

Saint John Fisher and Saint Thomas More Monday 22 June



About Saint John Fisher and Saint Thomas More

Saint John Fisher was born in Yorkshire in 1469 and died on 22 June 1535. He held many important positions including tutor to the Henry VIII as a young man, Chancellor of Cambridge University and Bishop of Rochester.

Saint Thomas More was born in London in 1478 and died there on 6 July 1535 – just two weeks after his friend John Fisher. Thomas More was a devoted husband and father, and like his friend John Fisher, he too held many important positions in society including a Parliament lawyer, Speaker of the House of Commons, and Chancellor of England.

Both these men were friends and consultants to Henry VIII. Henry had both these men imprisoned and beheaded for treason because they did not support Henry's supremacy over the Church. John Fisher was executed only a month after being made a Cardinal by the Pope. He was so ill and weak that he had to be carried in a chair to his place of execution. He was the only Bishop who spoke out against Henry's actions. He did not hold the actions of his fellow bishops against them.

Thomas More too went to his grave with a clear conscience and told the spectators he was still "the king's good servant – but God's first." He wrote many books and used the time of his imprisonment to continue writing.

What can we learn from Saint John Fisher and Saint Thomas More's lives?

Jesus said in the Gospel, 'all you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one (Matthew 5:37). These two men said what they meant and meant what they said, and they did not change their tune to suit popular opinion nor to gain popularity. They stuck to their guns. We live in a day and age where there is too much fence sitting and people are trying to rally support here and there. Perhaps a more constructive approach would be to stand by our Christian convictions and address issues through this lens.

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Both these men held important positions both in Church and society, but they did not abuse the privileges afforded to them in these positions. Instead, they used them to serve the Lord and His people.

We all experience trial and tribulation in our life. These two men kept working for God and His people even during their imprisonment. Saint Thomas More wrote a Prayer for our enemies on His death bed. These are the last two sentences from it, and perhaps could be our prayer today:

Lord, give me patience in tribulation and grace in everything, to conform my will to thine, that I may truly say: *"Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in cælo et in terra"*.

The things, good Lord, that I pray for, give me thy grace to labour for. Amen.

"Fiat voluntas tua, sicut in cælo et in terra"- means "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The film "A Man for all Seasons" tells the story of Sir Thomas More and how he stood up to Henry VIII. Henry VIII is remembered for all the wrong reasons, whilst Saints John Fisher and Saints Thomas More are remembered for their true witness to Christ and His teachings.

Collect

O God, who in martyrdom
have brought true faith to its highest expression,
graciously grant
that, strengthened through the intercession
of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More,
we may confirm by the witness of our life
the faith we profess with our lips.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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Gospel Matthew 10:34-39

Jesus instructed the Twelve as follows:

'Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth:

it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,

a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

A man's enemies will be those of his own household.

'Anyone who prefers father or mother to me is not worthy of me.

Anyone who prefers son or daughter to me is not worthy of me.

Anyone who does not take his cross and follow in my footsteps is not worthy of me.

Anyone who finds his life will lose it; anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it.'

Antiphon

Holy men shed their glorious blood for the Lord; they loved Christ in their life, they imitated him in their death, and therefore were crowned in triumph.

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Hymn for Memorial of Saints John Fisher and Thomas More (Martyrs)

Thomas More and John Fisher
were faithful to the end.
They chose to follow conscience,
the Holy Church defend.
They served God and their monarch,
Henry, the English King,
but they always put God first
in each and everything.

We give You thanks for these men,
who served you faithfully,
a cardinal and layman
who chose their destiny.
They chose to follow conscience
and to Christ to be true.
May their example guide us
in all we say and do.

1. These two English men were faithful to God
until the end of life.
The choice they made although was right
found them in earthly strife.
They served God and man, but God came first
for Him they always thirst,
because they knew that in the end,
only God was their true friend.

2. We give you thanks for these two men,
O Lord, who loved Your Word –
Saints John Fisher and Thomas More
and made sure it was heard.
They died with heart and conscience clear
and prayed Your will be done,
both here on earth and heav'n above
praising You and Christ Your Son.

86.86D (Common Metre Double)
Possible Tune: Resignation

Chris deSilva and Alessio Loiacono, June 2020.

Music Links to the Scripture Readings

[Lord, You Have Come to the Seashore](#)

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