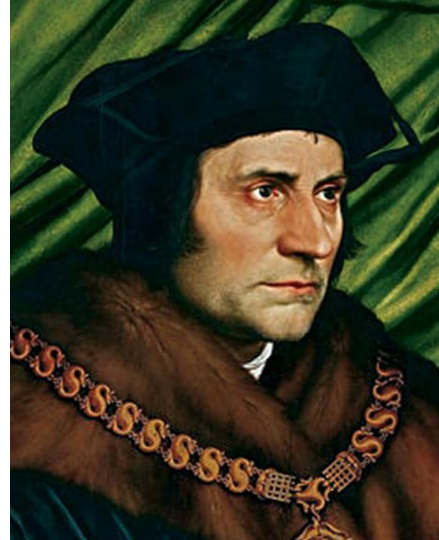


I thought we would talk today about what happened on 19 May 1935 - on that day, POPE PIUS (pronounced 'Pie - oos') XI made THOMAS MORE a saint. So who was Thomas More? Well, remember when I told you about QUEEN ELIZABETH THE FIRST - and that she was the daughter of KING HENRY VIII and ANNE BOLEYN? And that King Henry VIII divorced his first wife, CATHERINE OF ARAGON, because she had only given birth to a daughter, and not a son to inherit King Henry VIII's throne? Well, Thomas More refused to go along with King Henry VIII when it came to divorcing Catherine of Aragon and marrying Anne Boleyn, and ultimately paid for that with his life.



King Henry VIII and Thomas More were originally really good friends. Thomas More, like everyone else in England at that time (and like me) was a ROMAN CATHOLIC, which means that he thought that the POPE in ROME was the head of the Christian Church, because Jesus Himself had made his apostle Peter the first Pope, and told him he would be the head of the Christian Church after Jesus went to Heaven. Thomas More had the reputation of being a really good, holy and clever man, and King Henry VIII made Thomas More the LORD CHANCELLOR in 1529, when Thomas More was 51 years old. This meant that if anyone wanted to complain to the King about something the King's representatives had done (or not done), Thomas More would hear the complaint and decide what to do about it. Thomas More quickly got a reputation for being a really good Lord Chancellor, and the King was very pleased with his appointment. But two things would spoil this very happy situation.

The first was that in 1517, a German priest called MARTIN LUTHER had started saying that the Pope and the Catholic Church were behaving very badly and needed to REFORM. When the Pope and the Catholic Church ignored him, Martin Luther said, 'Right, that's it - me and my followers are off' and he set up his own Christian church, the PROTESTANT church. Members of this church refused to say that the Pope was the head of the Christian church - instead they PROTESTED against the Pope, and said that no one was the head of the Church: that everyone should decide for themselves what being a Christian involved, based on their own reading of the Bible. As a good Catholic, Thomas More refused to go along with this, and wrote lots of books and pamphlets saying that the PROTESTANTS should be stamped out. And at first King Henry VIII fully supported him, and the Pope was so grateful for King Henry VIII's support that he gave him the title 'DEFENDER OF THE FAITH'.



But things changed round about 1525, when King Henry VIII started to get unhappy that his then wife, Catherine of Aragon, hadn't given him a son to succeed him as King. Henry started to look for chances to get rid of Catherine and marry someone else. He started to say that his marriage to Catherine was invalid - null and void - because Catherine had originally been married to Henry VIII's older brother, Arthur, in 1501. Arthur had died the following year, and Henry had married Catherine in 1509. But Henry started to argue that he wasn't allowed to marry Catherine because the Bible said that men should not marry their brother's wives.

Henry asked POPE CLEMENT V to NULLIFY his marriage, and he might have expected the Pope would do him a favour after Henry had been so nice to him over the Protestant rebellion against the Catholic Church - but instead the Pope said, 'Sorry, no can do'. No ANNULMENT would be granted.

Henry was furious, but he wasn't finished yet. Instead, he said, 'Well, I'm HEAD OF THE CHURCH **IN** ENGLAND, and the Pope himself said I'm the DEFENDER OF THE FAITH' - so I think everyone should say that I am the supreme head of the Church in England, and what I say goes on religious matters in England - including whether or not my marriage is valid. But Thomas More refused to go along with this and said, 'No - the Pope is the supreme head of the Christian church.' Eventually, it became difficult for him to carry on as King Henry VIII's Chancellor while he disagreed with Henry on such an important issue, and he resigned his position as Chancellor in 1532.

At first, Henry was happy to let Thomas More go, and remembering their friendship, didn't make an issue of Thomas More's refusing to recognise that Henry was the head of the Church in England. But gradually, Thomas More's refusal niggled away at him, and he started pursuing Thomas More, saying 'Recognise my divorce from Catherine was valid! Recognise Anne Boleyn is your Queen! Recognise that my daughter Elizabeth by Anne Boleyn is next in line to the throne!' Thomas More refused to have anything to do with this, and in the end King Henry VIII had him arrested for treason in 1534, and Thomas More was tried and found guilty in 1535. He was executed on 6 July 1535. Before he was executed, he declared 'I die as the King's good servant, and God's first' - so God came first, and then the King.

Thomas More was made a saint 400 years later because Thomas More stood up for God first, before anything the King wanted him to do, even if it meant losing his life. An odd coincidence is that the 19 May was not only the day that Thomas More was made a saint, but also the day - on 19 May 1536, less than a year after Thomas More was executed - that Anne Boleyn was executed, also for treason. Maybe that was God's little joke - that Thomas More was made a saint on the same day that King Henry VIII got rid of the wife that he had killed Thomas More less than a year earlier for refusing to recognise.

Here's a very famous clip from a film about Thomas More, *A Man for All Seasons* – everyone should know this bit of the film (especially when people are being locked up in the name of 'public safety'): <https://youtu.be/WMqReTJkjjg?t=134>