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ."[104] Christian worshippers did indeed, according to De la Taille, offer sacrifice to God in the same manner as a faithful Jew by providing for the material offering. He insists that these Christian offerings were regarded as gifts to God – the “personal share of the faithful in the sacrifice.”[105]

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[102] Paul Tanner, “The Mass Stipend,” *Orate Fratres* 5, no. 9, 411.
[103] Leahy, 302.
[104] Tanner, 411.
[105] Thomas McDonnell, “Stipends and Simony: Evolution of the Mass-Offering and De La Taille’s Theory,” *The Irish Ecclesiastical Record* 54 (July-December 1939): 37.

b. Continuity in offering – *from gift to stipend*

From De la Taille's vantage of the sacrificial offering, the Mass stipend is just like the common offering of the early Church, which, in turn, paralleled the ritual Jewish offering before it. The stipend provides the bread and wine for the Christian sacrifice, just as the devout Jew presented his sheep. After payment for the bread and wine, the surplus is directed to the priest, as under the Old Law. For De la Taille, the stipend is "a gift going through the hands of the priest into those of God, who will afterwards give it back to the priest."[106]

For their part, stipend-donors receive fruit from the Mass because the matter of the sacrifice – that which is offered – was originally theirs. It is not the priest's application of the Mass or his special intention which affords the donors' benefit. He "merely consecrates the gift of the donor."[107] The priest is "God's trustee."[108] When a priest receives a stipend, he simultaneously takes on a mandate, namely, that of "transmitting the believer's offering to God at a specific sacrifice."[109] The offering is also a deposit entrusted to the priest's keeping until the offering is completed. His is a "gratuitous mandate" to apply the fruits of the Mass. He has not been *hired,* so to speak, to do so.[110]

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[106] Maurice de la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion: Contrasted and Defined* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1930), 160.
[107] McDonnell, 48.
[108] Jungmann, *Unto the Altar*, 28.
[109] Gilpatric, 196.
[110] Tanner employs the following secular example to draw the distinction: "If a man owed a bank fifty dollars and had a friend who happened to be going to this bank, and were he to give this friend fifty dollars with which to pay the debt, and were this friend to keep the fifty dollars and not pay the bank, certainly no one would deny that that friend would be obliged to restitution, even though he were not hired to perform this errand. This gratuitous mandate accompanied by the deposit of the fifty dollars binds him in justice either to execute the mandate or restore the deposit. In like manner the priest, whom St. Thomas literally calls the depositary, must, once he accepts the stipend, either offer the Mass or return the stipend" (413).

Here De la Taille "steers between the Scylla of simony and the Charybdis of a mere promise not binding in justice."[111] The obligation incurred in this exchange "is truly contractual and binding in justice, but at the same time – let it be noted carefully – altogether gratuitous; for the priest receives his recompense not from the stipend donor but from God, from whose altar he is privileged to draw sustenance ."[112]

To speak of the "application" of the Mass or of a Mass offered "for" a donor's intention "means simply that the priest has applied or ordered the stipend to a given sacrifice of the Mass."[113] Like the early Christian who laid bread and wine upon the altar, the stipend-donor is, indeed, an offerer of the sacrifice and entitled "to join his own intentions or petitions to the offering of Christ to the Father and to participate in the fruits of the Mass according to the measure of his own faith and devotion."[114]

In De la Taille's analysis, the stipend appears to be the "lineal descendant of the altar-offering," where it was "contained, as it were, in embryo." It is, in principle, "as old as the Mass itself."[115]

c. Return to subjectivity

Through his examination of the early practice of the offertory, De la Taille concluded that the faithful are "authors of the sacrifice…in a manner which is proper and personal to them."[116]

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[111] Leahy, 301.
[112] Gilpatric, 196.
[113] Ibid., 197.
[114] Ibid.
[115] McDonnell, 134.

While one can argue for the essential connection between the common offering of old and the stipendiary system, it would be foolhardy not to note how different the two appear in their most granular operation. One would have to admit as well that some of the changed features of the Eucharistic offering have given rise to mistaken notions of its meaning and value. De la Taille and his readers are keenly aware of how his very logical argument for a continuum of practice serves also as a powerful critique of that practice. To say that the common offering and stipend-giving are essentially the "same" is, quite provocatively, to expose those accretions and misconceptions that have arisen alongside the enduring practice of offering.

Perhaps most striking of the dissonant notions highlighted by De la Taille's scholarship is that of a "ministerial fruit," which, in the traditional High Scholastic view, can be directed at priestly will for the objective benefit of the donor. In De la Taille's conception of the Eucharistic sacrifice, this idea is simply untenable. In his vision, "application" is untethered from its traditional moorings – or, more accurately perhaps, reconnected to its ancient foundations. For De la Taille, it is by God's will that the infinite graces won by the Cross are distributed to all through the Mass. As sacrifice, the Mass operates differently from the other sacraments.

> In this sacrifice, as in all sacrifices, the direction of the action is from below to above, from man to God, in Christ in his members to the Father. Consequently, the Mass, unlike the sacraments, confers no grace directly in the manner of an efficient cause on those who offer it. The Mass functions rather as a moral cause in this sense. Christ our victim is so supremely pleasing and acceptable to the Father that he, viewing Christ's merits and intercession for us, is moved to hear our prayers and grant the petitions which we and the whole Church join to our offering of Christ's.[117]

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[116] De la Taille, *Mystery of Faith and Human Opinion,* 134.
[117] Gilpatric, 198.

From this perspective, it is clear that the very notion of the ministerial fruit is without substance. "[T]he priest simply does not have at his disposal certain graces to be conferred by his naming recipients, nor can he by his failure or refusal to name a recipient cut him off from graces that are properly his."[118] The donor will receive – along with all offerers – the graces God chooses to grant.

De la Taille's work also rejects the crude exclusivism and sense of entitlement that at times seemed to characterize the practice. The hunger to monopolize or privatize the graces of the Mass, while perhaps understandable from the vantage of our fallen nature, has absolutely no basis in Christian tradition. If the Mass conveys the infinite graces of Calvary, "there is no reason to fear that these graces are soon going to be exhausted or that one person can be disadvantaged by another's abundant share."[119] The Mass itself should disabuse us of any notion of its exclusivity. The Church has a long tradition of – and abundant liturgical prayers for – remembering the needs of the living and the dead.

For De la Taille, the graces of the sacrifice of the Mass are naturally expansive – extending beyond the offerer and the one for whom it is offered. "Through that charity which makes us all one man in Christ and makes it possible for each one to offer for others as well as for himself, the fruits of the holy sacrifice reach, by way of suffrage, all those for whom it is lawful to offer it."[120] While he notes that this "power of oblation" belongs exclusively to the baptized, remarkably – and encouragingly – he hints at an even more magnanimous efficacy born of the Church's offerings. "If, nevertheless (and this hope is always legitimate), there

[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Maurice De la Taille, *The Mystery of Faith: An Outline,* trans. J.B. Schimpf (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930), 21.

existed the invisible bond of union, those held by it have a share in the common benefit which accrues daily from the sacrifice of the Church to the multitude of unnamed souls."[121]

In general, De la Taille's study of the Eucharist marks an important return to an appreciation of the subjective dimension of Christian worship. With so much theological reflection spent on the concrete fruits of the Mass, the essential place for personal devotion in the encounter with God's grace was grossly neglected, if not outright rejected.

De la Taille insists that the Church's offering must always be efficacious – since the "sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit never entirely withdraws."[122] Yet, he also asserts that "the truth and efficacy of this Gift-giving corresponds to the sincerity and desire of those offering the sacrifice."[123] Devotion and participation matter. The difference between any two Masses can only really lie, argues De la Taille, in the respective intentions and dispositions of those offering – priest, donor and participants.

In his lengthy reflections on the personal oblation made by the worshipper, De la Taille asserts that we bring the very depths of ourselves with our material offering in the Eucharistic sacrifice. As De la Taille scholar Michon Marie Matthiesen explains, "When the smallest efforts of the Christian to direct her life and love to God are…joined with *devotio* to the external ritual offering of Christ's sacrifice, then they not only invest this ecclesial oblation with truth but are transformed into 'wine' and share in the 'liberating efficacy' of the cross."[124] The Mass is a

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[121] Ibid.
[122] *Sacrifice and Contemplative Prayer in Maurice de la Taille* (Chestnut Hill: Boston College, 2008), 343. See note 43 below on the deeper meaning of *devotio*.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid., 345.

potential vehicle of transformative power in the life of its members, individually and as Christ's Body, and in the life of the world.

c. Critiques

De la Taille is widely credited with having reinvigorated Eucharistic theology. His work proved pivotal in the theological and cultic Eucharistic watershed that the 20th century embodied.[125] Not surprisingly, the intervening decades have afforded scholars time to scrutinize and question some of his conclusions. The most prominent deficiency cited relates to his seminal argument that a substantial identity exists between Old and New Testament notions and experiences of sacrifice. Maintaining this parallel afforded De la Taille a most propitious vantage from which to examine the nature and importance of the offering in Christian worship, including the stipend.

McDonnell argues that, despite all of the careful argumentation, De la Taille betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of Christian sacrifice.[126] "The sacrifice is a gift to God, but a gift immolated (i.e. destroyed) and offered on an altar by a priest. There is no such thing in the Christian dispensation as a sacrifice of an earthly thing. Christ offered one sacrifice of Himself and left to the church the power of renewing it as often as she wishes in the Eucharist, love supplanting forever the old economy of earthly sacrifices."[127]

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[125] Evidently, it was not so widely appreciated at the time it appeared in English. One underwhelmed (anonymous) reviewer questioned whether "the industry of the translator and the faith of the publishers… could not have been more wisely and advantageously expended." Given its phraseology, which he judged as sure to "furrow most brows," this reviewer dismissed the work as inappropriate for all but "a remote and technical audience." [*Orate Fratres* 15.3 (January 26 1941): 140-141.]

