Prayer
Scripture: I Timothy 2:1-6
Hymn: 473 "O Worship the King"

HENRY VIII'S BREAK WITH ROME
PREPARATION FOR REFORMATION IN ENGLAND:

When Henry VIII broke with Rome because the pope refused to grant him a divorce from Catherine, the king was able to count on strong support from his people. Criticisms of the pope and the medieval church had been growing for centuries. More and more the pope was viewed as a secular prince. There was deep resentment of taxes and fees that went to Rome. There was strong dislike for foreign clergy. Criticisms of the sloth, the immorality, and the greed and wealth of priests and monks was growing more vocal. In spite of bitter persecution, Lollardry had survived as a kind of passive protest against the medieval church. Wyclif had many sympathizers who scoffed at relics and pilgrimages and raised questions about the mass and transubstantiation. There was open talk against the pope and his men and calls for a preaching ministry with a simple, spiritual gospel. Luther's works were being read and discussed and there was a growing minority who wanted a reformation in England similar to that in Germany. Christian humanists were attacking superstition and calling for a reformation of conduct and study of the Bible.

King Henry VIII, in European politics, was the defender of the church. He was the advocate of papal supremacy. He had secured a papal dispensation for his marriage with Catherine. For his attack on Luther he had received the title, "Defender of the Faith." When Henry decided to get rid of Catherine, it was necessary and important to have the pope dissolve the marriage.

THE DIVORCE

The first four children that Catherine bore Henry VIII were either stillborn or died soon after birth. The first was a daughter, stillborn January 31, 1510, seven months after their marriage. The second child, a son, was born less than eight months later. There was great rejoicing, and the child was styled Prince of Wales, but three days later he was dead. Another son was born, September, 1513, but did not live. In June, 1514, a third son was born, only to die shortly after his christening. At the time Henry was very bitter against his father-in-law and threatened to divorce Catherine.

When Louis XII of France died in January, 1515, Henry and Ferdinand again became allies. On February 13, 1516, Catherine bore Mary, the one child that survived. The thoughts of divorce passed. Catherine suffered a number of miscarriages. On November 10, 1518, another child was stillborn. In 1519 Henry promised to lead a crusade against the Turks if he should be given a male heir. Spanish physicians were brought in but they were no more successful than the English had been. By 1525 when Catherine was forty years of age there was no more hope that she would bear a son. Henry VIII was thirty-four; in full vigor of manhood he was desperate for a male heir.

Henry had come to feel that the death of his children was a divine judgment. Scruples of conscience were disturbing him; he was living in sin and under a curse. His marriage to Catherine was condemned by Leviticus 20:21: "If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. They shall be childless."

Henry, in the meantime, had had a bastard son by a mistress,
Elizabeth Blount. In June, 1525, when the lad was six years old, Henry created him Duke of Richmond, assigning him a special household and lands as if he were a legitimate son. The whole affair was very disagreeable to Catherine but did not seem to hurt the King's popularity with the people. Soon the boy was made Duke of Somerset, Lord High Admiral of England, Lord Warden of the Marches, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. There was talk of his being made Duke King of Ireland to prepare the way for his succession to the kingdom of England. There was talk of a marriage agreement with the niece of the Emperor Charles, a daughter of the Queen of Portugal, who had been promised to the Dauphin of France. Another plan was for him to marry his half-sister, Mary. Cardinal Campeggio gave approval for the brother-sister marriage and the pope was willing on condition that Henry abandon the divorce of Catherine. Henry was troubled that the crown might not pass to an illegitimate heir without dispute.

Henry seduced Mary Boleyn, the daughter of Thomas Boleyn, a wealthy merchant of London, on whom Henry bestowed royal favors, creating him Sir Thomas Boleyn, Viscount Rochford and Earl of Wiltshire. Mary was Henry's mistress before he fell in love with her younger sister, Anne.

