Application of the Holy Mass fruits

Summary

The application of the Mass presupposes the doctrine of the Catholic theology about the various fruits of the Mass. Three kinds of fruits or effects are usually recognized: the holy sacrifice benefits the entire Church (a general fruit – generalis, communis, universalis); it benefits the celebrating priest himself (a very special fruit – specialissimus); the Mass may be applied to the specific intentions of the celebrant (a special fruit – ministerialis, medius, specialis). The application must be “objectively determined” and it must be made before the consecration.

According to the Code of canon law from 1983, the Mass may be applied for anybody. That norm is considerably different from its correlate in the 1917 code which said that Mass may be applied for the in purgatory or for the living with the exception of public Masses for the excommunicated. Private Masses could be applied for tolerated excommunicates, which included baptized non-Catholics, but for excommunicates who must be avoided, a private Mass could be applied only for their conversion.

Today the limitations refer to situations in which the application of the Mass constitutes a public (know) event. A funeral Mass may not be celebrated for those who have been excluded from ecclesiastical funerals in can. 1185 CIC.