[126] His critique is reminiscent of the adage: "*The thing about parallel lines – they never meet!*"

[127] McDonnell, 37.

McDonnell argues phenomenologically that sacrifice for early Christians carried a sense of self-denial offered as gift. "Sacrifice is the product of an innate human instinct which prompts men to offer gifts to those on whose power and goodness they depend, and therefore to God now, a gift… should involve some deprivation for the giver. A gift that does not cost one something dishonors rather than honors the recipient."[128] Thus, in the case of offering at the Eucharistic sacrifice, McDonnell surmises that Christians would have been drawn to share in Christ's own self-offering.[129] "Christians brought their personal gifts to the altar and associated them with the New Sacrifice…. [T]he donors were associated individually and personally with the gift of Christ by sharing its cost."[130]

McDonnell additionally faults De la Taille's "stretch" in suggesting that the modern stipend is "a sacrificial offering accepted by the priest to be transmitted by him to God and received back, in part, from God for his sustenance."[131] While De la Taille is correct in identifying the stipend with the offering and, thus, seeing a continuity in Eucharistic development, he errs, according to McDonnell, in identifying the common offering and the individual stipend as true sacrificial offerings transmitted by the priest.

"It is often said that a donation to the church or to any obvious cause is something 'given to God.'"[132] But have these offerings really been given to God? Have they been

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[128] Ibid., 38.
[129] Ironically, McDonnell often writes as if possessing an authoritative read on the thinking of early Christians with regard to sacrifice and offerings. At the same time, he faults De la Taille for drawing conclusions from murky realms. "The truth seems to be that ideas were not clear on this subject in early times. De la Taille seems to have directed his research to the period in which ideas were confused on this question, and to have defended a view which seems to be implied in the writings of this period" (57).
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid., 44.
[132] Ibid., 45.

transmitted sacrificially? For McDonnell, these questions are never straightforwardly tackled by De la Taille. Nor could they be – for the economy of sacrifice has changed altogether with the New Covenant. "The oblation that presents to God His Divine Son does not surely present to Him also a sum of money…. The one and only sacrificial gift of the Church is Jesus Christ's."[133]

Whatever its shortcomings with respect to inferences regarding ancient sacrifice, De la Taille's approach has some striking advantages. In drawing attention to the personal oblation and the offertory, it "invests the Mass-offering with the dignity that we have not been accustomed to have associated with it."[134] It recasts the practice of stipends in a healthier light, with the implicit invitation to attend to its real and practical integrity.

Perhaps, most importantly, it reintroduces the subjective dimension into a rather stale and deeply flawed theological conversation on the objective value of the Mass. As such it "is well calculated…to increase the devotion of the faithful by emphasizing the priestly rites of all Christians."[135] Priests are not properly remunerated cultic functionaries but genuine stipendiaries of God. The lay faithful are restored to "their native condition of a holy, sacerdotal race, qualified by their baptismal character to participate in a certain degree in the priesthood of Christ by offering unto God gifts and sacrifices which are to be consecrated by the ministry of sacrificing priests invested with the full priesthood of Jesus Christ."[136]

[133] Ibid., 50.
[134] Ibid., 44.
[135] Gilpatric, 201.
[136] Tanner, 413.

2. Karl Rahner

Karl Rahner sent "shock waves through the very foundations" of the stipendiary system with the publication in 1949 of an essay[137] questioning the traditional theory of the "fruits of the Mass," which had buttressed the practice and passed for serious Eucharistic theology for centuries. [138] His principal concern was in removing the Mass from the domain of the mechanical and impersonal. It is perhaps not surprising that the man who described the Eucharist as "everything: the meaning, the pain, and the bliss of our existence" would examine the question of the Mass's efficacy from a decidedly subjective vantage.[139]

Rahner argued that the Mass achieved its effects through the personal engagement of its participants – their *devotio*.[140] Provocatively, he reasoned that Mass should only be celebrated when it would likely increase this personal engagement.[141] For Rahner, the very purpose of the Eucharist was to "make possible the members' participation in the sacrifice of the Head."[142]

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[137] "Die vielen Messen und das eine Opfer," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 71 (1949) 257-317. Rahner subsequently revised and expanded this essay with Angelus Häussling for the book, *The Celebration of the Eucharist*.

[138] William Dalton, "Mass Stipends, Mass Offerings, Mass Cards," *The Furrow* 41, no. 9 (September 1990): 504.

[139] Karl Rahner, "The Eucharist: The Mystery of Our Christ," in *Leading a Christian Life* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, Inc., 1970), 35.

[140] While commonly translated simply as "devotion," Burrell cautions against thinking of *devotio* as mere emotion in Rahner's use of the term. It is really "the personal openness of the subject to receive grace." [David Burrell, "Many Masses and One Sacrifice: A Study of the Thought of Karl Rahner," *Yearbook of Liturgical Studies* (1961): 105.]

[141] Burrell astutely observes how such a claim "plunges us immediately into areas of theology which are charged with more feeling than clarity" (105).

[142] Burrell, 104.

a. Devotion – the measure of grace

Rahner crucially distinguished between how the Eucharist offered grace and how that grace was effective in the world. He reasoned that the Mass was indeed something infinite. Yet, in its relationship to very real men and women – in effecting *their* participation in the sacrifice of the Cross – it was finite. How could it be otherwise? As a re-presentation of the redemptive sacrifice of Calvary, the Mass necessarily offers the infinite grace of that once-and-for-all salvific act. However, as the scholastics rightly reasoned, *whatever is received is received according to the mode of the receiver*. Thus, it is the *devotio* of the participants – including the priest – that measures how the divine grace offered in the Eucharist is humanly appropriated. "Nothing limits the effects of the Mass but the receptivity of the subjects involved."[143] To speak of the merits obtained through the Mass without considering the actual devotion of those present is, for Rahner, to engage in "pious fantasy."[144]

Rahner considers the poor widow's mite, which suffices for a single stipend, and the rich man's largesse, which affords him one hundred. Despite the modesty of her gift, the widow's *devotio* may bring to her "just as much benefit from her one Mass as the hundred Masses to the rich man."[145]

b. The *ex opere operato* question

Rahner's claim that the personal fruit of the Mass is uniquely a function of personal devotion could be seen as contradicting the foundations of sacramental theology. What place,

[143] Burrell, 106.
[144] Karl Rahner and Angelus Häussling, *The Celebration of the Eucharist* (Montreal: Palm Publishers,1967), 42.
[145] Ibid., 117.

if any, does he leave for concrete and infallible effects of the Mass? Rahner endeavored to harmonize – in a classically Catholic, both/and fashion – the objective and subjective dimensions of Eucharistic grace. He readily acknowledged the real fruitfulness of the Mass, while rejecting the traditional notion of benefits automatically secured and willfully directed by stipend-donors and priests. For Rahner, to imagine that the Mass produces fruits because of Christ's activity, independently of those participating in the liturgical offering, was to misunderstand the *ex opere operato* effect of the Mass.[146]

Rahner follows De la Taille's lead here. *Ex opere operato* does not mean that something is automatically effective, but that, despite any human defect, God obliges Himself through the Eucharist to apply His grace and mercy to us – "in a manner befitting the state and condition of each."[147] For Rahner, any discussion of the *ex opere operato* effects of the Mass must include "the other pole in the interpersonal relationship of grace which is the…the faith and love of the recipient."[148] In other words, God faithfully offers grace and we are free to accept it. In this way, Rahner's conception of sacramental causation highlights both the primacy and the gratuity of God's salvific activity. "In the life of grace the initiative is always God's. But it is sometimes forgotten that this refers to the *offer* of grace which must meet with a free human response and a free human acceptance, and when this is forgotten, Eucharist can be understood in a mechanical and even magical way."[149]

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[146] Dych considers Rahner's reflections on sacramental causality as "the area in Eucharistic theology where [he] made his most influential contribution." [William Dych, "Karl Rahner's Theology of Eucharist," *Philosophy and Theology* 11, no. 1 (1998): 136].
[147] De la Taille, *Mystery of Faith*, 320.
[148] Dych, 136.
[149] Ibid. [Paraphrase of Karl Rahner, *Meditations on the Sacraments* (New York: Seabury, 1977), 39.]

c. Stipends

Not surprisingly, Rahner's reflections on the Eucharist and sacramental causality challenged a number of traditional and seldom examined Eucharistic notions and practices. He had some "trenchant things" to say about the Mass stipend.[150]

Rahner approached the practice from the vantage of its participatory nature and potential. Following De la Taille's lead, Rahner asserted that stipends are offerings by those who wish to offer sacrifice with Christ in the Church.[151] "Since it is the donor who makes the sacrifice possible, we may say that… he is the principal co-offerer."[152] The stipend is "a constitutive sign of the integration of the donor into the eucharistic worship" and an expression of the donor's devotion.[153] "To offer a stipend…expresses the donor's gift of himself to God and his expectation that God will accept his gift and answer his prayers."[154] Only in this sense of a deliberate engagement with the sacrifice of the Mass for which the offering is made can stipend-giving be the occasion for the bestowal of blessings.

