



Dear Clergy and Members of St. Matthew's Church,

What does it mean to pledge? In the Collect for Maundy Thursday in the *Book of Common Prayer*, we pray for the grace to receive the Body and Blood of Christ “in remembrance of Him, who in these holy mysteries giveth us a *pledge* of life eternal” (152). Again, in the “Exhortations” for Holy Communion, we are directed to remember how Christ “hath ordained holy mysteries, as *pledges* of his love” (86). A pledge is an assurance; it is an extension of a part as a sign that the rest is coming. A pledge does not divide, but represents something whole, a way we say ‘I give you this in token of my promise to offer all for the sake of love.’ In the Sacrament, we receive from Christ a guarantee that the life we experience in this communion is the life He will bestow fully upon us in the Resurrection.

God's pledge to us makes us what we are as Christians. That God has pledged His life to us is the only reason that we have a life to pledge. Our practice of pledging our money, our time, and our service together constitute our living in the imitation of Christ. As Solomon prayed at the consecration of the Temple: “all things come of Thee O Lord, and of Thine own have we given back to Thee” (1 Chron. 9:24). Our pledge should be glad and free and willing, a way we testify of the Lord to whom we belong. As St. Paul writes, concerning pledging, to the Corinthians: “the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, *they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ*” (II Cor. 9:7). To pledge and then deliver on that pledge is an essential part of what it means to be a partaker of Jesus' life and a participant in Christ's Body. It is as much a profession of the Faith as reciting the Creed. In the end, there is no such thing as a non-pledging Christian, just a Christian who pledges faithfully or unfaithfully.

Therefore, I am extending a call for us to be faithful Christians and to pledge ourselves. Pledging means to offer ourselves for the Church at specific times and in specific ways so that we might come into the ability to offer all and always. And that time is now. As we commence our pledge season, **I ask you to fast and pray over this question of your pledge. I ask you to fill out and submit a pledge, whether in person or online. And I ask that you**

make concretely known to the parish, to yourself, and to the Lord how you will pledge yourself financially to the parish this coming year, even if that amount is zero dollars. As Bishop said in his sermon, we are all at different places of maturity in this area. This invitation is an opportunity for self-examination and growth in faithfulness. Ultimately, God will provide for the ministry to which He calls us. He always keeps His promises. But it remains essential to our spiritual health as a parish that we take this moment to assess where we are each at in our relationship to money. May the Lord grant us wisdom and courage for this timely work.

Peace,



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