

SAINTS ALIVE!
JUNE 22: ST. THOMAS MORE
Patron Saint of Politicians

Thomas More was a lawyer, a statesman, and Lord Chancellor to King Henry VIII.

Henry was married to Catherine of Aragon. They had a daughter. Parliament later passed the Act of Succession, declaring that this daughter was not a valid successor to the throne.

Henry sought annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, which the Pope would not grant. Therefore, Henry separated from the Catholic Church, established the Church of England, and declared himself Supreme Head of the Church of England.

More accepted Parliament's right to declare Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn, the legitimate Queen of England. But More opposed the King's separation from the Catholic Church, refused to take the Oath of Supremacy declaring Henry as Supreme Head of the Church of England, and refused to acknowledge the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.

After refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, he was convicted of treason and beheaded in 1535.

Thomas More is the patron saint of politicians.

The Catholic Church must expand beyond its doors; we are of this world. We Catholics are expected to be political. The opportunity is a right of citizenship of this world. Catholic leaders must be nonpartisan but never apolitical. Addressing the issues that affect our moral visions, in light of Catholic teaching, is our cherished responsibility.

Catholics address issues by emphasizing our principles. The principles are nonnegotiable: When we live in an empire we end up adopting its values. We need to reclaim our values.

Though the principles are nonnegotiable, the details are sticky; they are open to discussion and compromise.

While the principles are nonnegotiable, not all issues are morally equivalent. We can't get everything we want; nor should we try.

Thomas More understood this: conceding the State's right to declare its leadership, while refusing to accept the State's right to declare its supremacy over the Church. This is statesmanship.

St. Thomas More, we ask that you grant the gift of wisdom and statesmanship to all politicians and people engaged in politics.



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