Like De la Taille, Rahner esteemed the stipend as the descendant of the ancient common offering. It represented a salutary means of joining more poignantly in the sacrifice of the Mass – and sharing in the fruits of the Cross. The giving of a stipend and naming of an intention presented an opportunity for an increase in the *devotio* of the donor. For this reason,

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[150] Illtyd Trethowan, "The Celebration of the Eucharist," *Downside Review* 86, no. 284 (July 1968): 308.
[151] Rahner & Häussling, 115.
[152] Burrell, 110.
[153] Edward Kilmartin, "Money and the Ministry of the Sacraments," in *The Finances of the Church*, eds. William Basset and Peter Huizing (New York: The Seabury Press, 1979), 107.
[154] Kenny, Colum. "Mass Stipends: Doctrinal Problems," *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 66, no. 4 (January 1966): 307.

Rahner argued that a Mass stipend "becomes all the more truthful and credible" when the donor undertakes to participate personally in the Mass requested.[155] "[T]he fruits received by the person for whom the donor arranges the Mass will be measured by the devotion of the donor, the priest and others who actually pray for the intention of the donor."[156] While there may be a single stipend-donor, the only constraint on the number of intentions is the capacity of one's devotion. As Rahner put it: "Just as many participants in one Mass do not receive less grace than if fewer were present, so the intercessions do not parcel out the fruit of the sacrifice – on condition of course that the *devotio* according to which the grace of the sacrifice is proportioned is not lessened by adding intercessions."[157]

Rahner's approach had implications for the stipend-receiver as well. By his reasoning, there is no *fructus specialissimus* acquired by the priest nor a *fructus specialis* that accrues to the intention of a donor's stipended Mass. There is no fruit to be had at all independent of the devotion of the participants – be they priests, donors or lay faithful. "[U]nion by grace in faith and love with Christ's sacrifice is the *one* effect of the sacrifice itself, the essentially single fruit of the sacrifice issuing from the sacrifice itself."[158]

Rahner's conviction that *devotio* is the measure for Eucharistic fruitfulness leads him into the related and similarly neuralgic matter of the frequency of Mass celebration. Among the traditional justifications for the proliferation of private and votive Masses was the sense that every Mass brought honor to God. Naturally, therefore, the more Masses the better.

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[155] Dalton, 504.
[156] Edward Kilmartin, "The One Fruit or the Many Fruits of the Mass," in *Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America* 21 (Yonkers, New York: CTSA, 1966), 64.
[157] Rahner & Häussling, 100.
[158] Ibid., 78.

Rahner contested the notion that the Mass gives glory to God by its very celebration.[159] Trent insisted that the Mass *adds* nothing to Calvary. Rather, it *represents* that all-sufficient sacrifice to the end of time (*Session* 22). While the Mass makes present the Christ's sacrifice, the very source of salvation, it contributes nothing to the sacrifice of the Cross itself. No matter how often or reverentially celebrated, the Mass cannot add to the honor Christ has already given the Father in his self-offering on the Cross. "Only to the extent that [the Eucharist] is a personal act of the offerers is anything added to the all-sufficient glorification of God through the Cross."[160] Additional Masses do not increase God's honor if they cannot reasonably inspire "growth in inner participation in Christ's sacrificial attitude."[161]

But what if the Church writ large were the offerer of every Mass? Could the saints among the Church Militant, through their desire and devout prayer to join themselves to every Mass in the world, be considered the rightful offerers? If so, as had been argued, then every Mass could be said to generate new fruits through this collective and vicarious *devotio*. Rahner dismisses this notion of an *offering Church*.[162] The Church that offers sacrifice is no abstraction, but the assembled body gathered to worship. Their *devotio* will measure any new fruits accomplished. While it is true that holy members of the Church are united intentionally with Masses throughout the world and "each Mass is a true sign of the existential bond which never ceases to exist between the prayer of Christ and that of the Holy Church,…it is difficult to

[159] Ibid., 1-12, 34-38, 91-96.
[160] Burrell, 107.
[161] Rahner & Häussling, 37.
[162] Kilmartin observes a lack of theological consensus on the Church's "place" in the Mass: "Particularly in the last three decades a number of theologians have discussed the 'offering Church.' But as yet there does not exist a comprehensive historico-dogmatic presentation of the topic. Theologians remain divided in their opinions whether all of the members of the Church can be considered to be an immediate subject of the offering of each Mass" (*One Fruit*, 61).

imagine in what sense the Holy Church, as such, can be described as the immediate subject of the offering of each Mass."[163] Rahner concluded that no new fruits come from the prayer of the Church independently of the devotion of a concrete embodiment of the Church – i.e., actual participants in a particular Mass.

d. Critiques

Rahner's scholarship on the Eucharist has been criticized by some for overemphasizing Eucharistic devotion at the expense of considering the Mass as sacrament. Such critics hold to the traditional view that the Eucharist's sacramental nature and its ecclesial authenticity "properly determine [its] frequency and operationality."[164]

There are also several pre-conciliar magisterial documents at apparent odds with Rahner's treatment of the fruits of the Mass. Pope Alexander VII's Bull, *Ex omnibus afflictionibus,* is said to affirm the existence of a *fructus specialissimus* which accrues to the priest celebrant. Sanction for a *fructus specialis* (to the intention of the donor) is said to exist in Benedict XIV's Encyclical letter *Cum semper oblatas* (August 19, 1744), and in Pius VI's Constitution *Auctorem Fidei* (August 28, 1794). Both Pontiffs accepted the commonly held teaching regarding the three-fold fruits – including the *fructus specialis*. Kilmartin minimizes these cases: "magisterial approval of what was the common teaching of theologians of the 18th century is not sufficient to settle the question of the existence of a *fructus specialis* derived from the Mass independently of the devotion of the offerers."[165]

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[163] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 58.
[164] Francis Mannion, "Stipends and Eucharistic Praxis" *Worship* 57, no. 3 (May 1983): 200.
[165] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 68.

Pius XII twice addressed the topic of the efficacy of the Mass with Rahner's Eucharistic theology in mind.[166] The Pope suggests that "some fruits flow from the nature of the act itself, that the Mass immediately and not entirely through the disposition of its offerers, realizes at least *some* of its fruit."[167] Burrell reasons that Pius XII wanted to "bring the discussion back to recognize that there *are* objective realities involved, and that these are relevant."[168]

These challenges notwithstanding, Rahner's work contributed crucially to the advancement of Eucharistic theology with important implications for the liturgical and devotional life of the Church. While initially met with "hostility and censure" for its perceived challenge to "Catholic piety, spirituality and identity,"[169] Rahner's theological framework "now holds the field."[170] His treatment of the value of the Mass "takes into account the essentially relative character of the sacrifice of the Mass with respect to the Cross," while emphasizing "the importance of the subjective acts of men placed within the scope of the liturgical action."[171] The fruit of the Mass is a sharing in the fruit of the Cross, namely salvation, "the life of God in the risen and glorified Christ."[172] Thus, there is simply no sense in speaking of categories or typologies of fruits – or to imagine that the benefits of the Mass could be partitioned, directed, monopolized or diluted by human will.

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[166] Rome (1954) and Assisi (1956). *The Pope Speaks*, 1 (1954), 377 and 3 (1956), 689.
[167] Burrell, 114.
[168] Ibid., 115.
[169] Timothy Fitzgerald, "The Story of the Stipend, Part III: Confronting the Problem," *Liturgy 80* 17 (January 1986): 2.
[170] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 106.
[171] Ibid., 66.
[172] Rahner & Häussling, 82.

Rahner's scholarship catalyzed theological reflection on how to "harmonize the Church's practice regarding Mass stipends with an acceptable theology of the Mass."[173] He afforded theologians "language and new perspectives to get out of the corner with stipends."[174] He portrayed them as gifts to God rather than as alms to priests. He valued them for their participatory potential, rather than for their impetratory power. He saw them logically (and aspirationally) as a form of the co-offering of the early Church, rather than as a modest substitution for access and participation. Rahner avoids "both overestimation and underestimation of the Mass stipend. It is the expression of a personal sacrifice united to the Sacrifice of the Cross: neither more, but neither less."[175]

Both De la Taille and Rahner effectively demolish the traditional High Scholastic theory of the "fruits of the Mass" that defined Eucharistic theology and grounded the stipendiary system for centuries. Yet they both portray stipends in a way that evokes their ancestral dignity in the oblation of the early Church's Eucharist. This reappraisal of the participatory and subjective dimension of the offering illuminated simultaneously the deficiencies of the actual, day-to-day experience of the practice in the life of the Church and the potential for reform. The magisterial expressions regarding stipends in the post-Conciliar era seem to similarly honor this balance – reaffirming the practice while appealing to its roots and participatory value for the prayer and stewardship of the Church.

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[173] Kilmartin, *The One Fruit*, 66.
[174] Fitzgerald, *Part III*, 2.
[175] *Orate Fratres*, 561.

B. Post-conciliar developments: *to preserve and protect*

In the decades since the monumental Second Vatican Council, the Church has made three important statements on Mass offerings: the Apostolic Letter of Pope Paul VI, *Firma in Traditione*; the new Code of Canon Law; and the Decree of the Congregation for the Clergy, *Mos Iugiter*. Together they express the Church's clear desire to preserve Mass offerings while protecting them from abuse. In addition to some detailed legislation governing the practice, its very rhetorical portrayal is perhaps its greatest bulwark. The language is clearly evocative of the early Church's communal offering and seems to reflect the work of some 20th century Eucharistic theologians. The Church describes offerings as a form of free participatory engagement and an expression of unity with the sacrifice of Christ, and at the same time it encourages them as a form of valuable ecclesial aid and an expression of unity with the priest. Notably, these documents provide little more by way of theological justification for the preservation of the practice. Despite illuminating the subjective aspect of the offering, the Church's teaching expounds no explicit theology of the sacramental causality of the Mass.

