

Revered, then reviled by King Henry VIII

Written by By Sean Wells Contributing artist
Friday, 16 July 2021 05:14



THE STORY OF SAINT THOMAS MORE (SAN TOMAS) 1477 - 1535 A. D.

Feast Day June 22

Patron Saint of politicians, lawyers, adopted families, difficult marriages

Born into privilege, Thomas More had a life of comfort and prestige laid out before him. He was heavily influenced by his devout mother and became a lawyer, although he always felt a pull toward the pious life, living adjacent to a monastery and even becoming a Third Order Franciscan. He was even known to wear a hair shirt (a shirt woven loosely of coarse hair to be intentionally uncomfortable) and conduct other acts of penance. He was a dedicated husband to his first wife. They were portrayed as a happy couple.

He was a doting father to his biological children and step-child. He quickly climbed the ranks of the legal and political field, finding favor with the King, Henry VIII. In an act of great faith, Henry

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dubbed More, Lord Chancellor of the Realm, Second to the King. He demonstrated great loyalty to the King, superseded only by his loyalty to God.

This loyalty was tested when the King wanted to divorce his wife and marry his mistress, Anne Boleyn. He tried for years to convince More to allow him to break his Christian marriage vow, complicated by the fact that the Pope had already granted one exception for Henry to marry his brother's widow, his current wife. Despite much pressure, More did not budge, attempting to get out of the dilemma by both staying silent and retiring to the country, which the King reluctantly allowed. But, when More refused to attend Anne's coronation, Henry was so deeply insulted, he put More on trial, threatening him in an attempt to coerce him to sign a document stating that the King is the true voice of the church.

Despite a compelling and memorable defense by More, the kangaroo court (which included several of Boleyn's relatives), found him guilty and sentenced him to be hanged, drawn and quartered. In mercy, the King had him beheaded instead.

More demonstrated much restraint and was known as a moral and ethical man. He is celebrated as a scholar, barrister and judge. He authored the definitive book "Utopia" in which he describes an ideal world where the discrepancies between the rational world and the spiritual world inevitably must conflict, which would foreshadow his own fate. He described a perfect society in which "Anyone who campaigns for public office becomes disqualified for holding any office at all."

In his many writings, he never referred to the word "subject," but rather used words like "citizen," implying an interest in equality and unity. He wrote many works in his lifetime, some of the most important coming from his last years, and some of the most moving were written while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London. His story is told in the acclaimed movie and play "A Man for All Seasons." A darker take on this complicated man is expressed in the book and television series "Wolf Hall."

Whether you chose the saintly version portrayed in "A Man for All Seasons," or the earthly man of "Wolf Hall," there is little dispute that More was a man of principles and ideals.

In these times, in contemplating Saint Thomas More, we get to reflect on the formative ideas

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and ideals of our great philosophers.

Please enjoy coloring the image in honor of Saint Thomas More.

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