

SAINT THOMAS MORE SHRINE

On January 1, 2008, Archbishop Harry Flynn officially named our newly merged parish Saint Thomas More. Since that time we have worked together to form ourselves anew as the Catholic Community of Saint Thomas More with Christ securely at our center. And even as we have been laboring to become this new faith community, artists and artisans have been working to create our Shrine to Saint Thomas More. Its anchor feature – a statue of our patron – was designed and created by sculptor Leo C. Irrera of Washington, D.C. Cast in ground Carrara marble, it captures the seminal moment leading to our patron’s martyrdom - his choice of Christ and the Church (with fingers pointing to the cross on his breast) over the Collar of Esses with the Tudor Rose Badge of Henry VIII (lying discarded at his feet).

The banks of vigil lights on either side of his statue were designed and crafted by Twin Cities artisan, Chris Rand (now of New York). They evoke the waters of the River Thames that flowed past Thomas More’s estate and ferried him to countless meetings for the Affairs of State.



The work of local artist and parishioner Mary Klein crowns our Shrine with an exquisite portrait of Thomas More’s family in the lunette above the Shrine’s stained glass and statue. Years in the making, Mary’s painstaking artistry captures the honest humanity of our patron in his love for his family. In the coming months we will explore the rich details of this portrait – an exercise in coming to know our patron through the individuals portrayed as we learn fascinating bits of information about this piece as an example of sacred art in the Church.

Parishioner Dan Kelly labored to add the rich warmth of beautifully carved wood to the Shrine, using his skill to fashion wainscoting from the church’s original communion rail. He also crafted the stand which holds the Statue of Saint Thomas More, the wooden pillar that holds the Shrine’s Vigil Light, and the Baptismal Font at the center of our worship space (also made from the original communion rail).



Memorable words from our Prayer of Saint Thomas More have been carved into the stone of our monumental church by local sculptor, Peter Morales, “Give us the grace to work for the things we pray for.”

(See Saint Thomas More the Man on the reverse side.)

SAINT THOMAS MORE THE MAN



Many of us are familiar with the story of Saint Thomas More through the 1966 British biographical film, “A Man for All Seasons” – based on Robert Bolt’s 1960 theatrical production by the same name. A leading figure of his time, Thomas More enjoyed great personal, financial and political success; yet he was willing to sacrifice everything, even his life, for his faith and conscience: “I call you to witness, brothers, that I die in and for the faith of the Catholic Church.” Martyred on July 6, 1535, for refusing to support King Henry VIII’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon and recognize him as the supreme head of the Church in England, Sir Thomas More was canonized as a saint by Pope Pius XI in 1935.

He has been described as a man fully engaged in the world, but not captive to that world. His pedigree of accomplishments in the worlds of business, education, scholarship, law and state governance is impressive. The fact that he did not let his worldly success compromise his spiritual integrity is even more impressive. Factor in his humanity as a husband and father juggling the demands of career, family and faith in a complex world of conflicting values, and you have a remarkably appropriate role model for today’s Faithful. As we celebrate the blessing of our community’s Shrine to Saint Thomas More, let us focus briefly on the virtues that marked his character and

to which we aspire; and on his experience of family that clearly marked him as one of us in the joys and challenges of his humanity.

Gifted with many spiritual and human virtues, Sir Thomas More was a man of Prudence and Courage; Diligence and Persistence; Industry and Pursuit of Excellence; Discretion, Justice, Mercy and Compassion; Humility and Wisdom; Faithfulness and Chastity; Christian Fortitude, Patience and Joy; Perseverance and Trust; and Faith, Hope and Steadfast Love. The presence of these virtues is borne out in the story of his life; and we pray that these virtues may shape our own life stories for the greater glory of God .

Part of a large extended family, Sir Thomas More was a family man. Quoting from the Center of Thomas More Studies, “By 1510, More was blessed with four children and a wife, Jane Colt, whom he dearly loved, even if the first years of marriage had bought unforeseen misunderstandings. Like any young lawyer, he worked hard to develop his law practice, and in 1511, he was asked to give the prestigious Autumn lectures at Lincoln’s Inn. In that same year, just when life seemed happiest, Jane died. Deeply grieved, More had the additional difficulties of taking care of four children under the age of six. His solution went against the expectations of many, but within one month, More married Alice Middleton. Although she was older than he by seven years and shared few of his interests, More knew her to be a good and loving woman, as she proved to be.

“Even with the experienced and efficient help of Alice, More found balancing the demands of family and profession to be quite difficult. More’s sense of duty towards his family was so great that he was willing to give up his political positions rather than see his children neglected. He found many ways to show that he was indeed a ‘tender, loving father.’ And in devising the curriculum for his children, he was explicit about what was most important, ‘Put virtue in the first place..., learning in the second; and in their studies esteem most whatever may teach them piety towards God, charity to all, and modesty and Christian humility in themselves,’ because ‘the whole fruit [of education] should consist in the testimony of God and a good conscience.’”

Learn more about More by visiting the website www.thomasmorestudies.org.