

Adaptation
ST. RICHARD OF CHICHESTER
1197 - 1253

CHARACTERS [In speaking order]

VOICE 1: PAPAL BUREAUCRAT

VOICE 2: NARRATOR: Friar Bocking, Richard's companion and biographer.

VOICE 3: RICHARD DE WYCH, later Bishop of Chichester

VOICE 4: ROBERT, Brother to Richard
EDMUND OF ABINGDON, Richard's tutor, later Archbishop of Canterbury
HENRY III, The King

SCENES

PROLOGUE

I RICHARD AND ROBERT

II RICHARD AND EDMUND, OXFORD

III RICHARD, PRAYER TO ST. EDMUND

IV HENRY III AND THE PAPAL BUREAUCRAT

EPILOGUE: RICHARD, BISHOP OF CHICHESTER

First Performance was held at:
St. Richard's Episcopal Church, Winter Park, Florida on:
June 14, 1998

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[There are four music stands immediately in front of the altar facing the congregation. At the end of the Gospel, the Papal Bureaucrat walks to his stand and the other three readers walk from their seats in the congregation with their scripts and take their places at their music stands. When they are in place, the Papal Bureaucrat begins his monologue.]

PROLOGUE

Medieval Europe was a time when the church had great power and influence. In the year of our Lord 1197, Richard de Wych, son of a yeoman farmer, was born in Droitwich. Born in a manor house, he grew to be a farmer, a grower of figs, and the Bishop of Chichester. He is Richard, our Patron Saint!

PAPAL BUREAUCRAT: We thereupon, to the profit of our realm, intending to provide convenient remedy by the advice of our prelates, barons, and other subjects, being of our council, having established, and ordained, that no person, religious or otherwise shall presume to buy or sell lands or tracts of lands, or receive them under the description of a gift, andor any other title, whatsoever it may be--

FRIAR BOCKING: *[Raising his hand to stop the bureaucrat's monologue]* But we will hear enough bureaucratic utterances! Let us think on Miracles attributed to St. Richard instead!
Of all the miracles attributed to St. Richard of Chichester, the miracle of the blackbird is one most memorable: A student at Oxford kept a blackbird whose song was rich and melodious. It gave the student much joy. A companion wanted the blackbird, but the student would not give the bird away. So in a rage, the angry companion cut out the bird's tongue. When the student realized what had happened, to his ailing and songless pet, he grieved and began to pray to St. Richard, who also enjoyed songbirds. Immediately, the bird revived and began to sing again! This is the miracle of the blackbird!

BOCKING: **Scene One, Richard and Robert, his brother:**

RICHARD: Sheep?

ROBERT: Yes, sheep. What will we do about the sheep?

RICHARD: What's wrong with the sheep?

ROBERT: That's just the point. If I knew what was wrong with the sheep, we wouldn't be in our present predicament.

RICHARD: Predicament?

ROBERT: We need someone to master the workers. **I can't** do it. I don't know what to tell them. I don't know anything about sheep and we have no money to pay a bailiff.

RICHARD: Money?

ROBERT: No money. While you were studiously accruing mastery of the Latin subjunctive, our kind and generous guardian seems to have taken off with our assets. He made a bad deal for this year's barley. Half the price our neighbors got. And he sold the stone from the fence to buy a fancy cloak! Needless to say, the removal of the stone opened up a whole new world for the sheep. The boy couldn't cope. Half the sheep disappeared, the other half are in some way sick. Bleached. Bleating. Bloated.

RICHARD: They need physic. Perhaps piercing. Speak to him. Assert yourself. They're your sheep. It's your money. It's your farm. As firstborn, you certainly possess the responsibility to assert your primogeniture.

ROBERT: **I don't** want the responsibility. And **I can't** muster the authority. You do it. You know all the details. You're a born farmer.

RICHARD: You forget my studies. I've yet to master the ablative absolute.

[PAUSE]

BOCKING: So, Richard left school for a time, and ran the farm. He did well. Debts were retired, sheep were healed, and Richard found fulfillment in cultivating figs. Although the original family fortune was lost forever, the brothers were relieved of the burden of abject failure. The future looked promising. A marriage was arranged.

ROBERT: It's clear that I'm no good at this and you are. The figs have never been better. You're good with personnel.

RICHARD: Personnel?

ROBERT: Marry the Waltham girl and stay on the farm. It needs managing. It needs you. I need you.

RICHARD: I need to return to Oxford. It's where I need to be. Day by day, I become less satisfied.

ROBERT: You don't seem to see yourself. Look around you. The sheep. The figs. The Waltham girl. She's rich and she wants to marry you.