1. *Firma in Traditione*

The Second Vatican Council inaugurated a thoroughgoing reform of the liturgical life of the Church. The first formal instruction on the implementation of the Church's initiative in this regard sagely counseled against exclusivism and the appearance of simony. "[S]ee to it that the Council's prohibition against preferential treatment of individuals or a social class either in ceremonies or by outward display is respected…. In addition, pastors shall not neglect to ensure prudently and charitably that in the liturgical services and more especially in the celebration of

Mass… the equality of the faithful is clearly apparent and that any suggestion of money-making is avoided."[176]

Manifestly cognizant of these conciliar preferences, Pope Paul VI offered the first major treatment of Mass stipends following the Council. *Firma in Traditione*, his 1974 Apostolic Letter, promulgated *motu proprio*, is entirely devoted to the practice, which it defends as spiritually and practically beneficial.

The Pope begins by observing that the Mass stipend is a "long-established tradition." He describes the practice in a way reminiscent of the offering made in early Church Eucharists (which both De la Taille and Rahner identified as the practice's progenitor and worthy essence). Motivated by their desire to "participate more intimately in the Eucharistic Sacrifice" and to "unite themselves more closely with Christ offering himself as a victim," the faithful "add…a form of sacrifice of their own." Their gesture "is a sign of the union of the baptized person with Christ." At the same time, the faithful also "contribute in a particular way to the needs of the Church and especially to the sustenance of its ministers." By way of this engagement, they derive "more abundant fruit from the sacrifice." For Paul VI, the practice is "not just approved," but "positively encouraged by the Church" and should be "fully preserved while being protected from possible abuse."[177]

The Pope invokes the Pauline dictum that "The laborer is worthy of his hire" (1 Cor. 9:7-14, 1 Tim. 5:18) in explaining the practical benefit of stipends for the clergy's upkeep. He seems

[176] Consilium, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, on the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Liturgy, 26 September 1964: AAS 56 (1964) 877-900, in *Documents of the Liturgy* 23, ICEL, paragraphs 34-35.
[177] Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, vol. I* (Northport, New York: Costello Publishing Co., 1975), 277.

"intent on ensuring that the financial interests of the Church are served and that abuses do not creep in as a result."[178] For example, the document states that a priest can keep only one stipend per day, with the rest to be disposed of according to the Ordinary's instructions. In order to discourage priests from celebrating Mass for financial gain, the document forbids concelebrants from keeping plural stipends.

2. New Code of Canon Law

In 1983, the Church promulgated a substantial revision to the 1917 Code of Canon Law with important implications for the practice of Mass stipends, which were retained as an institute of universal law. The need for a general update of the Code was foreseen at the time of the Second Vatican Council. The process was lengthy and the question of the future of Mass stipends was debated and speculated upon throughout. A schema for the relevant revisions was presented in 1975, which, according to Huels, was a disappointment to many canonists who "questioned the adequacy of the institute in light of Vatican II."[179] Studies on the schema prepared by the Canon Law Society of America and the Department of Canon Law at The Catholic University of America raised fundamental questions about the practice. Other canonical societies, including those of Canada and Great Britain and Ireland, faulted the disproportionate number of canons in the schema. "There were more norms on stipends in the draft sent to the Pope than there were on the entire sacrament of confirmation!"[180] Evidently, reservations about the schema and its preservation of the practice were raised even within the Pontifical Commission for the Revision of the Code of Canon Law.

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[178] William Dalton, "Mass Stipends, Mass Offerings, Mass Cards." *The Furrow* 41, no. 9 (September 1990): 505.
[179] John Huels, "Stipends in the new Code of Canon Law," *Worship* 57, no. 3 (May 1983): 216.
[180] Ibid., 217.

> Before its final plenary session in October 1981 there were eleventh-hour attempts to remove the whole section on stipends from the Code. Two petitions sought a radical reduction in the number of canons because they smack of 'casuistry' and 'commercialism.' Two proposals suggested that the entire practice be left to the competence of the episcopal conferences. One prelate, representing one of the largest episcopal conferences in the world, proposed that the whole stipend system be abolished and some other way be found to provide for clerical support without any connection between the celebration of the eucharist and an offering of money.[181]

None of these proposed changes were made in the final draft sent to the Pope in 1981. Rather, Canons 945-958 of the revised 1983 Code of Canon Law "reflect the discipline enacted by various popes over three centuries, including *Firma in Traditione.*"[182] Four canons from the 1917 Code were suppressed, canons 825 and 826 which distinguished the three kinds of stipends, and canons 833 and 834 which had strongly contractual overtones with their provisions for the stipend donor to stipulate conditions, such as the time of the celebration of the Mass. The total number of canons on Mass offerings was reduced from 19 in the schema to 14 in the new Code. "This was accomplished not by making any substantial changes but simply by consolidating several short canons into longer ones, especially Canon 955 which is based on five different canons of the 1980 schema. Thus, while the number of canons in the final version is smaller, there is no diminution in actual content."[183]

At first glance, the 1983 Code seems only stylistically different from its predecessor. The first paragraph of Canon 945 closely resembles its 1917 parallel (Canon 824.1):

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[181] Ibid.

[182] John Huels, "The Offering Given for the Celebration of Masses," in *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*, eds. John P. Beal, James A. Coriden and Thomas J. Green (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 1130.

[183] Huels, *Worship*, 218.

> 1917: According to the received and approved manner and instruction of the Church, it is permitted to every priest celebrating and applying a Mass to receive an offering, that is, as stipend.[184]
>
> 1983: In accord with the approved practice of the Church, any priest celebrating or concelebrating is permitted to receive an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention.[185]

The second paragraph of this introductory canon, however, is new to the revised Code. It recommends that priests "celebrate Mass for the intention of the Christian faithful, especially the needy, even if they have not received an offering" (945.2). In this counsel, "the legislator has in mind the spiritual benefits that may come to the persons or concerns for whose intentions the Masses are celebrated."[186] The paragraph implies that there is some benefit to be gained from the celebrant's praying for a specific intention at the Eucharist over and above the financial benefit that accrues to the Church from the offerings.[187] Just as this canon posits a spiritual benefit to donors and their intentions, the subsequent canon, 946, proclaims the practical benefit to the Church and her ministers that the offering affords. Drawing heavily from *Firma in Traditione,* "this canon justifies Mass offerings for the opportunities they provide the donors to participate in the work of the Church."[188]

Remarkably, the most important change in the new Code is conveyed by the substitution of a single word. No longer is the donation referred to as a "stipend" (*stipendium*), but rather as an "offering" (*stips*). This change was proposed originally by the Code Commission *coetus* on the sacraments in 1972. This is far more than a trifling matter of

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[184] *The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law*, trans. Edward N. Peters (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2001), 297.
[185] *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition*, Canon Law Society of America, 1998.
[186] Huels, *New Commentary*, 1131.
[187] Huels, *Worship*, 219.
[188] Ibid., 220.

nomenclature. “Rather it indicates a shift from the legal to the more personal and relational understanding of Mass offerings."[189] *Stipendium* suggests "a mercantile exchange of goods for services or the remuneration of *do ut facias* contract."[190] The word “offering,” however, clearly signifies that what is given is given freely and for the care of the Church. “Mass offerings can be understood as gifts to the church or its ministers on behalf of some intention, much as a donation or bequest is made to any charitable institution *in the name of* some person, living or deceased."[191] These are free-will donations to the Church, which express the donor’s desire for prayer at Mass and for the aid of the Church. "It can be said then in the light of all this that the change from stipend to offering helps somewhat to lessen the appearance of ‘buying a Mass.’“[192]

3. Mos Iugiter

Developments in Eucharistic theology from the time of De la Taille had long ago raised the question of the suitability of plural offerings and intentions. If the stipend was the equivalent of the common offering of old, then shouldn’t all be allowed to offer, expecting a share in the grace of the sacrifice according to their devotion? Formal magisterial discussion of the multi-intentional Mass began during the revision of the law in the 1970s, but no provision was included in the 1983 Code.[193]

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[189] William Cosgrove, “Mass Offerings: Issues in Theology and Practice,” *The Furrow* 59, no. 2 (February 2008), 78.
[190] Dalton, 506.
[191] Huels, *Commentary*, 1130.
[192] Cosgrove, 78.
[193] Brian Dunn, “A Review of the Law on Mass Offerings for Newly Ordained Priests.” P*riest* 63, no. 10 (October 2007), 36.

Prompted by numerous queries from bishops around the world, the Congregation for the Clergy published a discussion document on the subject in 1986 which was circulated to episcopal conferences for comment.[194] The document voiced the concerns of some bishops about the growing practice of priests "pooling" Mass offerings and celebrating a single Mass for all the intentions together. As the new Code had not directly addressed this issue, bishops sought clarification about its legitimacy. The draft document proposed empowering local Ordinaries to determine whether the practice of combining Mass offerings might, in certain circumstances, be permitted or prohibited within their territories. Ultimately, the Congregation opted for more universal norms. In the end, the Decree, *Mos Iugiter*, carries the same legislative and legal status of the canons of the Code of Canon Law and may be seen as a legitimate adjunct to them, as it was approved by the Pope in *forma specifica*.[195] The *ratio legis* of the Decree was to meet the needs and the desires of the faithful to participate in the practice given the contemporary reality of fewer priests and Masses.

