

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, Year C
23 November 2025
Luke 23:35-43

Catechist Background

The Feast of Christ the King celebrates the identity of Jesus as the King of everything, rather than something that happened in his life (like the Transfiguration). Every time we use the word 'Christ,' we refer to Jesus' kingship, as the word in Greek means 'Anointed One.' Ancient Israelite kings were anointed to confer sacredness upon them in recognition of their God-given role and for the part that they would play in Israel's story. By New Testament times, the Jews had been waiting for hundreds of years for this Christ ('Messiah' in Hebrew). The king that the Jews expected was very different to the King they got, however. Although encouraged by the crowds to save himself and live, Jesus died a painful death on the Cross to save his kingdom, the whole world, from the effects of sin.

Jesus speaks to the repentant thief about 'Paradise', an interesting concept. The word, from ancient Persian, means an enclosed park, and is used in other places to talk about the Garden of Eden before the Fall of Adam. In telling this thief they would be together in paradise, Jesus indicates that in his death he is restoring humanity to a right relationship with God, an intimacy which was broken when sin entered the world. These days in Church we tend to say 'heaven' instead of 'paradise'.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, it would be useful to have a crucifix with the letters 'INRI' above Jesus, and a holly ring to demonstrate as a crown. The liturgical colour for today is white, which means "Jesus is here". You may wish to incorporate this colour into your gathering space for today.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You are our King, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You are our Saviour, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You call us to you every day, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Dear God, may everyone know that Jesus is the King of the world and praise you always. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Luke 23:35-43

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- What is the main job of a king or a queen, or any ruler of a country? (The children may need help to realise that a ruler's greatest responsibility is to look after the people in their country.)
- The soldiers who crucified Jesus made fun of him in many ways. What ways did they do that?
- The soldiers followed the instructions of the people who ruled Israel. Were the soldiers being good rulers in treating Jesus like this? (No!)
- If Jesus is our ruler, who are the people in Jesus' kingdom? (We are, and everyone else)
- How does Jesus look after us? (by caring for us, teaching and guiding us)
- What did the second thief ask Jesus for? Do you think he knew what he was asking for?

- What did Jesus say to him in reply? ("Today you will be with me in paradise")

Response

The soldiers who crucified Jesus made fun of him in many ways.

- One thing they did was to put a sign above his head with the initials 'INRI,' which stands for '*Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*,' (Latin for 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.')
- (Show a crucifix with this sign, if you have one.)
- Another thing they did was to make Jesus wear a crown made of very sharp thorns.
 - Show the crown of holly.
 - Allow the children to touch it carefully
 - ask them what it would be like to be forced to wear a crown like that, or even sharper.

The crowds and the soldiers did horrible things to Jesus, but that was not the end of the story.

- Jesus was able to change and transform horrible events for the good of his people (all humans everywhere), and for the glory of God.
- When we meet things that aren't nice, we can decide to see them as opportunities for good.
- Encourage the children to think of examples, like comforting someone who has fallen over or sharing with someone who has broken a toy.
- We expect Jesus to return to his people again, and we will hear more about that next week.
- In the meantime, we can change this nasty sharp crown into something much more positive: an Advent Wreath, to remind us that Jesus is coming to us.

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God the Father who made the whole world, including us?
- Do you believe in Jesus, the Anointed King, the Son of God who came to save us?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, who helps us to live out God's Kingdom?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying, 'We remember that God is the Ruler of the universe and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for people in positions of power in the Church. May they care particularly for those who are poor and weak. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all earthly rulers: kings, queens, presidents, prime ministers, and others in positions of power. May they rule their people as Jesus would. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for prisoners. May they turn their hearts towards Jesus and follow Him in Love. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for those in our parish who are feeling sad or lonely. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, you ask us to be your eyes and your hands and your hearts on earth. Help us to shine your love to everyone we meet. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.