

Born in London in 1478, Saint Thomas More went to London's finest schools, including two years at Oxford and studied Law before being called to the Bar in 1502. He thought about becoming a monk, but instead was elected to Parliament and shortly after that, was married.

He was ahead of his time in many ways – insisting that his daughters receive the same education as his sons, despite the custom of the day.

In addition to serving in Parliament, he was undersheriff of London, Master of Requests, and Privy Councillor. In 1521, he was knighted, and was made under-treasurer of the Exchequer; receiving many more honors and offices until finally being named Lord Chancellor by the King in 1529.

St. Thomas More defended the Faith against the novelties of his day. And wrote prolifically on political and religious topics.

One such work is titled *Of a republic's best state and of the new island Utopia*, or more commonly known as *Utopia*.

In it he describes a perfect country where everything is rosy. There are no laws, no private property, no locks on doors. Women and men are both equal. Everyone must work. Privacy is not allowed, so that everything everyone does is out in the open for all to see. Homes are rotated between residents every 10 years. There is slavery. But in Utopia, slaves wear chains made out of gold.

The work is most likely meant as satire. The narrator's guide is named *Hythlodæus*, which means 'dispenser of nonsense.' And while the narrator's name is *Morus*, it is a play on words ... being based on More's own name, but meaning 'fool' in Latin. The surrounding kingdoms names translate as 'no land,' 'much nonsense,' and 'no water.' Even the word *Utopia*, which became part of the English language, literally means, 'no place.'

He wrote the book in Latin, and it wasn't until 1551 – sixteen years after More lost his head as a martyr to King Henry VIII (the eighth) – that *Utopia* was finally translated into English.

While More's work spurred many attempts at utopian communities, and many of his ideas have been promoted within progressive circles over the past several hundred years; it is difficult to determine if More wrote this as serious commentary or as a joke, a parody, or a satire on 'perfection.'

Today is the Second Sunday of Ordinary Time, and in the Gospel two disciples of John the Baptist approach Jesus, and He asks them, "*What are you looking for?*" and then encourages them to "*Come and see.*"

They spend the day with Jesus, and become convinced in that short time that they "*have found the Messiah.*"

In St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, he admonishes the community in Corinth to avoid sin. Here already we see, in the first century, the earliest Christian communities were struggling with human nature, and the effects of sin within the early Church community.

There is a bumper sticker that reads: *Christians aren't perfect, just forgiven.* And indeed, oftentimes people get absorbed in trying to find the perfect church or the perfect community. Some may hold off on joining a church until they work out all their problems and become more perfect.

Yet, there is no perfect place. *Utopia*, is literally 'no place,' and is to be found 'no where' ... no one person is perfect, present company included, with the exception of Our Savior, Jesus Christ. We are called by God and forgiven by God ... washed in the waters of Baptism and bathed in the saving Blood of Jesus Christ poured out on the Cross. The harder we try to achieve perfection on our own terms, the further we get from God's call for us to be transformed in His grace, His mercy, and His love.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ ... let us pray for the grace to realize that where we are right now is the place that God has put us to hear Him speaking to us ... and who we are right now ... not some idealized future self ... is exactly the person God is speaking to ... calling out "*Follow me.*"

Let us listen for the voice of God, and when we hear Him call us, let us abandon our own desires and our own plans and respond: "*Speak, [Lord] your servant is listening.*"