The expressed concern in the Decree is the practice of "collective" intentions in disregard of the wishes of the donors to have their offerings applied singly to particular Masses with particular intentions. "The Decree goes out of its way to point out the exceptional character of [plural intentions] even when the law permits."[196] With two notable exceptions, these collective offerings are forbidden. When donors make a small offering but specifically do not ask that it be applied to a particular Mass, these offerings can be combined and applied together to a single Mass (so long as the collective offerings do not exceed the diocesan stipend

[194] Dalton, 367.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid., 366.

limit.) The faithful may also voluntarily unite their offerings in request for a single Mass for their intentions. These cases "must always be seen as an exception to the rule and as such are to be discouraged lest the exception replace the norm itself."[197]

Four guidelines were prescribed for these exceptional multi-intentional Masses:

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 Mass must be announced.

3.) The practice may not be observed more than twice a week.

4.) The celebrant may keep for himself no more than the usual amount of the single Mass offering and must send any excess to his Ordinary (cf. canon 951.1).

In general, the multiplication of Mass intentions is discouraged for its perceived threat to the faith and liturgical practice of the laity. The Decree recognizes that the practice, insofar as it involves money, brings with it the risk of misunderstanding and the appearance of simony. This is why, it is noted, the Apostolic See has long exercised vigilance with regard to offerings.

Moreover, if allowed to grow, the practice could “extinguish in the entire Christian people the awareness and understanding of the motives and purpose of making an offering for the celebration of the holy Sacrifice for particular intentions.”[198] The Church and her members would suffer as a result, especially those “sacred ministers who still live from these offerings.” The faithful risk becoming progressively unaccustomed to "giving offerings for the celebration of Masses for individual intentions, thus causing the loss of a most ancient practice which is

[197] Ibid., 368.
[198] Citations from the Decree and its commentary come from the English-language *L’Osservatore Romano*, 25 March 1991.

salutary for individual souls and the whole Church." Arguments in defense of intention-pooling are judged as "specious… and even pretexts," reflections of "a false ecclesiology."

In a commentary, Archbishop Gilberto Agustoni, Secretary of the Congregation for the Clergy, elaborated on some of these "pretexts" said to defend erroneously the practice of combined Mass intentions. For example, he insists that the obligation to apply donors' offerings is not fulfilled by merely mentioning the intentions of the offerers during the celebration. Doing so does not satisfy the obligation assigned by Canon 948, namely, 'of applying as many Masses as there are intentions.'

Agustoni faults priests who refuse offerings for the celebration of Mass for particular intentions. "They deprive the faithful of one of the most excellent ways by which the laity can participate more actively in the celebration of the Mass," thus causing "spiritual damage." To those who claim stipends are no longer needed, Agustoni counters that "the majority of priests worldwide are supported by stipends, and that many activities of the Church are dependent in part or totally on Mass stipends." Disregarding this fact is a "strange Puritanism."

The commentary further buttresses the normative practice of single-intention Masses by recalling the old "fruits of the Mass" theological tradition. "Nor can it be forgotten that the Catholic doctrine has constantly taught that the fruits of the Eucharistic sacrifice are variously attributed: above all to those whom the Church herself names in the 'intercessions' of the Eucharistic Prayer, then to the celebrating minister (the so-called ministerial fruit), then to the offerers, and so forth."

4. Conclusion

From the first line of Paul VI's Apostolic Letter to the most recent Decree of the Congregation for the Clergy, the post-conciliar Church has made the appeal to tradition the heart of its defense of Mass offerings, a practice "so long established."[199] At the same time, Church documents have praised its spiritual and practical benefits in uniting the faithful more closely with Christ and the Church. This favorable portrayal is surely more evocative of the practice of the early Church's common offering than the stipendiary system inherited from the Middle Ages.[200] This leads some to wonder if the Church has overlooked the historical development of the practice – imagining a uniformity in the practice and its motivation. Cardinal Agustoni's commentary on *Mos Iugiter* explains how the Decree posits "the substantial identity of the motives and goals" of the faithful who, "following an uninterrupted tradition to be honored for its antiquity and meaning," offer a stipend for a Mass to be celebrated for a particular intention. As Kilmartin sees it, "The illusory impression is given of a linear development in the direction of a more perfect expression of the practice and its interpretation."[201] The truth is a more complex evolution, with some features of the early practice having been marginalized or completely eclipsed.

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[199] "In response to the prelate who sought the abolition of the stipend system, the 1981 *Relatio*, or report, of the Code Commission, then under the presidency of Cardinal Pericles Felici, countered that this 'discipline is rooted in the very ancient tradition of church' " (Huels, *Worship*, 218).

[200] It is hard to imagine the dowager testament writer in 18th century Modena – or the pious housewife in 1950's Dublin for that matter – esteeming their stipends for the sake of sharing in the sacrifice of Christ and the work of the Church.

[201] Edward Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology,* ed. Robert J. Daly. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 211.

Notably omitted in the post-conciliar teaching on Mass stipends is reliance on the traditional "fruits of the Mass" theory.[202] This High Scholastic approach to the Mass justified the stipendiary system through its notion of divisible and transferrable fruits of the Mass. While clearly inadequate in explaining how the Mass is related to the Cross and how either is related to the Church, this theoretical framework easily accommodated the practice of stipends. The apparent de-emphasis of justificatory appeal to the High Scholastic approach in the post-conciliar teaching is potentially a significant development. In their commendation of the participatory and spiritual dimensions of the offering, the Church's pronouncements appear to reflect the influence of the work of theologians like De la Taille and Rahner. These same expressions, however, offer only hints into the theological inclination of the magisterium. Does silence connote consent – in the sense that the old framework still holds – or is this a case of a classically understated ecclesial development?

Why is the Church so concerned about limiting the practice of multiple Mass intentions? Is this indicative of the lingering belief that the normative practice of a single donor and intention is more efficacious? Might this be a back-door way to affirm that there is a special fruit of the Mass which should not be diluted? The Decree itself stresses that the Church's concern is with avoiding any semblance of simony and preventing any misunderstanding that would demean the practice or lead the faithful to abandon it.

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[202] While the commentary obliquely introduces "elements of the traditional Scholastic theology of Mass stipends, namely, the concept of the differentiation of fruits of the Mass applied according to different laws, it remains unclear how this reference is to be interpreted" (Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 233).

While the magisterium seems reluctant to portray the Mass as mechanistically benefiting donors at the will of priests, it is quite candid about how the Church benefits from Mass offerings. As Huels sees it, "these texts indicate that the principal beneficiary of Mass offerings is the Church itself, which gains financially, and the secondary beneficiaries are the donors who profit as a result of their spiritual disposition and actual participation in the Eucharist and their sharing in the works and ministry of the church."[203] For Kilmartin, all of this indicates that the magisterium "is open to a new way of understanding the theology of Mass stipends, while at the same time is reluctant simply to relegate the traditional explanation to the historical past."[204]

The uncertainty surrounding the Church's theological position hasn't stopped theologians from drawing inferences and conclusions. Huels argues that, without the buttressing of the traditional theology of a "special fruit" which the priest can direct for a stipend donor, the Mass intention is just a glorified (and so maybe unworthy or unnecessary) intercession, which belongs better with the other equally favored objects of the Prayer of the Faithful. "There is no need to suggest that this prayer is any more or less efficacious than other intercessory prayers made by the Eucharistic assembly. Indeed, the liturgy itself expressly states the Eucharist is offered for many intentions…. The official documents of the contemporary magisterium make no claim that there is any particular efficacy in the priest's remembering this special, additional intention."[205]

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[203] Huels, *Worship*, 50.
[204] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 211.
[205] Huels, *Worship*, 220.

III. POSSIBILITIES FOR RENEWAL

A. Call for abolition

Not surprisingly, objections to the practice of Mass stipends remain. Joseph Jungmann confessed his uneasiness with the continued practice of Mass stipends, given its perceived incongruity with the sublime reality of the Mass. "And this feeling increases the more vividly we have in our minds an ideal picture of the celebration of the Eucharist,… as the Memorial of the Lord, the sacrifice of the New Covenant, offered in thanksgiving among the communion of the faithful, who in this way present their whole lives to God and return to everyday life strengthened once more by the Bread of Life. How can we reconcile intention and stipend with this concept?"[206] Indeed, some observers are disquieted to the point of advocating for the abolition of stipends. Despite the new theological framework proposed and implicitly embraced in post-conciliar pronouncements, some would still "consign this wretched practice to the pastoral dustbin."[207] Francis Mannion concluded that stipends are "ecclesiologically and liturgically pathological."[208] For Robert Hovda, the Mass stipend "camouflages and distorts our sacramental understanding," obstructing "renewal at every turn."[209] As he explains, "People's attitudes are formed by what we do more than what we say. As long as the Mass stipends are collected and the parish bulletin lists the 'intentions,' we can preach good sacramental theology

[206] Jungmann, *Unto the Altar*, 23.
[207] Leon, Ó Mórcháin, "Buying a Mass," *The Furrow* 58, no. 11 (November 2007): 627.
[208] Mannion, 214.
[209] Robert Hovda, "The Amen Corner," *Worship* 59, no. 1 (January 1985): 70.

and practice to our heart's content and be confident that no one will hear us, or, if they should happen to catch the drift, will take us seriously."[210]

John Huels judges abolition to be both an ideal and legally feasible solution. "The chief problem with Mass offerings is not truly theological anymore, for the concept of a freewill donation to the church without contractual obligations does not offend against good theology. The problem with Mass offerings now is principally a moral one because many of those who 'buy Masses' are being deceived. They think they are getting something for their money, some spiritual favor or grace which benefits their intention."[211] Moreover, Huels suggests that the Church has already provided a legal loophole to end this deceptive practice.