Medical knowledge was not sufficiently advanced for Henry to understand that the death of his children was the result of his own venereal disease. Troubled by scruples of conscience about the rightfulness of his marriage to his brother's widow and haunted by fears of a disputed succession, Henry made up his mind that he should marry again and hope for a son to be his heir. Cardinal Wolsey accepted the plan. The pope would be asked to declare that the marriage with Catherine had been no marriage. Wolsey was sent to France to strengthen the bonds between Henry and Francis against the Emperor Charles, to hint that Catherine was to be divorced, and to put forward the project of Henry marrying Renee, daughter of Louis XII.

When Wolsey returned from France he found that Henry had not given him the full story nor put the full matter in his hands. Henry had become infatuated with Anne Boleyn; Anne had returned to England after spending time as a lady in the court of France. Henry had tried to seduce her but she resisted until she was sure he would make her queen. Henry maintained that his marriage to Catherine was invalid since the papal dispensation for the marriage was insufficient; he was free to marry. He understood that his intercourse with Anne's sister would require a special dispensation from the pope to remove the impediment to marriage raised by the near affinity created by the illicit relationship. Henry sent Dr. Knight to Rome to secure the dispensation. Knight's mission opened the pope's eyes to Henry's real intentions. Wolsey was shocked to learn that instead of replacing Catherine with a French princess Henry intended to marry Anne Boleyn, but he went to work on getting the pope to dissolve the marriage with Catherine.

Henry expected the pope to declare the marriage with Catherine invalid. When Henry shocked Catherine on June 22, 1527, by telling her that they must separate because they were living in sin, she appealed to her nephew, the Emperor Charles V, who promised to protect her. Pope Clement VII found it distasteful to declare that Pope Julius II had erred in granting the dispensation for Henry's marriage to Catherine. The pope could not afford to offend the Emperor who had taken Rome and made the pope his prisoner for a time. Wolsey's agents asked for a papal legate who, with Wolsey, would examine the marriage in England and pass judgment without appeal. The Pope sent Cardinal Campeggio to conduct the trial but with instructions that any sentence
must be submitted to the pope. Campeggio tried to get Henry to withdraw his request for the trial; he tried to get Catherine to enter a convent. Catherine won general sympathy by her dignified behavior and was cheered by the women. Catherine showed Campeggio a document that made the validity of the marriage seem unimpeachable. Henry and Anne were already living under the same roof—Henry had given her a fine apartment next to his own in Greenwich and she accompanied him on hunting trips.

Campeggio finally held court in May and June, 1529; Catherine appeared in person and denied the court's jurisdiction, appealing to Rome. Bishop John Fisher of Rochester declared that after two years of study he found the marriage indissoluble by any authority. Campeggio adjourned the court until fall and on October 1, the case was moved to Rome.

Wolsey had failed. He had made many enemies by his taxes and high-handed manner. They worked through Anne to get him excluded from the king's presence. On October 9, 1529, Wolsey was removed from the Chancellorship, and Sir Thomas More was appointed to take his place. The same day Wolsey was indicted in the King's Bench for violating the statute of praemunire; he confessed guilt. He had to give up all his church offices except the archbishopric of York to which he was banished. In the autumn of 1530 Wolsey was charged with treason and was arrested to be taken to the Tower of London for trial. The sheer terror of knowing that he would be executed brought on illness. He died on the way to London, declaring that if he had served God as diligently as he had served the King, God would not have given him over in his grey hairs.

Thomas Cranmer, a private tutor, suggested that Henry should seek the opinions of English and foreign universities on the validity of his marriage. Cranmer was instructed to lay the case before the universities. Oxford and Cambridge, the French universities of Paris, Orleans, Bourges, and Toulouse, and the Italian universities of Ferrara, Padua, Pavia and Bologna all found the marriage with Catherine invalid, in spite of a proclamation by the pope forbidding all doctors from maintaining the invalid nature of the king's marriage.

Henry summoned the Parliament that would be know as the "Parliament for the enormities of the clergy" to make sure that he had the laymen behind him. On June 12, 1530, a letter was sent to the pope urging him to grant the king's desire and hinting that if he did not, they would have to take matters into their own hands.

