

## **Man for All Seasons continued....**

The arch-villain in the film is the king's chief minister, Thomas Cromwell (played by Leo McKern), who assumes the lead in trying to pressure More into taking the oath and, when that fails, presiding over his trial for high treason. More attempts to defend himself by arguing that, although he had refused to take the oath, he had remained silent on his reasons for not doing so and, according to the legal principle of "qui tacet consentire videtur" (he who is silent is seen to consent), the charge of high treason cannot be proven. At that point, Cromwell produces as a witness Richard Rich (John Hurt) who has been bribed to testify that he had heard More deny the king's title. On the strength of his testimony, More is found guilty and sentenced to death. With dignity, courage, and touching naiveté, More had trusted in the letter of the law to protect him, but he discovered that the law was no match for a spiteful monarch and his willing accomplices.

More was beheaded on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1535. Ironically, he has become a figure revered by both the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. He was canonized by Pope Pius XI in 1935. Forty-five years later, More's name was added to the Church of England's Calendar of Saints and Heroes of the Christian Church as a Martyr of the Reformation to be commemorated every July 6<sup>th</sup>.

In 2000, Pope John Paul II proclaimed More "the heavenly patron of statesmen and politicians." A man who declared on the scaffold before his execution that "I die the King's good servant, but God's first" would seem an appropriate choice.

-Jim Weingartner