

- 1 Beside the head of the Queen on British coins appear the letters “F.D.”. They are an abbreviation in Latin for the words “Defender of the Faith.” This was a title given by the Pope to King Henry VIII, (the eighth) recalling how, in his first years as king, Henry had written a book about the Sacraments, “defending” what Catholics believe. Some years later he would be executing Catholics.

- 2 February 7th was the birthday in 1478 of Sir Thomas More, who became a man of great learning, a lawyer, and the father of four children. King Henry VIII valued his friendship, appointing him Lord Chancellor - the main government minister of the time. The king knew that Thomas More was above corruption; he was a person of integrity and honesty at a time when money bought what was thought of as ‘justice’.

- 3 The king wanted to divorce his queen (Catherine of Aragon) and marry Ann Boleyn instead. When the Pope proclaimed that that was wrong, the English parliament passed an Act declaring the king to be “Supreme Head of the Church in England”, and Henry decided he could do as he wished in many things. This action also led to the destruction (“Dissolution”) of many monasteries and cathedrals in England as the king confiscated and sold their lands and possessions.

- 4 Thomas More knew that he could not agree with what the king was doing and, even though many bishops supported the actions of the king, Thomas remarked that *“their consciences must speak for them; mine must speak for me.”* Thomas still considered himself loyal to the king and, when he was condemned to death, he said:
*“I die the King’s good servant,
 but God’s first.”*

5 *Let us pray:*

**God our Father,
 teach us to distinguish clearly
 between right and wrong,
 that we may grow in character
 and develop a true sense of values
 through following Jesus,
 your Son and our Brother.**

**We pray, too, for all
 who are in positions of leadership
 in our country
 that they may be inspired
 by the values of the gospel.**

**We pray that they may live
 as people of integrity and honesty,
 growing in a sense
 of duty and responsibility,
 always being aware of the needy,
 and ready to be of service to others.**

Amen.

6 “I die the King’s good servant,
 but God’s first.”

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org