



Thomas Becket – Our Patron Saint

Thomas Becket was born in London, England. After his parents died, he worked in an office. He loved hunting and other sports. When Thomas was about twenty-four, he went to work in the house of the Archbishop of Canterbury and then began to study to become a priest.

Soon he became a great favourite of King Henry II himself. People said that the King and Thomas were such close friends that they had only one heart and one mind.

When Thomas was thirty-six, King Henry made him his chancellor. As Chancellor of England, Thomas had a large house and lived very comfortably! But he was also very kind to the poor and Thomas would pray all the time.

When the Archbishop of Canterbury died, the King wanted Thomas to be the replacement. But Thomas said that he did not want to be the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thomas knew that, as Archbishop, he would have to defend the Church from the King and that would mean trouble. "Your affection for me would turn into hatred," he warned Henry.

The King paid no attention and Thomas was made a priest and a bishop in 1162. At first, things were fine. But soon, the King began to demand money from the Church, which Thomas felt was not right.

The King grew more and more angry with his friend. Finally, he began to treat Thomas very unkindly. For a while, Thomas was tempted to give in to Henry. Then he began to realise just how much Henry hoped to control the Church.

The King tried to pass a law which allowed priests to be punished without trial and Thomas signed it. He really regretted signing it and rejected the law. Thomas had to flee to France because he was scared of the King's reaction. Thomas stayed in France for 7 years but eventually wanted to face the King so came home.

The King was very angry when Thomas returned. "Will no one rid me of this Archbishop?" Some of his knights took him seriously and went off to murder the Archbishop.

They attacked him in his own cathedral. Thomas died, saying, "For the name of Jesus and in defence of the Church, I am willing to die." It was December 29, 1170.

The entire Christian world was horrified at such a crime. Pope Alexander III held the King personally responsible for the murder.

Soon miracles began to happen at Thomas' tomb and he was proclaimed a saint by the pope in 1173.