



## Mass stipend system sells pieces of sacramental life

The Mass is not a commodity to be bought and sold.

Yet our system of Mass stipends contributes to the misconception that Masses can be purchased and even owned.

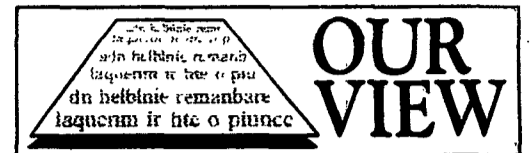
Theologically speaking, the faithful have every right to request that their intentions be remembered in a special way during the Mass. In return, they have long contributed an offering — once the very bread and wine of the eucharistic sacrifice, later a gift of money.

The stipendiary system we have inherited is rife with contradictions. Stipends are said to be a free-will offering; yet likelihood of getting the offering waived depends on what parish someone happens to attend.

Paying a stipend does not denote ownership of a Mass; yet the transaction does place upon the priest a solemn obligation to honor the Mass intention.

Pastors are required by canon law to "send out" Masses they cannot celebrate within a year's time; yet donors of Mass stipends have the right to request that the Masses be celebrated at places and times that allow them to be present.

Diocesan guidelines stipulate that "the remembrance of the Sacred Eucharist" is not to be treated as the secondary benefit of some other project or enterprise; yet people commonly donate Mass money for the primary



purpose of supporting missionaries and religious foundations.

Catholics often bequeath money for Masses in their wills, intending to support their parishes; yet the money goes to the celebrant. And whereas some priests don't mind being financially supported by their role as a priest, others are quite uncomfortable with the "Mass-for-money" connection.

At its best, the custom of turning to the eucharistic celebration to remember a loved one or seek a special intercession is a beautiful expression of faith and piety.

At its worst, buying a Mass card on the occasion of a death or anniversary is a programmed response that's cheaper than flowers and touches the donor no deeper than his wallet.

Better education can improve the terminology people use when they stop at the rectory to "buy a Mass."

Education can also eliminate angry phone calls from people complaining that their intention wasn't announced from the altar — which is not required of the priest.

But we will not be rid of the Mass-for-money connection — so open to abuse — until we find another system. As one priest remarked, "There has to be a better way."

— The Editors

## Was 'Miracle of Fatima' responsible for Cold War thaw?

To the editor:

The historic events that have unfolded over the last several months in communist countries reached an emotional peak with the opening of the East-West German borders and tearing down of parts of "the wall." No symbol has so realistically represented the separation of a people nor the division of the way of life, communist vs. democratic, as "the wall." Having been raised and educated during the start of the Cold War, the Iron Curtain, the Berlin blockade and The Wall, I can't help but to still have doubts, fears and suspicions that

there isn't some great evil plan lurking behind the new mood of the communist national leaders. These events can't just be because of public opinion or the protests of communist country citizens because these governments still have control of military might to suppress — as we recently witnessed in China.

So what is behind all these good things that are happening? And isn't it mysterious that the peak event occurred in the land of our arch enemy of two World Wars at the same time that we celebrated Armistice Day — the Peace Day that ended WWI in

1918? Also bear in mind that all of these good things are happening under the control, and to some extent the direction, of the current Russian leader — the same position that has directed so much evil destruction and oppression since the Russian revolution in 1917.

What have we had to counter all of the evil which communism has brought upon the world? For many Catholic people, an event took place in 1917 in a remote village in a country that cared or knew little about the world power domination that was just beginning in Russia. The event is the "Miracle of Fatima," a religious encounter where people were urged to pray — to pray fervently, for world peace and for the conversion of Russia. Many believers of the Fatima message have prayed faithfully over the last 70 years, and I can't help but ask — IS IT WORKING? Are we witnessing it? The Fatima message delivered in 1917 also contained a message to the world that if we didn't direct our lives more toward serving the Creator and our fellow man, there would be a war even

worse than the one going on at that time. For years I thought that was WWII, but the horrors and atrocities of Korea and Vietnam must also qualify.

Having lived at a safe distance through all of the horrors and sorrows that can be traced back to the start of communism, these almost unbelievable changes are so exciting and wonderful to hope for. And so, in the hope that these happenings are real, I encourage, I invite, I plead with all people, let us unite in prayer by raising our hearts and voices to give thanks for what we are witnessing and to continue to pray for world peace, peace in peoples' hearts and the conversion of Russia. Won't you please join in the Rosary, which is broadcast locally on WWVG (1460 AM) at 6:30 p.m. seven days a week? Isn't it worth devoting the time and effort? And it only takes the dream, you don't even need the dollar — that's a better deal than what the NY Lotto offers.

Rodney Discavage  
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Penfield

## Talk can't revive abortion victims

To the editor:

Bravo! Bravo!

Finally one of our clergy dares to challenge our "so called" Catholic newspaper urging them to become more outspoken with politicians and laity who serve on boards, run for office or work for agencies that promote killing of our unborn. Our bishops and the *Courier* need to go beyond the obvious "lip service" on the abortion tragedy and take a more vocal stand.

Father Dave Mura is right! Enough is enough — 24,000,000 abortions later, dialogue is important, but let's not forget what we are talking about. Our infant brothers

and sisters aren't "half dead;" there is no "dialogue" or compromise that will bring them back.

We must never forget these 24 million lives lost and it's about time our newspaper, our Catholic bishops, our religious, our Catholic laity spoke out publicly about the greatest human rights violation this country has ever seen — the slaughter of our own children.

George C. Wiedemer  
Hillary Lane  
Penfield

Mr. Wiedemer is a Republican member of the Monroe County Legislature.

## Church can't dictate decisions of conscience

To the editor:

I would like to comment on the views of Father David Mura, (1-25-90) in which he addresses denying Communion to pro-choice politicians, Planned Parenthood workers and health care providers who are associated with abortion.

I am a Catholic registered nurse who does not believe in forcing my religious views on others. I do not feel it is my job to deny health care to any patient who has

made a decision to control their own body. It is however my duty to administer safe and compassionate health care to all individuals.

I think it is time the church acknowledges our freedom to follow our conscience. It is time the church stayed out of all politics.

Elaine D. Ashworth, R.N.  
member, Catholics for Free Choice  
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