> Canon law does not impose the Mass offering system, but only seeks to regulate it where it exists. The Code says that it is lawful for a priest to accept Mass offerings, but the inverse is not excluded. Nothing in the law prevents individual priests from refusing to accept Mass offerings, or even whole groups of priests such as those of a diocese or province of a religious institute. Canon 952 allows the provincial council or the meeting of bishops in an ecclesiastical province to define the amount of the offering. This counsel or meeting also could become a forum for a local church to re-examine thoroughly its position on Mass offerings, notwithstanding their total abolition voluntarily accepted by all priests in the province.[212]

The argument is also made that Mass offerings have become superfluous in a post-Vatican II liturgy. If stipends were once *all* about participating in the Mass, then the reformed Mass, with its numerous means for lay engagement and service, has rendered stipends unnecessary. "The congregation has ample opportunity to participate actively through prayer,

[210] Ibid.
[211] Huels, *Worship*, 222.
[212] Ibid., 223.

song, gesture and acclamation."[213] Hence, stipends are said to deserve a diminished place in the life of the Church.

B. In defense of restoration

While these calls for abolition are surely made with good intentions – and reflect a regard for the Eucharistic life of the Church – they contradict the deliberate and explicit will of the magisterium to preserve and protect the practice. Between the Church's embrace of Mass offerings and the continued importance they hold for so many lay faithful and clergy, the challenge at hand would seem to be that of administering the practice with the utmost pastoral sensitivity and care, so as to enhance its devotional potential while rooting out any persistent misunderstandings and abuses.

It is ironic that Huels and others portray the stipendiary system as arising principally in response to the pastoral need of a once marginalized faithful. At the same time, they seem to show very little pastoral insight and sensitivity in assessing more deeply the value stipends hold today for the faithful, not to mention their potential to enhance the liturgical life of a parish. As Kilmartin concludes, despite all its limitations, "the Mass stipend has preserved a custom which, if properly interpreted and practiced, should be retained. In the Eucharist, the community is invited to unite itself to the worship of Christ by which he consecrated himself to God 'on behalf of the many.' Motivated by this invitation it is fitting that the participants express the consecration of self by offering the fruits of their daily work."[214]

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[213] John M. Huels, *Disputed Questions in the Liturgy Today* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988), 49.
[214] Kilmartin, *Money and the Ministry of the Sacraments*, 110.

How do the contemporary faithful approach the matter of Mass intentions and offerings? Are they under the misguided impression that they have procured some divine benefit as Huels suggests, or are they consecrating themselves to God in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, as Kilmartin hopes? While generalizations are always fraught with the risk of overreach, my own admittedly limited experience as a parochial vicar has left me with the abiding sense that the practice is reasonably well understood and valued for the noblest of reasons.

Consider it phenomenologically. A request to remember an intention at Mass is typically advertised in the parish bulletin and therefore is open to the larger community. These Masses are usually deliberately scheduled – typically to mark poignant anniversaries or events. They are a way to comfort and to be comforted, a way to enlarge the circle of prayerful solidarity, and a way to remember and to reunite. Above all, offerings afford the faithful a way to solemnly pray for a loved one – and who would be presumptuous enough (or faithless enough) to claim that such prayer cannot be fruitful?

Had there never been such a practice, and if the Church had never offered a rationale or theological justification suggesting discrete, finite, applicable fruits of the Mass, we would still surely see it as laudable and potentially fruitful for a believer to solicit prayers in the worshiping community for someone they love. In doing so, they demonstrate their faith and their charity. God must surely smile on that!

Just how are these prayers fruitful – to solicitor and recipient alike? Just as mysteriously and potentially efficaciously as any prayer offered sincerely. Huels reasons that the omission of

any reference in post-conciliar magisterial teaching to the fruits of the Mass as a theological explanation of the practice of Mass offerings, as well as the deliberate substitution of the word "offering" for "stipend" in the new Code of Canon Law, means that the intention of the donor has no greater dignity or value and generates no greater merit or response than any prayer intention brought to the Eucharist. Even if he is correct in this case, *experientially* there *is* something "special" about the Mass intention. People value the practice in this way or they would not engage in it. Huels would surely say that this attachment to the practice by some lay faithful is rooted in an erroneous belief that a special and exclusive grace of the Eucharist can be efficaciously assigned to their intention. At the same time, however, he describes a course on sacramental law in which he provocatively asked his students "what they got for their money" when they purchased a Mass card. He received many halting answers, including the hilarious "it*'s* cheaper than flowers." "Interestingly, not one of these young people has ever said that the deceased or other intention receive any additional graces, any 'special fruits of the Mass' which the celebrant or concelebrant applies. Yet since the time of Duns Scotus this had been the dominant theological rationale, and I suspect it is still the motivation of the good many Catholics who have Mass celebrated for particular intentions."[215] In my own judgment, the faithful think more like Huel's students than Duns Scotus's!

Of the many reasons that a disparate group of Catholics might use to defend the practice, I suspect very few would choose anything like the crude transactional parceling of grace that some medieval theological manuals present. In my experience, those parishioners who made Mass offerings or requested Mass intentions did so for very understandable and

[215] Huels, *Worship*, 215.

deeply Christian reasons. So often, they were seeking to comfort the bereaved. Since the intentions were published in the parish bulletin, I witnessed many gatherings on anniversaries of losses when the chapel would be unexpectedly full of friends and family, and even mere acquaintances, gathered to remember, to pray, to support, to love.

In addition to Mass intentions, many prayers are indeed offered and shared by way of the Prayer of the Faithful. I would never presume to say that God did not hear these prayers too, or that they received less of His attention or grace because they were not *the* Mass intention. But I know that, in the lives and experience of so many, the practice of having a Mass applied to a particular intention is potentially a truly grace-filled and *fruitful* prayer in the best and simplest sense of that term.

While hardly a scientific survey, below are the perspectives of some parishioners of mine who occasionally made Mass offerings:

> *We believe God listens to prayer. So when a Mass is said for a special intention, all the people at the Mass raise their prayers to God for the intention. This way, many people are asking God to look favorably upon the person/request.*
>
> *This is the tradition of how we remember the dead.*
>
> *Having a Mass offered is a sign of respect and love and in this way is very important.*
>
> *From my youth I was taught that being remembered at the liturgy was the greatest way to pray for a loved one.*
>
> *Our faith assures us that Christ becomes present at the Eucharist and responds to those who participate in this sacrament. Presenting a loved one during this sacrament to the care of Christ is a special form of intercession.*
>
> *It's a means of drawing God's attention to a particular soul.*
>
> *I generally pray for someone else. Recent intentions have included prayers for the families of the deceased (I assume the departed are already in heaven); prayers for*

> *friends who are seriously ill and/or suffering; prayers of thanksgiving for the delivery of a healthy baby; prayers that my very premature triplet grandchildren will survive (they are thriving); prayers that my daughter-in-law will have a successful pregnancy and not suffer another miscarriage. I am a strong believer in the power of prayer and think that our triplets survived because an army of people all over the country prayed for them daily. I take solace in knowing that people are adding their prayers to mine. As I think about it, I believe it also comforts me to verbalize my concern in a caring, accepting church community.*

Admittedly, some people can be a bit fussy when it comes to scheduling or the manner of the audible expression of their intention. For the most part, the Mass intention appears to provide a valued way for the faithful to support each other in times of crisis. It represents a desire for public commemoration, with an implicit invitation to the wider community to pray and participate, to comfort and support. All of these features are good. They seem to represent an organic intellectual evolution regarding offerings, rather than the fruit of much, if any, deliberate catechesis. But still, how much better it would be if the faithful could see their "stipend" as an offering in the fullest and richest sense of that term, with roots in the early Church's Eucharistic celebration!

This will require further pastoral intervention and catechesis. It might seem esoteric and of low priority in a time when so many other gaping holes in adult understanding of the faith and tradition of the Church lie in discouraging disarray before us. Yet, such a catechetical venture could be a great vehicle for some modest and beneficial learning with regard to the Eucharist in general as the "summit and source" of our lives. Ironically, some of those who like stipends least (or loathe them most) indirectly perpetuate whatever is lacking in the practice by neglecting the matter altogether. How much better and more salutary it would be to accept the charge of the Second Vatican Council and the new Code of Canon Law, along with the best

of the theological reflection on the Eucharist, and channel the practice towards increased understanding of and greater devotion to the Eucharist.

C. Developing the potential

Following in the footsteps of Maurice de la Taille, a number of theologians have noted the organic relationship between the stipend of today and the offertory of the early Church. There is indeed great potential in such a linkage. It can and should serve as a clarion call for reform and renewal. With an eye to accentuating this connection to the ancient offertory and its sense of the self-oblation of the faithful – who wish to share more deeply in the sacrifice of Christ and the work of the Church – the following pastoral issues merit consideration.

