

Today is the Memorial of St. John Fisher and St. Thomas More. Both of these men lived during the early stages of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century. Both of these men were executed for not acknowledging King Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church of England.

In the First reading, we hear about Abraham, who on Faith, packed up all his belongings and moved with his entire family and household from Ur of the Chaldeans – what is present-day Iraq; and began traveling to Canaan and Egypt. And this, in his mid-seventies. Yet Abraham's Faith translated into action.

St. John Fisher, as bishop of Rochester, confronted the claims of the Protestant Reformers with simple Scriptural references. To Luther's assertion that Faith alone was sufficient, St. John replied in a sermon using St. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 13, where speaking of the value of Divine Love, ends with: "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

In today's Gospel, we hear Jesus speak on judgment and judging.

When St. John Fisher was presented with situations of public heresy, in the cases of people who were outspoken on behalf of the claims of Luther; St. John Fisher treated them with great mercy. While the other bishops of England were finding common people guilty of heresy and even burning some at the stake; St. John Fisher was handing out absolution, and exhorting them to persevere in the Faith of their ancestors. For as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the merciful, for they will know mercy."

And so, in following the example of St. John Fisher, we have our own exhortations for today – Faith outside of Love is, to quote St. Paul "nothing;" and that mercy triumphs over justice.

In the end, St. John Fisher, despite his age and sickness, was beheaded and drawn and quartered by the English authorities.

Yet, despite whatever consequences, we are called to Divine Love in action; and in the same Divine Love, are called to be merciful and forgiving.

In our own day and age, people are punished for similar crimes – such as not acknowledging the Communist Party as the Supreme Authority over the Catholic Church in China.

So let us pray that our brothers and sisters in persecuted areas may be strengthened in their Faith; and that our own Faith may be lived out in Love, and our own lives may be examples of mercy and forgiveness.