



**Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue
in the City of New York**

The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, OBE, DD, *Rector*
John Scott, LVO, D. Mus., *Organist and Director of Music*
www.SaintThomasChurch.org

Sunday, October 5, 2003

The Feast of Dedication

Festal Eucharist

at 11am

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A Sermon by
The Reverend Andrew C. Mead, Rector

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MAKE YOUR PLEDGE

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.

This morning we celebrate the dedication of our beloved parish church to Saint Thomas the Apostle, the so-called Doubter who, when he saw Jesus risen from the dead, worshiped and confessed, "My Lord and my God!" We conclude with a solemn *Te Deum* in procession to express our thanks for this goodly heritage.

This is a perfect occasion to begin our Every Member Canvass and to preach the Canvass sermon. My purpose is, first, to persuade those of you who do not make a pledge to Saint Thomas Church and Choir School to do so for 2004; second, to persuade those of who do pledge already to increase your pledge for 2004 and take a step towards the sacrificial giving and joy of tithing.

Why should you make a pledge? You should make a pledge because in doing so you make a commitment of your money to the ministry and mission of the Church of Jesus Christ, of which you are baptized member. When we are prepared for Confirmation, the Church catechism teaches us that it is our bounden duty to worship God every Sunday in his Church, and to work, pray and give for the spread of God's kingdom. Making a pledge is making good on that bounden duty.

The *fact* of making a pledge is more important than the *amount* of the pledge. I will get to the amount, or more correctly, the proportion, of a pledge shortly. At this point, please try to see that making a pledge of your money to the Church is an outward and visible sign of the inward and spiritual grace of your faith. It is like receiving Holy Communion. Money represents a part of you, committed to the work of Christ and his Church; just as the Sacrament represents the Body of Christ, given for you.

At Saint Thomas Church we have a large number of people who come here as a part of the aggregation of our visitors, tourists and friends. By pledging, you move from the aggregation to the *congregation*, the fellowship of active participants within our parish family. It is like serving at the altar, or the soup kitchen, or on one of the committees that support the Vestry, or the Vestry itself. The pledge cards have been mailed out and they are available this month of October everywhere in the Church. Our friendly Canvass committee members are present to respond to any questions you may have. And today we are having a special reception in Andrew Hall where we will hear, among others, our recently retired

Bishop (who regularly attends the 9 o'clock Eucharist) speak briefly about stewardship. Join us, and make your pledge.

Last year, the Every Member Canvass for 2003 produced an encouraging increase in pledged giving. This came in response to shortfalls caused by the decline of our endowment from 2000 to 2002, and the faithful came through last fall in a way that was truly heartening. We need to build on that faithfulness this fall for 2004.

But I want to persuade you to increase your pledge, not just for budgetary reasons, but for spiritual reasons. Our Lord Jesus Christ talked about our stewardship of our money very often. You could summarize all his teaching in his one famous sentence, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Jesus knew that if you want to see a person's priorities, just take a look at the entries in his check book. That is why, when observing the people putting money into the Temple treasury, he commended the poor widow for putting in two copper coins, above the rich donors who put in large sums. Jesus was interested in the *proportion* that the donation represented more than the absolute amount. The "widow's mite" was a much larger proportion of what the widow had than the hundred shekels put in by the rich man was as a proportion of what he possessed. I want you to increase your pledge, yes, because the Church needs your support, but more importantly, because I want you to give more of yourself, more of a proportion of your means, in your pledge. Why? Because we reap what we sow. The increase in the measure you give will increase your capacity to receive the gifts and graces of God. More sacrificial pledging at Saint Thomas reflects growth and depth in the spirit and commitment of our congregation.

In the Prophet Malachi, God actually challenges his people to tithe (that is, give ten percent of their means to God). He says, Let your tithes come in, and then see if I do not pour down blessings upon you. This is the basic principle of generosity. It is in giving that we receive, and in loving that we are loved, and this applies to your support of your Church.

Now to conclude. Why pledge at all, why pledge sacrificially, why indeed tithe, to Saint Thomas Church and Choir School? Because it is costly to have such a mission in this place? Yes. Because we need the living through their pledges to be generous just as the departed are through our endowment? Yes. But most of all, because here, at Saint Thomas, is where you and I are fed by the Word of God and the Sacraments of the Gospel. Here is where we worship, love and serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is where we meet him in the graces of the Anglican tradition and our unique choral heritage. Here is where you and I receive God's grace, and therefore it is here where the "first-fruits" of our pledges, tithes, and offerings belong.

Have a little faith to make a pledge if you haven't yet done so. If you have made a pledge before, take courage and let your faith grow! Increase your pledge for 2004! Wouldn't it be wonderful if we were to take the Lord up on his ancient challenge, and let our own tithes and offerings flow in with biblical abundance! Think of the good surprises and gifts he is ready to pour down upon us! So let's get with it, and make our pledges, now.

In the Name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. Amen.