



## Introduction: An Act of Love and Justice

At the heart of Catholic life lies a reality often overlooked yet essential for the Church's sustenance and the sanctification of souls: **the stipend**. This term, which may sound technical or even financial, carries profound spiritual, theological, and pastoral significance.

What is a stipend? Simply put, it is the offering that the faithful give to a priest so that he may celebrate a Mass for a specific intention—whether for the deceased, a spiritual need, or in thanksgiving. But behind this simple definition lies a treasure of grace, tradition, and justice.

In this article, we will explore:

1. **The historical origins of stipends**
  2. **Their theological and biblical foundation**
  3. **Their pastoral importance in the life of the Church**
  4. **How the faithful can live out this practice with greater devotion**
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## 1. The History of Stipends: From the Early Christians to Today

The practice of offering donations to God's ministers is not new. Even in the Old Testament, the Levites and priests lived from the people's offerings (cf. Numbers 18:21). St. Paul reaffirms this principle in the New Testament:

*"The Lord has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14).*

In the early centuries of Christianity, the faithful brought bread, wine, and other goods for the Eucharistic celebration, and part of these gifts supported the clergy. Over time, as managing goods in kind became difficult, stipends were established as a just and proportionate financial contribution.

During the Middle Ages, Councils and Popes regulated this practice to prevent abuses,



emphasizing that a stipend is not a “payment” for the sacraments (which are free) but an alms that allows priests to dedicate themselves fully to their ministry.

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## 2. Theological Foundation: The Mass, the Treasure of the Church

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that the Eucharist is “*the source and summit of the Christian life*” (CCC 1324). When a faithful requests a Mass for an intention, they actively participate in Christ’s redemptive work.

### Why Offer a Stipend?

- **It is an act of justice:** The priest dedicates time, prayer, and effort to celebrate Mass for a specific intention.
- **It is an act of charity:** It supports the material needs of the Church and its ministers.
- **It is an act of faith:** It acknowledges that the Mass has infinite value, and our offering is a sign of surrender.

In her wisdom, the Church teaches that **a Mass cannot be denied due to lack of a stipend**, but at the same time, she encourages the faithful to be generous, following the example of the widow in the Gospel who gave “*all she had to live on*” (Mark 12:44).

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## 3. Pastoral Relevance: How to Live This Practice Today

In a world where everything has a price, the stipend reminds us that the sacred is not for sale—but it is sustained by love.

### Practical Applications for the Faithful:

- **Offer stipends with devotion:** Not as a mere formality, but as an act of faith, uniting our intention to Christ’s Sacrifice.
- **Be generous according to your means:** The Church does not set a fixed amount, but we should give with a grateful heart.
- **Educate others:** Many Catholics are unaware of this practice. Sharing its meaning



enriches the community's spiritual life.

### For Priests:

- Remember that the stipend is a means, not an end.
- Celebrate every Mass with fervor, regardless of the offering received.
- Teach the faithful the value of this practice, avoiding both greed and neglect.

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## Conclusion: A Bridge Between Heaven and Earth

A stipend is far more than financial assistance: it is a bond of love between the faithful and the altar, between earth and heaven. Each time we request a Mass, we participate in the greatest work in history—Redemption.

Today, in a secularized world, this practice calls us to **be generous toward God**, to support His ministers, and to trust that **our offering, united with Christ's, yields eternal fruits**.

*"Give, and it will be given to you: a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38).*

**When was the last time you requested a Mass for an intention?** Today is a perfect day to renew this beautiful tradition. □