

Sacred Heart Stewardship

Bequests

When a bequest is made to a parish and the amount of the bequest is attached to the offering of Masses (e.g. "I bequeath to Sacred Heart Parish \$10,000 for Masses to be said for my intentions."), the entire amount mentioned must be set aside for Mass offerings. Using this example, 1,000 Masses would have to be offered for the deceased individual. What many people do not understand is that none of this bequest goes to support the parish and its programs or ministries. Mass offerings are given to the priest who celebrates the Mass either directly or through a salary offset system, not to the parish and its ministries.

If the intention of donors is to have the parish benefit from their generosity, their wills should be worded in such a manner that it is clear that the bequest is directed to the parish itself. Requests that their intentions be remembered in Masses can also be made, but such requests are separate from and independent of the amount of the bequest. Every Sunday and holy day, the pastor offers the Mass for the People, for the intentions of living and deceased members of the parish entrusted to his care. Their intentions will surely be remembered at this time.

Since the breadth of God's mercy and the graces of Eucharist are beyond our human calculations, it is difficult to understand how, from our faith perspective, we would insist on the need for hundreds of Masses to be said for any one specific individual. Since parishes may not accept more Mass offerings than can be fulfilled in a single year, these large numbers of Mass offerings must frequently be directed elsewhere, precluding the direct involvement of the parish in these prayers of the deceased.

The wording of the bequest can also result in tax implications. When Mass offerings are attached to the bequest, the amount is free of estate tax only within certain limits; a bequest made directly to the parish is completely free from estate tax, regardless of the amount of the gift.



or

Mass
Intentions

