



## **The Feast of Sts John Fisher & Thomas More (22nd June) 2026**

**Homily by Fr Robbie Low**

***2 Maccabees 6:18-31***

We live in an age where we may reasonably claim an interest in the process and upshot of government. When Churchill quoted, in a speech in 1947, that 'democracy is the worst form of government.....except for all the others' he was speaking from bitter experience. Having led the country through a war for the survival of Europe, against titanic odds, the country had duly thanked him by giving his job to Mr Atlee in a crushing landslide.

He was both shocked and wounded by this seeming ingratitude but nonetheless bounced back with this and other memorable quotes on the nature of government and the tides of history. He was, having fought a war against brutal dictatorship, never going to advocate this as a preferable alternative.

Today we are witnessing, in all probability, another act of rank ingratitude, this time within the ranks of the Labour Party. It matters not, to me, who is the leader of the Labour Party or, for that matter of any party. I have never belonged to any of them nor do intend to do so. But it does matter to me and to you, who is our Prime Minister. And we have seen enough, recently, of the internal convulsions of both main parties in power unseating the leaders who led them to electoral victory. This

may well be an acknowledgement of political reality but the political reality, in a democracy, is that there is a fundamental objection to this process except in the case of the debilitating illness or death of an incumbent. The appointment of a new leader and, one must expect, the presentation of a new manifesto – the contents of which seems to be covert and hidden under the all-embracing mantra of ‘CHANGE’ – present the significant problem that neither have the democratic mandate without the confirmation of a victory at a General Election.

Why does this matter on a day when we celebrate the martyrdom of both John Fisher and Thomas More – two of our saintly heroes on the reredos of this altar. Well, a couple of things. They lived, we know well, in an age when democracy did not rule. They were, uncomplainingly, subject to the accepted system of scarcely bridled monarchical power. That power walked, more or less comfortably, beside the acknowledged power of the Faith, personified and encoded in the place of the Catholic Church in society and the culture and governance of the realm.

The break, when it came, was seismic and, to this day, unrepaired. The Reformation disorder, chaos and destruction with its blizzard of self-serving lies and propaganda and the greatest institutional theft in our history -the monasteries – have divorced our nation from the Catholic Faith for some five centuries.

Neither More nor Fisher, for all their personal affection for the conflicted king could go along with, what they rightly saw to be, that inevitable process. The King was , by the grace of God alone, monarch. Thus he had been anointed. Once he divorced himself from that accepted contract, it was a relatively short road from the scaffold of the martyrs to the execution of an English monarch who tried to revive the concept so rashly ditched by his desperate and foolish and brutal predecessor.

What is most remarkable in all this is, perhaps, not More but Fisher. Fisher stands out as the only English bishop to side with the Church. The rest capitulated very swiftly to monarchical tyranny, to the fatal breach of the constitutional contract and the creation of the chimera of a state church whose primary task was and remains to bless the culture and the establishment. It is precisely the deal that was offered to and honourably rejected by old Eleazar in today’s reading. (‘You don’t have to believe in what you are doing to survive - just pretend.’)

As we recall the episcopal flight from the Church and Fisher's solitary courage, we may remember the words of one of the more recent victims of Prime Ministerial eviction – one Boris Johnson – who described the process as - 'When the herd moves, it moves'

This week has been described a more like 'a stampede'.

But the movement of the 'herd' is, as in Fisher's time, is neither noble nor altruistic. It is a movement, primarily, of self preservation.

Martyrs are not interested in self-preservation but in truth and in Christ and there is always a cost.

Whenever there is a movement to tamper with the political contract between the Government and the governed – be it by the fiat of a Tudor monarch or by subtle erosion by 'the King of the North', those who know their history need to be both vigilant and vocal and fully engaged.

Amen