RICHARD: Overseeing a farm keeps the purse heavy, but it is not food for the mind and soul. I'm here, but I **want** to be there. And married I **don't** want to be at all.

ROBERT: But the Waltham girl. Her fortune will restore our wealth and security.

RICHARD: I can't **be** married. I hardly know her.

ROBERT: Brother . . . friend . . . think of the family. You owe it to the family to do what it's been clearly demonstrated that I **can't**. The farm is yours. Take it. Bring me papers: I hereby waive my rights as elder son and convey, deliver, discharge, donate, obligate, and furthermore abandon this farm to you, my brother Richard of Wyche, in all formality and without recourse. Take the farm. Take the Waltham girl. Live happy. Ever after.

RICHARD: I'm not taking the farm. I appreciate your generosity. I appreciate the Waltham girl's willingness to take me into the Waltham fortune. But I can't go. I **hereby** convey the farm back to you. The farm works now. Just keep it running. I convey unto you the figs and the sheep.

ROBERT: But the Waltham girl. It's been arranged.

RICHARD: Then rearrange it, Dear brother, for I'm to Oxford now. Keep the farm. Keep the Waltham girl. She's pure and perfect and she has a name, you know. It's Emmeline. She's as pure and perfect for you as you say she is for me. I've not so much as kissed her.

BOCKING: **Scene Two, Richard and his tutor Edmund at Oxford:**

RICHARD: My Lord Edmund, I thank you for taking me as pupil.

EDMUND: The privilege will **be** mine, I'm certain. Master Grosseteste recommends you with vigour. It seems you have a **gift** for the academic life.

RICHARD: I have a gift, but not much else. No shoes, even.

EDMUND: Shoes may keep the feet warm, but thought and spirit keep the mind and soul alive. Now is the time for you to develop your mind and spirit. Your feet will take care of themselves.

RICHARD: Since I left the farm, I've been so free of spirit. I am so at home with the lectures. I feel, when I attend, that I am the tap to a great repository of the world's truths, and that these truths have some specific intent for me. The event of acquiring knowledge is the only place and the only time I feel complete satisfaction of life.

EDMUND: That is the nature of knowledge, of truth. They are liquid. They seek their proper level, and take the shape of their receptacle. Knowledge and truth are finding you, Richard. RICHARD: But it's complicated. I try to store up hope for a specific future. Day by day, I try to put away some Hope for the future of my true life, but I plod along moment by moment, Day by day, Those I share my quarters with and I have only one gown among us. We take turns wearing it to lectures. I run to keep warm. We can't afford heat.

EDMUND: Does this then discourage you?

RICHARD: Discourage? No. I have doubts. Perhaps I SHOULD go back to the farm

EDMUND: Patience. Recognize each day, that day's contribution to your academic life. Your study. Your learning. Study as if you were to live forever, live as if you were to die tomorrow.

[PAUSE}

BOCKING: So Richard studied, and in those days, it took seven years to earn a Master's degree. Richard did it, and studied more in Paris and Bologna, and then returned to his friend and mentor in Oxford.

EDMUND: Were studies in France and Italy as fruitful as your Studies here at home?

RICHARD My spirit and understanding have yet to ripen. I was hoping you could guide me in a clear direction. Offer me a way.

EDMUND: Perhaps God has an agenda for you which will offer fulfillment, and every bit as much satisfaction and as you had on your farm.

RICHARD: You have God's ear? I've yet to recognize that particular blessing!

EDMUND: I have the King's ear; I only hope it is also God's.

RICHARD: The King??

EDMUND: I am to become Archbishop of Canterbury. [PAUSE] I shall be needing a chancellor.

PAPAL BUREAUCRAT: ... In the year of our Lord 1234, of the Pontificate of Gregory IX, in the reign of the most illustrious king of the English ... Henry III, in the honor of the royal Household with due customs and of his realm, and before the archbishops, bishops and clergy, and earls, barons and nobles of the these lands...and these same customs recognized by the archbishops and bishops, earls and barons, and by those of high rank in the age of this time ...

BOCKING: *[Raising his hand to stop the Bureaucrat's monologue]* So Richard became Chancellor to Edmund of Abingdon, Archbishop of Canterbury. It was a manifestation of destiny for them both. Richard, the humble, and modest, thrust suddenly into public life, served Edmund well. Through all political controversy, of which there was much, Richard was Edmund's right hand. They were alike in temperament and it took both of them, with their modest, spiritual ways to withstand the onslaught of political strife. Their friendship flourished. Through political discord, Royal dismissals, exiles, and through illness, Richard continued to serve his friend until Edmund died in 1240.