1. The offertory

Reminding the faithful of the historical evolution of the offertory, during which the stipendiary system developed, begs the important question of the state of the offertory itself in the reformed liturgy. Is this crucial aspect of the Eucharistic celebration accorded the respect it deserves? Sadly, I fear not. I recall attending a Sunday Mass twenty years ago in the Cathedral of Notre Dame de la Trinité in Atakpamé, Togo. While a Latin-rite Mass, the liturgy was unlike any I had ever attended – resplendent with the heartfelt devotion of its participants. At the time of the offertory, every man, woman and child processed with song and dance to the front of the cathedral, where each one deposited a monetary offering in a basket held by the deacon. This symbolic action was undeniably time consuming, but deeply expressive of the

congregation's engagement with the sacrifice of the Mass. How different from the typical Sunday experience in the North American Church!

Who doesn't cringe a bit as ushers sheepishly thrust their baskets down every pew as seemingly startled congregants dig into their pockets for something to hand over. The scene reeks of undignified and ill-timed fundraising. Its connection to the Eucharistic celebration is largely obscured. As a priest-celebrant, I myself have been impatient with this gesture, wishing that it could be disposed of efficiently so as not to disrupt or unduly prolong the Mass. Too often, someone must be dragooned into bringing up the gifts of bread and wine – as if the person drew the last straw. Something is surely amiss.[216]

Romano Guardini lamented this impoverishment of our worship. As he saw it, "modern man has largely lost the facility for symbolic action, because the intellectual and ethical aspects of his religious life have been heavily stressed."[217] Robert Hovda grieved the unrecognized potential in the offertory – especially in its marginalization of the money offerings of the Sunday assembly.[218] He observes a "typical embarrassment…with the money offerings of the Sunday assembly," which "illustrates our fear of the body, our ineptness in sacramental and symbolic action, our ethereal distortions of a gospel that does not disdain anything that is

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[216] Then there is the growing practice of tithing or pledging – where people announce their intended annual financial commitment in advance. Often these pledges are delivered by credit card on the internet or in a single check before the end of the tax year. This approach further disconnects monetary offerings from the liturgy itself.

[217] Roman Guardini, "Personal Prayer and the Prayers of the Church," in *Unto the Altar: The Practice of Catholic Worship,* ed. Alfons Kirchgaessner (New York: Herder and Herder, 1963), 34.

[218] There's something ironic about Hovda's approach. He strongly wants to abandon stipends and their attendant intentions. Yet, if the practice could be effectively reconnected to a revitalized offertory reminiscent of the best practices of the early Church (*admittedly a challenge)*, then his vociferous defense of the inclusion of monetary offerings In the Sunday celebration could serve as a strident defense of Mass offerings (stipends).

human, especially such basic human concerns as economics and politics."[219] For Hovda, this reaction is simply unworthy of Christian worship. "There is no spirit and no truth in a worship which eschews the concrete signs of our human support and our human survival and our human sense of responsibility for the common good."[220] Stipends aside, money matters are indeed neuralgic for us Catholics. "We are responsible for having allowed the money offerings to shrink to the insignificance of a mere 'collection' for local upkeep….As long as Catholics are convinced that the money offerings on Sunday are merely to heat our buildings and repair our plumbing and pay our ministers and serve our needs, our giving will probably remain as ungenerous and uninspired as it usually is."[221] As Fitzgerald poignantly concludes his study of Mass offerings:

> The assembly needs to be reintroduced to its great dignity, the holy and anointed Body of Christ. After centuries of being a stranger in its own house, the assembly needs to be reminded that it co-celebrates; it gives and also receives…. One of the signs of that priestly dignity is the procession by which the home-grown offerings – bread, wine, money, food and other offerings for the church and the poor – are presented as gifts to God.[222]

Then, of course, there is the question of the financial value of stipends themselves. Historically, these offerings were hugely important to the material welfare of the Church and her clergy. By most accounts, the Church's post-conciliar treatment of Mass stipends frankly acknowledges the perduring and practical importance of stipends. "[P]resent-day church law is intent on regulating Mass offerings as gifts destined to serve the needs of the church in the

[219] Hovda, 67.
[220] Ibid., 71.
[221] Ibid., 69.
[222] *Part III*, 4.

upkeep of its ministers."[223] As a religious priest whose "upkeep" has never depended upon Mass stipends, I confess that I've often overlooked this aspect of the practice.

Huels discusses the financial significance of the Mass stipend system within the contemporary Church. He cites an unpublished financial report of one religious order claiming more than $700,000 in annual receipts from Mass offerings, with over one quarter of $1 million coming from a single parish. He estimates that, if every priest were to celebrate Mass 360 times per year at the stipend rate of five dollars per Mass, each would earn $1,800 annually. This would amount to over $100 million each year in clergy stipends in the United States alone. This is not just money for the clergy, it is real money for the Church. "Since the salaries of priests are frequently budgeted at a low scale to account for stipend income, the institutional church has that much extra money at its disposal."[224]

It seems obvious that the Church should provide for her clergy and missions in such a manner that they need not depend on stipend income. If this were the case, Mass offerings could perhaps be directed towards some charitable outreach or need of the parish. As George St. Hilaire reasons, "Since priests' salaries are notoriously low, they will have to be raised. And the money necessary for this overall raise will have to come from the people….[I]f money is available for stipends, then it is available for direct support of the clergy."[225] Of course, individual priests would have to consent to this transferal of the offering, as Canon Law is clear that the offering belongs to them. The way the law is presently written, the decision of

[223] Dalton, 507.
[224] Huels, *Worship*, 221.
[225] "Eliminating Mass Stipends," *The Homiletic and Pastoral Review* 66 (1966): 848.

whether to accept a stipend or not is wholly within the power and discretion of the priest. Redirecting Mass offerings toward a common purpose, say to aid the poor, would always depend upon the voluntary participation of the clergy.

There is indeed room for reform in the Church's financial care of its clergy. As St. Hilaire poignantly concludes: "Celebrating the Mass is probably the greatest act a priest can perform. It is also probably the most spiritual. Certainly it seems unfortunate that he is caught in a mesh where he has to receive something akin to a tip to do it. We would all feel much more at ease if we were perfectly free in offering Christ the Victim to the Father; nor should financial worries dictate the conditions under which we do so."[226]

2. The intention

Great care also needs to be shown in how the Mass intention is "honored" within the celebration. John Huels argues that no special attention should be drawn to the donor's intention. Thus, he rejects as inappropriate any explicit mention of "the intention of the Mass." He likewise objects to the practice of referencing an intention for the deceased during the Eucharistic Prayer. This inclusion, he insists, should be reserved for formal memorial Masses. His preference is that the intention be named by the donor during the Prayer of the Faithful. Even within the Prayer of Faithful, however, Huels objects to any undue emphasis upon the intention of the donor. In other words, one should not say "We pray *especially* today for…." Huels' counsel here reflects his regard for the equal dignity of all prayers brought to the Mass

[226] St. Hilaire, 851.

and his concern about perpetuating any lay misconception about the exclusive rights accorded to donors.

Without being exclusivist, we can draw attention to an individual person's needs or a particular cause.[227] We Catholics have an All Saints day, but we also have days when we remember the saints singly, in all their individuality. This seems very Catholic. So, too, is remembering individual intentions at Mass. In some parishes, an announcement is made before the Mass regarding the intention. On Sundays, this would seem to be an ideal practice. I propose the following language to highlight the connection to the offering and to invite communal prayer. "An offering for today's Mass was made by X for Y intention." Or, "An offering for today's Mass was made by X who invites our prayers for Y." For daily Masses, the celebrant should offer a prayer for the intention during the intercessions – if the donor does not. Donors should be strongly encouraged to be actually present at the Mass for which their offering is applied. Of course, this means sharing with donors at the outset the date and time of the Mass.

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[227] Kenny describes how historically the special intention of the Mass was expressed: 1.) In the early Roman Mass, the intention was expressed in the Secret, then called the *oratio super oblata*. 2.) In the 4th century the practice developed of inscribing the names of the intentions in the diptychs and reading them in the Canon. 3.) As the number of donors grew it became more complicated to record and read all the names. So, by the 11th century, the function of the diptychs was generally taken over by the prayers of offering which were developing around the actions of preparing the bread and wine for the sacrifice. These prayers often included a general remembrance of all benefactors, those who made an offering, and those for whom the Mass was offered." 4.) In private Masses and in public Masses where diptychs were not read, the *memento* of the Canon was free for the priest to insert the names of those who offered a stipend. Mass endowments of the 11th century frequently stipulated that the priest should do so. 5.) In the 12th century the custom developed of making the intention in a special collect. 6.) Finally, in the 13th century the practice was established of determining the intention of the Mass upon the receipt of the stipend; a special prayer or mention in the Canon of the person's name for whom the Mass was said was no longer required" (*Origin and Relevance*, 845).

3. Catechesis

Catechesis regarding offerings in general could help to revitalize the ritual – reconnecting the practice to that of the early Church and, hopefully, enhancing everyone's understanding and effective engagement with the Sacrifice of the Mass. Greater devotion and greater graces!

As Karl Rahner reasoned, a sound formation for the laity on the practice is essential, "if in the next generation any idea at all of the meaning and value of the Mass stipend is to survive."[228] There is no way to "explain" offerings without broaching the very history and meaning of the Mass itself. Who wouldn't profit from this? Moreover, Article 7 of the Decree of the Congregation for the Clergy, *Mos Iugiter*, explicitly calls for catechetical instruction for the faithful on the matter of Mass offerings.[229]

While Huels agrees that there exists a catechetical deficit among the faithful regarding offerings, he dismisses the project – as it "would require a massive effort" which would "likely produce total confusion on all sides."[230] How little Huels thinks of the Christian faithful! This isn't rocket science. I'm not convinced people are so easily confused or deceived – regardless of their generation. Moreover, I believe that the faithful can grasp the post-conciliar rationale for Mass stipends and even profit from studying a bit of the practice's history and development. Why not have a lay coordinator for Mass offerings who would receive the donation, record the relevant information, complete the Mass card and inquire about the nature of the intention (learning something about the intention in question and the occasion to be remembered)?