Having made sure that parliament was back of him, Henry charged the English clergy with being guilty of praemunire; a heavy fine was levied upon them, to be paid in five yearly installments and they were forced to declare the king was "Their singular protector and only supreme lord, and as far as that is permitted by the law of Christ, the Supreme Head of the Church and of the clergy."

In the summer of 1531, Catherine was ordered to withdraw to the Moor in Hertfordshire and afterwards to Easthampstead. Deputations again and again tried to persuade her to withdraw her appeal to Rome. In January, 1532, Pope Clement sent the king a reproof for his desertion of Catherine and cohabitation with Anne Boleyn.

Parliament, in 1532, supported the king in forcing the submission of the clergy and the pope to his wishes. The "Act of Convocation" declared that the Church of England could not make rules for its own guidance without the king's permission. Another act declared that the annates should be withheld from the pope and given to the king. When Archbishop Warham dies in August 1532, Henry forced the pope to recognize Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury by threatening to withhold annates. Cranmer was consecrated March 30, 1533. In February, 1533, Parliament passed the Act of Restraint of Appeals, prohibiting all
appeals to Rome.

On January 25, 1533, Henry VIII, without waiting longer for a divorce, privately married Anne Boleyn who was already expecting his child. On April 5, the Convocation of Canterbury issued a proclamation that the pope had no power to grant a dispensation in the case of Henry. The Act of Restraint of Appeals made the decision final for England.

On April 11, 1533, Cranmer as the new Primate of England asked the king to let him try the question of the divorce. His convocation declared that no dispensation could be granted by the pope for a marriage with the widow of a brother provided the marriage had been consummated. The convocation declared the marriage between Arthur and Catherine had been consummated and pronounced the marriage between Henry VIII and Catherine null and void. Hence, their child, Mary, was illegitimate; the marriage of Henry and Anne Boleyn was pronounced valid.

Preparations began for the coronation of Queen Anne, which took place on June 1, 1533, in Westminster, with little popular enthusiasm. A deputation was sent to Catherine to inform her that she was no longer queen and would bear the title of Princess Dowager. The pope responded by declaring the marriage between Henry and Catherine was lawful and on July 11, a bull of excommunication was issued commanding Henry to restore Catherine and to put away Anne within ten days or be excommunicated. The Emperor, all Christian princes, and Henry's own subjects were called on to enforce the bull by arms.

The English Parliament responded with the strong acts of 1534:
1) The Acts forbidding the payment of annates to the pope was made final and absolute. Bishops were to be nominated by the king and elected by the Deans and Chapters. 2) The payment of Peter's Pence was forbidden and all applications to the pope for dispensations were forbidden. 3) The Act of Succession was passed declaring the marriage of Henry and Catherine null and affirming the validity of the king's marriage to Anne Boleyn, declaring that all issue of the marriage would be legitimate; failing a male heir, the crown would go to Princess Elizabeth, who had been born September, 1533. 4) The Act of Supremacy which declared the king, and his heir after him, Supreme Head of the Church of England. 5) The Treasons Act which declared that it was treason to deny the king any of his lawful titles or to call the king a heretic or schismatic. These acts completed the separation of the church and people of England from the Pope of Rome. Convocations at Canterbury and York declared that the Roman pontiff had no greater jurisdiction bestowed on him by God in Holy Scripture than any other foreign bishop.

The king as head of the church in England was to make ecclesiastical visitations and to redress ecclesiastical abuses. He was not given the right to ordain or to control the sacraments; these rights were reserved to the archbishop and the bishops. Appeals that formerly had gone to Rome were to be settled in the king's courts. Henry VIII appointed Thomas Cromwell to be Vicar-General to oversee these courts. He was the king's legate. Cromwell was a man of humble origin but great ambition. He had served under Wolsey but had managed to survive his master's fall. For three years he had served as a Privy Councillor. Now he became the king's chief secretary and Master of the Rolls.