

Official Communiqué 15

Decree on the sharing of funeral offerings

The income from funeral offerings has been divided into two equal parts for more than twenty years : 50% is intended for Masses on behalf of the deceased and 50% for the pastoral needs of the parish. There have been requests from some of those in charge of parishes that this division be modified to allow the parish to retain 75% of the offerings for its pastoral needs.

As the 50-50 sharing resulted from an agreement of the bishops of the ecclesiastical province (in accord with Canon 1264 : 2), it was necessary to have the approval of the bishops of the ecclesiastical province for modification of the current practice, and this has recently been obtained.

As you know, Mass intentions that are not said in the parishes of origin are conveyed to the Bureau des Prêtres, which assumes the duty of sending them to the Résidence Léonie-Paradis, or to parishes in need, or to religious communities connected to the diocese, as well as to bishops of mission countries. We wish to maintain this assistance to the fullest possible extent.

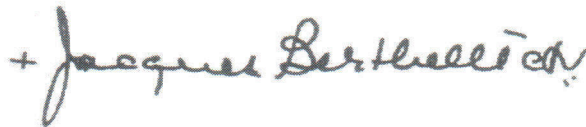
On the other hand, having taken into account the views of the Conseil Presbytéral and consulted a certain number of pastors, I am in a position now to authorize a new sharing of the income from funeral offerings.

Collections at Mass have traditionally been intended for the support of priests. But since the salaries of priests have been suitably adjusted, Mass collections account for only a small part of their living. One part of the offertory is therefore assigned to the fabrique, which guarantees the salary of the priests, and the other part to the diocese which, through the Bureau des Prêtres, manages the priests' compensation fund. The part that belongs to the diocese has contributed in part to covering the actuarial deficit in the priests' pension fund. The Code of Canon Law stipulates (article 946) that « the faithful who make an offering for a Mass to be said for their intentions are contributing to the good of the Church and participating by this offering in its care for the support of its ministers and its works ».

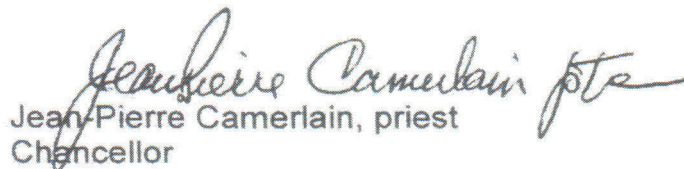
We know that the parishes have to pay the salaries not only of ordained ministers but also of pastoral agents. The largest part of parish budgets goes to the remuneration of pastoral staff. This provides an additional justification for a revision of the distribution of the funeral offerings.

Consequently, as of January 1st, 2009, I authorize the leaders of parishes to retain 75% of the offerings at funerals for the pastoral needs of the parish and 25% for Mass intentions. It will still be stated before the offertory at funerals that the collection will be divided between Masses requested for the deceased and the pastoral needs of the parish. The first paragraph of page 42.306 (8.5) of the *Handbook of Fabrique Administration* will be modified accordingly.

In virtue of which I have signed, at Longueuil, on this 15th day of December, 2008.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name Jacques Berthelet.

† Jacques Berthelet C.S.V.
Bishop of Saint-Jean-Longueuil

A handwritten signature in cursive script, starting with a cross symbol and followed by the name Jean-Pierre Camerlain.

Jean-Pierre Camerlain, priest
Chancellor