Saint of the Day for June 22nd
Saint Thomas More
(February 7, 1478 – July 6, 1535)

Image: Sir Thomas More |
Hans Holbein the Younger

Saint Thomas More's Story

His belief that no lay ruler has jurisdiction over the Church of Christ cost Thomas More his life. Beheaded on Tower Hill, London, on July 6, 1535, More steadfastly refused to approve King Henry VIII's divorce and remarriage and establishment of the Church of England.

Described as "a man for all seasons," More was a literary scholar, eminent lawyer, gentleman, father of four children, and chancellor of England. An intensely spiritual man, he would not support the king's divorce from Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn. Nor would he acknowledge Henry as supreme head of the Church in England, breaking with Rome, and denying the pope as head.

More was committed to the Tower of London to await trial for treason: not swearing to the Act of Succession and the Oath of Supremacy. Upon conviction, More declared he had all the councils of Christendom and not just the council of one realm to support him in the decision of his conscience.

Reflection

Four hundred years later in 1935, Thomas More was canonized a saint of God. Few saints are more relevant to our time. In the year 2000, in fact, Pope John Paul II named him patron of political leaders. The supreme diplomat and counselor, he did not compromise his own moral values in order to please the king, knowing that true allegiance to authority is not blind acceptance of everything that authority wants. King Henry himself realized this and tried desperately to win his chancellor to his side because he knew More was a man whose approval counted, a man whose personal integrity no one questioned. But when Thomas More resigned as chancellor, unable to approve the two matters that meant most to Henry, the king had to get rid of him.

Saint Thomas More is a Patron Saint of:

Attorneys
Civil Servants
Court Clerks
Lawyers
Politicians
Public Servants