



# CHRISTMAS

## Thomas Becket

1119-1170

**Feast Day—December 29**



A London-born clerk to Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, Thomas studied canon law abroad and was ordained a deacon. His support of Henry II's claim to England's throne led to his appointment as royal chancellor. He was the king's great friend until 1162, when, as the new archbishop of Canterbury, he said he changed from being a patron of play-actors and a follower of hounds, to being a shepherd of souls. He and the king clashed over many issues, notably the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts. Thomas fled to France for six years; soon after his return, Henry's wish to be rid of this troublesome prelate led to Thomas' murder by four knights. This medieval martyr's life and death were adapted in two modern plays: Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Anouilh's *Becket*.

