

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT MASS CARDS

Question 1: Can you explain the practise of Mass Offerings?

The Church encourages priests when they say Mass to do so for an intention, particularly for those in need. They are to do this whether or not they have received an offering from one of the faithful to say Mass for a special intention. In requesting a Mass the faithful are asking that the priest make their intention his own. This practice grew within the Church over time and is now a long-established tradition. A Mass offering thus given as a form of sacrifice is a means by which the faithful associate themselves more closely with the sacrifice of the Mass.

Question 2: How do I arrange for a Mass to be celebrated?

The best practice in relation to arranging for a Mass to be celebrated for a particular intention is to buy an unsigned Mass card and have it signed at a Church or by a priest you know. This priest will then either celebrate the Mass himself or pass it on to another priest (or religious order/missionary society), who will then celebrate the Mass for the intentions of the donor.

Question 3: Who do you support with your Mass offering?

The Mass offering is a contribution to the upkeep of priests and since many Mass offerings are passed on to priests on the Missions, those who make an offering for Mass participate in the missionary work of the Church.

Question 4: In the case where a priest receives a lot of Mass offerings each day how do I know that Mass is celebrated for my particular intention?

The priest who receives the offering for Mass has an obligation to apply Mass for the specific intention of the person who has made the offering. He is to celebrate Mass within a reasonable time. Irrespective of how many Masses he celebrates in a day, a priest may only keep an offering for one Mass per day. If a priest receives too many Mass intentions he must transfer any surplus Mass offerings, in total, to another priest. Normally these offerings will be sent to priests working in needy areas or to priests working on the missions.

Question 5: What is Church law on the sale of Mass Cards?

The Church's norms and regulations about Mass offerings are clearly set out in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* and in the 1991 Decree *Mos lugiter*. The Eucharist, the 'source and summit of the Christian Life', is at the heart of our belief and the Church has strict rules to govern the practice of Mass offerings so that even the appearance of trafficking or trading is to entirely excluded from Mass offerings (Canon 947).

Having signed or stamped Mass cards for sale to the public in shops and other commercial outlets is a practice that is not approved by the Irish Episcopal Conference, the Major Religious Superiors or the Superiors of Missionary Societies because it undermines a correct understanding of the Eucharist.

Question 6: What is State law on the sale of Mass Cards?

Since 1 September 2009, the Charities Act 2009 regulates the sale of Mass cards in Ireland. Under this Act, the sale of Mass cards requires an "arrangement" by which a Bishop or Religious Superior must give permission for signed Mass cards to be sold. The Act also lays down penalties to ensure that this law is kept. From the Church's point of view, in Ireland the Bishops and Religious Superiors of this country are the only ones who could make such an "arrangement."

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