



New Mass Intention Program from The Pontifical Mission Societies

After decades of sharing the offerings of the Catholic faithful in the United States to mission priests around the world to celebrate Masses for their intentions, the Pontifical Mission Societies have launched a convenient new way to have Mass offered for your private intention. Starting November 1, 2018, during the Month of All Souls, anyone with access to the internet will be able to request a Mass for a deceased loved one and receive instant notification about the priest who has accepted to offer the intention, as well as the time and place that the Mass will be said.

"In recent years, the tradition of having Mass offered for a deceased relative or friend has been slipping out of our Catholic daily life. What's more, few people know how to enroll a loved one in a Mass intention program," said Oblate Father Andrew Small, OMI, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, promoter of the new service.

"Modern technology is updating the way we interact with one another, and we are excited to make this ancient tradition of the Church available through modern channels of communication," he explained. "Almost instantly, you can submit a Mass request and just as quickly you will know the precise date and time the Mass will be celebrated, and can share the information with family and friends, and spiritually prepare for that moment."

"In addition to participating in one of the core moments of our Catholic faith, you can invite others to come closer to the Sacramental life of the Church, even those who have become distant from the Church," Father Andrew continued. "Offerings for these Masses are vital support for mission priests who minister in some of the poorest places in the world. We have developed a safe digital pathway to connect people in this way and deepen the experience of the Mass, while expanding access to the sacred tradition of a priest offering Mass for a specific intention."



Making this possible is the MISSIO USA ChatBot (MissioBot) which is available via Facebook Messenger. You can easily send a Mass request from your desktop computer or smartphone. A real-life cohort of mission priests is standing by, waiting to receive Mass requests and to respond, one-by-one, to the individual requests. The name and reason for the intention are relayed to the mission priest via this new digital platform who acknowledges the request, which is communicated instantly to the person making the request.

"While we are using the new technology, the experience of human interaction is at the heart of this new process. Real priests are waiting to receive your intention and offer Mass for you," added Father Andrew.

The Mass petitioner is sent a reminder shortly before the Mass is celebrated and can access useful catechetical materials to help enter into the Sacramental moment, even without being physically present.

"Aware of the need to maintain a respectful space for such an encounter, all communications between petitioner and priest are secure and confidential, and are generated by the Messenger platform," said Father Andrew. "This means that only essential information is shared regarding the person's intention for requesting the Mass and the name and location of the priest, and the date and time that Mass will be offered. This service is not like other SMS or text message capabilities in that there is no direct communication allowed between the users. It is the digital platform that relays the messages to both the priest and the petitioner while maintaining the privacy of both. Users cannot communicate with one another through this channel in a direct way."

First launched on World Mission Sunday 2016 to offer stories through a guided conversation about the Church's missions, MissioBot expanded those connections to offer more, including daily wisdom, and quizzes about our Catholic faith. Last November, MissioBot facilitated the ability to send prayer requests to missionaries around the world who pray daily for those intentions.

"With MissioBot, it's a spiritual journey of accompaniment," said Father Andrew. "We are attempting to inject an antidote to the isolation that many experience through the use of technology, and replace this with connection and spiritual support."

While November is traditionally a time to remember and pray for the deceased, there is also the ability to have a mission priest offer Mass at any time for a celebration, for difficult times, for someone's health, for a special intention.