PAUSE

BOCKING: **Scene Three, Prayer to St. Edmund, Richards mentor**

RICHARD: Dear Brother Edmund. I pray to you for hope. My life since God called you from us has prospered day by day. I am wealthy in the love and friendship of the people. I walk the Parish and friends welcome me. I've been two years a priest now and my sheep sustain me as firmly as I do them. I pray to you, Dear Edmund, in gratitude for your sacrifices. Was your death my call to priestly order? I pray that your suffering and death, had in God's plan, some other purpose than the mere sorting out of my impertinent life. No matter. I know you rest with Christ. This parochial life is not without worries. This symbiotic connection between Church and Nation,

which we English take such pride in, is . . . difficult. There is much discord. Please know, dear Edmund, that **I** have no difficulty in choosing what's right-- I have you to thank for that-- I fear that money is at the center of our struggle. There are many vacant Sees, and of course, the King reaps that wealth. He is in no hurry to approve Bishops. These concerns are more disturbing for me now. The Clergy and the people, worry. O, One more time, dear Edmund, send me your help. In this time of trial, your gentle spirit can harbor me. They want me to be bishop.

PAUSE

BOCKING: [*Raising his hand to stop him*] The canons at Chichester did in fact elect Richard Bishop. The King was furious. He had wanted a church official named Robert Passelewe, a particularly worthless man who had obtained the King's favor through an unjust acquisition, which added thousands to the royal treasury. The Pope, however, consecrated Richard. The King refused to acknowledge him. For two years, Richard walked barefoot through his diocese, ministering to his flock, living as a guest of a parish priest, and by sheer goodness, achieving love and devotion from the people. It was not possible, however, for a bishop to serve appropriately without rightful revenues. It was an untenable situation.

BOCKING: **Scene Four: King Henry the Third and the Papal Bureaucrat:**

PAPAL BUREAUCRAT: Most Glorious Majesty, His Holiness Pope Innocent the Fourth, Bishop of Rome, presents to you--Richard de Wych, Master of Arts, Rector of Deal, Chancellor of Oxford, Chancellor of Canterbury, and most reverend Bishop of Chichester.

HENRY: You may tell His Innocence The Pope that no barefoot farm boy will occupy a See in my realm. We wanted Passelewe.

PAPAL BUREAUCRAT: With respect, your Most Illustrious Majesty, the canons

elected Richard.

HENRY: They first elected Passelewe.

PAPAL BUREAUCRAT: You may recall, most Eminent Majesty, that your own Archbishop invalidated that election. His Holiness would be most grateful if you would honor the canons' free election in this matter, confirm Richard's position, and restore his revenues.

HENRY: Remind His Reverence that as far as we are concerned, this matter is settled.

Robert Passelewe will be Bishop of Chichester. The revenues defer to the Crown.

Remind His Holiness that we hold the key to the Bishop's treasury.

PAPAL BUREAUCRAT: I have been instructed to remind His Most Royal Majesty that His Holiness holds the key to His Most Devout Majesty's salvation.

HENRY: Perhaps His Holiness will understand that *my* bishop is better than *no* bishop. Does His Holiness wish Chichester to remain a functioning See?

PAPAL BUREAUCRAT: Does His majesty wish to remain within the embrace of the Holy Mother Church?

[A TENSE PAUSE AS HENRY THINKS IT OVER]

BOCKING: Henry blinked first. Under threat of excommunication, the King relented, and at least partially restored Chichester's revenues. Day by day Richard continued to live frugally himself, and he used the revenues to help the poor. He sold his own possessions, including his fine horse, to help the less fortunate sheep in his flock. He was Bishop for eight years. He was benevolent, capable, reverent, organized, a good administrator, a good shepherd, and above all, charitable. He was an exemplary bishop. He died at midnight on April 3, 1253 at the age of fifty six, reciting his prayer. Nine years later Pope Urban IV declared him a Saint.

[PAUSE] Our epilogue: Richard, Bishop of Chichester.

EPILOGUE

RICHARD: The figs and the sheep are with me, Lord. Although my body fails, my soul seems fully rendered. My books and my teachers have provided me with an enlightened life. My faith has given me guidance and strength. St. Edmund leads me now to you.

[SOFT ORGAN MUSIC UNDER]

Thanks be to thee, my lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits Thou has given me, for all the pains and insults thou hast borne for me. O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know thee more clearly, love thee more dearly, and follow thee more nearly, day by day.

[MUSIC: ST. RICHARD'S HYMN.]

[During the singing of the hymn, the three readers leave the altar and file out through the Gospel side door. Acolytes remove the music stands. The Papal Bureaucrat remains to conduct the remainder of the service]

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1191-1253

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