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[228] Rahner & Häussling, 115.
[229] Kilmartin articulated a schema for such a catechesis which follows in an appendix.
[230] *Worship*, 223.

Perhaps a simple pamphlet could be distributed explaining the practice. Bulletin announcements, reprinted articles, adult education seminars, sensitive and timely preaching – all of these things could go a long way in correcting any misconceptions that might exist. If we abandoned every religious practice which is poorly understood, we would sadly have very little left in the Church!

Regardless of their origin and historical development, and being the subject of much debate, and even controversy, Mass offerings remain a part of the life of the Church. It would behoove her to seek the greatest fruit from a practice whose potential for good and ill is part of our ecclesial story.

APPENDIX A: Canons Regarding Mass Offerings[231]

Offerings and Intentions

Can. 945 §1. In accord with the approved practice of the Church, any priest celebrating or concelebrating is permitted to receive an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention.

§2. It is recommended earnestly to priests that they celebrate Mass for the intention of the Christian faithful, especially the needy, even if they have not received an offering.

The Donor

Can. 946 The Christian faithful who give an offering to apply the Mass for their intention contribute to the good of the Church and by that offering share its concern to support its ministers and works.

Trafficking or Trading Excluded

Can. 947 Any appearance of trafficking or trading is to be excluded entirely from the offering for Masses.

Separate and Collective Intentions

Can. 948 Separate Masses are to be applied for the intentions of those for whom a single offering, although small, has been given and accepted.

Lost Offerings

Can. 949 A person obliged to celebrate and apply Mass for the intention of those who gave an offering is bound by the obligation even if the offerings received have been lost through no fault of his own.

Unspecified Number of Masses

Can. 950 If a sum of money is offered for the application of Masses without an indication of the number of Masses to be celebrated, the number is to be computed on the basis of the offering established in the place where the donor resides, unless the intention of the donor must be presumed legitimately to have been different.

One Offering per Day

Can. 951 §1. A priest who celebrates several Masses on the same day can apply each to the intention for which the offering was given, but subject to the rule that, except on Christmas, he is to keep the offering for only one Mass and transfer the others to the purposes prescribed by the ordinary, while allowing for some recompense by reason of an extrinsic title.

§2. A priest who concelebrates a second Mass on the same day cannot accept an offering for it under any title.

Amount of Offering

Can. 952 §1. It is for the provincial council or a meeting of the bishops of the province to define by decree for the entire province the offering to be given for the celebration and application of Mass, and a priest is not permitted to seek a larger sum. Nevertheless, he is permitted to accept for the application of a Mass a voluntary offering which is larger or even smaller than the one defined.

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[231] *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition*, Canon Law Society of America, 1998.

§2. Where there is no such decree, the custom in force in the diocese is to be observed.

§3. Members of all religious institutes must also observe the same decree or local custom mentioned in §§1 and 2.

Limitation on Offerings Accepted

Can. 953 No one is permitted to accept more offerings for Masses to be applied by himself than he can satisfy within a year.

Excess Mass Offerings

Can. 954 If in certain churches or oratories more Masses are asked to be celebrated than can be celebrated there, it is permitted for them to be celebrated elsewhere unless the donors have expressly indicated a contrary intention.

Transferal and Satisfaction of Mass Obligations

Can. 955 §1. A person who intends to entrust to others the celebration of Masses to be applied is to entrust their celebration as soon as possible to priests acceptable to him, provided that he is certain that they are above suspicion.

He must transfer the entire offering received unless it is certain that the excess over the sum fixed in the diocese was given for him personally. He is also obliged to see to the celebration of the Masses until he learns that the obligation has been accepted and the offering received.

§2. The time within which Masses must be celebrated begins on the day the priest who is to celebrate them received them unless it is otherwise evident.

§3. Those who entrust to others Masses to be celebrated are to record in a book without delay both the Masses which they received and those which they transferred to others, as well as their offerings.

§4. Every priest must note accurately the Masses which he accepted to celebrate and those which he has satisfied.

Unsatisfied Obligations

Can. 956 Each and every administrator of pious causes or those obliged in any way to see to the celebration of Masses, whether clerics or laity, are to hand over to their ordinaries according to the method defined by the latter the Mass obligations which have not been satisfied within a year.

Vigilance

Can. 957 The duty and right of exercising vigilance that Mass obligations are fulfilled belong to the local ordinary in churches of secular clergy and to the superiors in churches of religious institutes or societies of apostolic life.

Mass Record

Can. 958 §1. The pastor and the rector of a church or other pious place which regularly receives offerings for Masses are to have a special book in which they note accurately the number of Masses to be celebrated, the offering given, and their celebration.

§2. The ordinary is obliged to examine these books each year either personally or through others.

APPENDIX B: Kilmartin's proposed theological synthesis[232]

(A) The Mass entails the sacramental representation of the sacrifice of the cross. But in what sense? Is the sacrifice of the cross represented to the liturgical community in order that the community be enabled to come into contact with it; or, is the liturgical community represented to the sacrifice of the cross? In either case, does the mystery of the eucharistic sacrifice consist in the sacramental presence of the historical sacrifice of the cross? The Roman magisterium seems to favor the idea that the sacrifice of the cross is represented to the liturgical community. However, the concept of representation of the liturgical community to the sacrifice of the cross is also a viable option.

(B) This sacramental presence takes place in order that the community might share in a sacramental way in the graces derived from the redemptive work of Christ. Hence, the eucharistic celebration is a means of application of the fruits of the sacrifice of the cross. This is the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church confirmed by the Council of Trent.

(C) This sacramental presence of the once-for-all sacrificial self-offering of Christ does not imply, in any sense, the presence of a new oblation on the part of Christ. Moreover, in the glorified state, discrete acts are not possible on the part of the humanity of Christ. The newness of each eucharistic sacrifice is attributed to the renewed self-offering of the liturgical assembly. The idea that the eucharistic sacrifice is above all an action of Christ is frequently met in the teaching of the magisterium. What is meant by this, however, remains obscure. The statement that the eucharistic sacrifice is efficacious *ex opere operantis Christi* is open to several interpretations and is not sufficiently clarified in modern official teaching.

(D) The thesis concerning the *ex opere operato* effect of the Mass which is based on a supposed new action of Christ lacks a solid theological basis. Moreover, there is no convincing argument for the predicating that fruits derive from the Mass *ex opere operato* in virtue of the divine will. Rather, this thesis is based on the unproven assumption that every celebration of Mass involves an efficacy analogous to the so-called efficacy of the sacraments which consists in the infallible offer of grace *ex opere operato*. Still, the Roman magisterium to this day has not explicitly rejected the notion of fruits derived from the Mass independently of the devotion of those who somehow actively participate in the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice.

(E) Fruits derived from the Mass are a function of the devotion of members of the Church who actively participate in the eucharistic worship and are received according to the measure of the devotion of those who offer or those for whom the offering is made. For no other source of blessings derived from the Mass can be identified. The classical doctrine of distinct fruits of the

[232] Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 234.

Mass applied according to different laws still forms a part of the tradition which has not been completely discarded by the magisterium.

(F) As subjects of the offering of the Mass are included all the Christian faithful who are actively related to the particular Mass through physical presence and, therefore, those whose devotion determines the measure of fruits derived from the celebration. The notion that the members of the universal Church participate in the Masses of the world by their intention is valid only in so far as this means that their prayer affords support for those engaged in the celebration of particular Masses. It should also be said that those who make offerings for the celebration of Masses participate in the celebration as persons who make possible the eucharistic celebration. But their devotion in making the offering does not account for the measure of the fruits of the Mass when it is celebrated. As is the case of the members of the Church universal, the divine response to the expression of their devotion does not have to wait until a Mass is applied to their offering.

The notion that the holy members of the Church who unite themselves in the offering of the "Masses of the world" are a source of blessings which derived from these Masses is a part of the traditional teaching of Catholic theology which was explicitly formulated in the 13th century. The teaching about the Eucharist as involving the offering of the universal Church continues to find place in the teaching of the magisterium, but the exact meaning of this teaching is not sufficiently determined.

(G) The application of a Mass to the offering of a donor is made by the priest. Thereby a relationship between a gift and a particular Mass is established by the liturgical leader. However, the priest does not, precisely speaking, apply the fruits of a particular Mass to the intention of the donor of the offering. For the fruits of the Mass are not applied according to different laws. Rather, there is one fruit which is applied according to the divine dispensation to all in accord with their devotion.

From this point of view it is imprecise, theologically speaking, for a priest to promise to offer the Mass's "first intention" for this or that person. This language implies what has now become theologically questionable, namely that the priest has control over blessings derived from the Mass. However, the Roman magisterium has not yet explicitly rejected the idea that the priest has a role in the assignment of the special fruit of the Mass which is related to the special intention for which the Mass is celebrated.

(H) The application of a number of offerings of donors to a particular Mass does not, in itself, necessarily result in a diminishing of the efficacy of the Mass for the intention of the individual donor. For, always, the efficacy of the Mass is measured by the quality of the devotion of the participants. Nevertheless, the Roman magisterium still speaks of the relatively greater efficacy

of the normative practice of the Mass stipend, but without sufficiently clarifying the basis for this position.

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