June 22: St John Fisher (Mt 10:34-39)

**SACRIFICE AND SERVICE**

Saint John Fisher (1459- 1535) was an English Catholic scholastic, a bishop made a cardinal very late, and a martyr. He shares his feast day with Saint Thomas More on 22 June.

Fisher was executed by order of King Henry VIII during the English Reformation for refusing to accept the king as Supreme Head of the Church of England and for upholding the Roman Catholic Church's doctrine of papal primacy.

When the question of Henry's divorce from Queen Catherine of Aragon arose, Fisher became the Queen's chief supporter and most trusted counsellor. Fisher was betrayed into saying that he was convinced "that the King was not, nor could be, by the Law of God, Supreme Head on earth of the Church of England. He was charged with treason and was beheaded.

Fisher's last moments were thoroughly in keeping with his previous life. He met death with a calm dignified courage which profoundly impressed those present.

After the bold statement of Peter, “You are the Christ” (Mk 8:30), Jesus begins at once to explain how he will carry out his role of Messiah. It will be through personal sacrifice at the service of others, as willed by God and foretold by the Scriptures.

But what a difference there is still between the mentality of Jesus and that of his apostles! Peter protests in the name of the others and earns for himself the rebuke of being Satan or the Tempter, because, like Satan in the desert, he has suggested to Jesus a way opposed to the one willed by God the Father.

Jesus invites Peter to follow him in *his* way. Then, with various phrases addressed to the crowd and to all his disciples, Jesus impresses on everyone the duty to follow him in the same saving way of personal sacrifice at the service of others. He also assures them that some of those present will see the messianic kingdom sprout forth like a seedling in their own lifetime.

Jesus was fully aware of the necessity to succeed in his mission, and that there was no other way for this than to hand over his life completely to the Father, who was able to raise him up again.

The Father does not will the death of his Son. He wants only that the Son bring love to the world. But this mission cannot be carried out without a severe test and without Jesus remaining faithful to his human condition.

Love cannot come on earth without passing through suffering. The lot of the Master involves also that of the disciples. We too will have to “take up the cross” and “follow him” and “lose our own life” in order to save it.

Salvation will not come from our self-satisfying or self-promoting successes but from the *sacrifice* of our self, offered out of love and accepted and recognized by the Father, who knows how to give our life back to us. And when Jesus Christ comes “in glory”, he will answer for us before the Father.