



St. Thomas More (O.F.S.) [1480 – July 6, 1535] Feast Day: June 22

St. Thomas belongs to that class of **Tertiaries** who have **grasped the true spirit of their Seraphic Father**. It is a spirit of deep-seated piety and of contempt for the world, as well as of unswerving fidelity to Holy Church practiced in an exceptional degree and sealed with one's blood.

His father was a knight. Thomas was born in London in 1480. Having been a very devout youth, he became a lawyer. His services were constantly in demand, but nevertheless he always found time to attend holy Mass daily and to perform other pious practices.

As the father of a family, he was concerned that his children should be reared in the fear of God. He became famous for his book entitled *Utopia*. By means of his "Kingdom of Nowhere" he scourged in fine satire the evils that were eating their way into the Church and the State.

Through Henry VIII he became attached to the royal court and was finally appointed Lord High Chancellor. The time had now arrived in which the **Tertiary** was to manifest how sincerely he had grasped the **spirit of the Saint of Assisi**. As was to be expected, even as a statesman Thomas More continued to make his accustomed religious practices. He set aside every Friday as a day of introspection. His charity was without limit.

He experienced special delight in serving the priest at holy Mass, and he received Holy Communion daily. He was once told, by way of reproach, that it was unbecoming for a layman with so much work to do and so many distractions to communicate daily. But he replied: "You are advancing the very reasons for the need of frequent Holy Communion. If I am distracted, Holy Communion helps me to become recollected. If opportunities are offered me each day to offend my God, I arm myself anew each day for the combat by the reception of the Eucharist. If I am in special need of light and prudence in order to discharge my burdensome duties, I draw nigh to my Savior and seek counsel and light from Him."

But it was not long before his doom was sealed. Blinded by unholy passions, King Henry divorced his lawful wife and married Anne Boleyn, a lady in waiting at the court. When Rome justly condemned this adulterous act, the king severed his connections with Rome and set himself up as the head of the Church in England. Whoever disapproved of his conduct was doomed to die.

The first person who opposed the king was his loyal chancellor, Thomas More. He was cast into prison. There he wrote a pamphlet entitled *Death Endured for the Faith Need Cause No Fear*. When his wife endeavored to persuade him to give up his opposition and prolong his life, he asked her just how long she believed he would still live. She answered, "At least twenty years." "Indeed!" said Thomas More. "Had you said a few thousand years, that might make a difference. But surely even he would be a poor merchant who would run the risk of losing an eternity for the sake of a thousand years." He was beheaded on July 6, 1535.

Pope Leo XIII beatified this great **Tertiary**, and Pope Pius XI canonized him on May 19, 1935.

[Quoted from, The Franciscan Book of Saints, ed. by Marion Habig, O.F.M. 1959 & 1979, pp. 453 & 454. Bold was added to emphasize the Third Order (Secular Franciscan Order) connection.]

Questions to consider:

1. Why was daily Mass so essential to St. Thomas More? What does Mass mean to you?
2. What does it mean to be a martyr for the Catholic faith?
3. How are people called today to be martyrs for the Catholic Church?

[Compiled by Deacon Dave & Thérèse Ream, O.F.S., Revised July 2017]