

# Read

2 Samuel 5:1-3

Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43

## LIVING THE WORD

# Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

November 20, 2022



## REFLECTION

Did you ever play “If I were boss of the world” when you were little? We love playing at redesigning the world in our imaginations, but whether we are playing superheroes or dreaming of becoming the president, we usually imagine using our power to control the things that happen around us.

Christ turns everything we know about power and authority on its head. What kind of king would allow his subjects to sentence and kill him? St. Paul says that the crucifixion is a “stumbling block” and “foolishness” to nonbelievers (1 Corinthians 1:23). Without faith, the crucifixion makes no sense. Without the resurrection, death is merely an ending.

Christ promises us that if we die with him, like the repentant thief in today’s Gospel, we will also rise with him. We are gifted with this through the grace of baptism. Throughout our lives, we are called to die to the desire to control others and live instead in the love Christ offers.



## ACTION

Jesus values our freedom to choose between right and wrong so much that he allowed humanity to reject and kill him. Sometimes we try to manipulate, shame, or force people to treat us well, do what we want, or even love us! This week, let’s make a special effort to honor freedom as much as Jesus did by asking honestly for the things we want and resisting the temptation to put pressure on others. When others make choices that hurt or disappoint us, we can pray, “Jesus, thank you for loving me even when I don’t love you. Help me to bear wrongs as patiently and suffer rejection as humbly as you did. Amen.”



**Do an image search for “Christ the king” and “Christ’s crucifixion.”**

**Note the differences in the images and reflect on today’s celebration.**



## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What is the connection between the second criminal’s attitude about his own crimes (which he says were justly condemned) and his ability to recognize Christ’s innocence and kingship?
- ❖ How do you understand Jesus’ kingship based on today’s Gospel reading?



November 20, 2022

# SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

## LECTIONARY #162C

2 Samuel 5:1-3

Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Today's Gospel gives us insight into the reign of Christ, our king. His throne is a cross. His companions are thieves. His life ends with nothing, in complete poverty. Over the past several weeks, the Gospel readings have told us that the poor are blessed, that the humble are exalted, and that the kingdom is hidden from view, but ever present. Jesus, abandoned by his followers and mocked by his oppressors, reigns as the humble king of the universe. He carries the sins of humanity with him on the cross. One thief mocks him, even as he shares the same fate. The other recognizes who he truly is. We might ask ourselves, "who am I in this scene?" Ever the savior and king, Jesus brings redemption from the cross. He is our king, now and forever.

**Q FOCUS:** *Christ the King shows mercy, forgiveness, and welcome. We should do the same.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

The saints are witnesses of the kingdom of God. Like Christ, they were often persecuted for their faith, yet they maintained steadfast allegiance to God's kingdom. This week the Church celebrates several martyrs (those who are killed for their faith). It celebrates St. Cecilia (November 22), Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro (November 23), St. Andrew

Dũng-Lạc and his companions (November 24), and St. Catherine of Alexandria (November 25).

### Church Teaching Connection

"We would do well, each one of us, on this day, to think about our own personal history, to look at Jesus and to keep telling him, sincerely and quietly: 'Remember me, Lord now that you are in your kingdom! Jesus, remember me because I want to be good, but I just don't have the strength: I am a sinner, I am a sinner. But remember me, Jesus! You can remember me because you are at the center, you are truly in your kingdom!'" (Pope Francis, Homily, November, 24, 2013).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Luke 23:35-43

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

The rulers sneered at Jesus and said, "He saved others, let him save himself if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God." Even the soldiers jeered at him. As they approached to offer him wine they called out, "If you are King of the Jews, save yourself." Above him there was an inscription that read, "This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, "Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly, for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied to him, "Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

Are we surprised that on the solemnity of Christ the King, we are presented with Jesus, bruised, mocked, and abandoned to die on the cross, as our king? Not if we have been paying attention.

As this liturgical year comes to a close and we honor our king, Jesus shows us a vision of the kingdom. It is built upside down. And we need to turn our lives upside down to get it. The readings over the past several weeks and months have Jesus telling us that the poor were blessed, that the humble were exalted, and the dead would rise. He called the simple by name to be his disciples, he ate with sinners and called them friends. He showed the world that he did not have to bow to everyone else's expectations. He revealed a world much different than our own.

The cross is his throne. What type of justice does he dispense on his throne? Mercy, forgiveness, welcome. Jesus flips our expectations again and again. With his power he shows tender mercy. His actions in life and death are forgiveness. His final act: seeing a person and welcoming them home.

► This is our king. He died the way he lived. If we are part of his kingdom then how should our lives look?

Jesus challenges us to live as he lived. He provides the radical example that you can love, include, forgive, and welcome. He shows us that no person is too far away from the kingdom of God.

From his throne of the cross he shows us that true power lies in humility, in simplicity, and in love. This isn't a touchy-feely love, or a weak love, but a true and honest love. It is powerful and life changing. It sees us for who we are and loves us. It calls us forward, to join him in suffering, and also in glory.

► How can we honor Jesus as king in our own lives? What might that look like in our homes, schools, and lives to have Jesus as king?

Like the repentant thief in the Gospel, we ask Jesus to remember us. It is hard to live this Christian life. The temptations are great and we fall so many times. Every time, Jesus welcomes us back to him. We are with him, now and forever. He welcomes us into paradise. He reigns. Let our lives always reflect that truth.

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 66.*

**Jesus reveals his kingdom is merciful and welcoming.**

**The paradox of the cross calls us to contemplate glory and suffering.**

**If we belong to Christ's kingdom, we too should live as he did, being merciful, forgiving, and welcoming.**

# Act on the Word

## New (Liturgical) Year's Eve

*For this activity, you will need party decorations, fun Christian music, food, paper, and pens.*

The solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe is the end of the liturgical year. It is essentially Catholic New Year's Eve! To celebrate the end of the liturgical year, this activity should be a joyous occasion, celebrating Jesus as King.

Similar to a New Year's Eve party, there should be food, decorations, games, music, and dancing. Have silly games at the ready and allow the young people to lead in some dances.

After some fun time relaxing, have the young people form small groups to create a countdown to the new liturgical year (which begins with the First Sunday of Advent) by reflecting on the past year and creating goals for the new year. Remind them that anything is possible with Christ, and new commitments can be made for faith and service.

Each group should come up with the same number of activities/reflections as there are days until the First Sunday of Advent. (For example, if the beginning of Advent is seven days from when you are meeting, have each group come up with seven things, one for each day). These activities and reflections should help the young people prepare for a new liturgical year and a renewed relationship with Christ. They can consider some of the following questions as inspiration for their planned activities.

- \* How have you grown spiritually this year?
- \* What has been the most challenging aspect of your spiritual life?
- \* What are you most proud of so far this year?
- \* What spiritual goals do you have moving forward?

After the small groups have finished, invite them to share their activity ideas with the large group. Then, have everyone discuss together ways your whole group can focus on Christ the King in the coming year. Plan out service days, or adoration evenings. Think of ways to affirm one another and keep Christ at the center of your gathering.

## Closing Prayer

*Lord God,  
you sent your Son  
to die for our sins  
and to reconcile us with you.  
Attune our hearts  
to walk faithfully to the call of our Baptism  
to build a kingdom  
of reconciliation, justice, and peace.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.itp.org/lwgr](http://www.itp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*