**Interlude**

This short scene depicts Thomas preaching in the cathedral on Christmas morning, 1170. Becket makes several points in his brief homily. He tells his listeners that, through the bloodless sacrifice of the Mass, the Christian community celebrates Jesus' death at the same time as they celebrate his birth. Thus, Christmas is an occasion in which mourning and rejoicing commingle. He defines true peace in spiritual rather than temporal terms. He connects Christmas with the liturgical feast that follows the next day, the feast of Saint Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Becket reminds his listeners that martyrdoms are not mere happenstance, but the will of God, and events through which God works out the divine purpose.

In his sermon, Becket continues to emphasize the distinction between worldliness and spirituality. Jesus promised a peace that was not sourced in the world—and this is demonstrated by the fact that his disciples suffered immensely. The divine peace offered by Jesus is beyond the bounds of worldly thinking. Becket explores the meaning of a number of paradoxes inherent in the celebration of Christmas, the first being that, since Christ died to redeem the sins of the world, "we celebrate at once the Birth of Our Lord and His Passion and Death upon the Cross." A similar paradox is then explored in the meaning of the word "peace" as Christ used it when he said to his followers, "My peace I leave with you"; after describing the afflicted lives of the disciples (who suffered "torture, imprisonment, disappointment" and "martyrdom"). Thomas concludes that Christ's peace is "not as the world gives"—in the form of, for example, an end to war—but as spiritual solace.

His final paradox lies in the nature of martyrdom: "we both rejoice and mourn at the death of martyrs," he explains, for the "sins of the world" have killed an innocent person who will, nonetheless, be "numbered among the Saints in Heaven." Thomas expands upon this idea by asking his listeners to remember that martyrdom "is never the design of man,'' for "the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr."

Becket wants the congregation to think about martyrdom from a more divine perspective, to view it in a way that defies everyday, worldly thinking about the human will. Becket says that martyrs do not choose their martyrdom; their death, rather, is a part of God’s design—they are instruments of a divine will, a will to which they have wholly submitted. Because of the complexity of martyrdom—of the paradox it causes for thought (as the martyr both submits to God and is simultaneously submitted by God’s plan)—the way we celebrate them must match that complexity, and thinking dualistically about mourning and rejoicing fails to do that.

Obviously, considering his own possible martyrdom, Thomas's definition both instructs his listeners and allows him to once again consider his possible fate, "I do not think I will ever preach to you again." Becket closes by invoking the memory of his predecessor, Archbishop Elphege, and prophesying that Canterbury "in a short time may yet have another martyr, and that one perhaps not the last."