

Reflection St Thomas Becket Christmas Octave 2020

St Thomas Becket (1118 - 1170) was born in London and became a close friend of King Henry II. He was only a deacon when he was appointed chancellor of England. On being ordained as archbishop of Canterbury, he underwent an abrupt conversion of life and began to defend the Church's rights against the king. He had to take refuge in a French monastery for six years, and when he returned to his diocese four knights, inspired by careless words from the king, assassinated him in his cathedral on 29th December 1170. He was immediately acknowledged as a martyr. The king later did penance and endowed his shrine. Thomas is remembered for his courage in defence of the rights of the Church.

St Thomas was inspired by the words of St Paul we heard in the first reading today. In defending the rights of the Church, Thomas was defending the rights of God. Our founder, Fr Emmanuel d'Alzon, was also a fierce defender of the Church and the rights of God. In the Assumptionist Rule of Life we say: *"The spirit of our founder impels us to embrace the great causes of God and of man, to go wherever God is threatened in man and man threatened as image of God. We must display daring, initiative and disinterestedness, in fidelity to the teaching and the orientations of the Church. This is our way of sharing in her life and mission."* (Ch1:4) Putting God first, as Jesus stresses in the Gospel, means recognising that all our gifts, our talents and abilities and life itself are gifts to us from God. These gifts can only find fulfilment by being used in the service of God. This means using them to show love for neighbour and love for God. Like so many of the paradoxes of the faith the more selfless we are with our gifts and talents the greater the benefits we receive from them. Our Rule of Life adds: *Faithful to the will of Fr. d'Alzon, (and therefore to God and to the Church) Assumptionists are at the service of truth, of unity and charity. In this way they herald the Kingdom.*

A King's servant, going to the castle comes across a man lying by the side of the road. He asked if he was OK.

Man: "Oh, hi, I'm **Will**. Nice to meet you! Would you like to buy me?"

Servant "What, you mean like a servant?"

Will: "No, just to have me around"

The servant was lonely, he hated working for the king and wanted to have a friend. But he had no money.

Servant "Sorry, but I'm very poor."

Will: "You know what, you can have me for **free**"

The servant thanks him and tells him to follow him to the castle, where his King resides. On entering, the King bellows at the servant to give him a foot rub.

Servant: "No! I won't!"

Will gasps at the servant's reply.

"I'm ordering you to do it!" yelled the king.

Servant: "I don't have to do anything you tell me now, because I have a **FREE WILL!**"