

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Our Lord Jesus Christ the King, Year C
24 November 2019
Luke 23:35-43

Catechist Background

The Feast of Christ the King celebrates the identity of Jesus as the universal King, rather than something that happened in his life (like the Transfiguration or the Annunciation). 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 the divine role that they played 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 they expected was very different to the King they got, however. Although encouraged by the jeering crowds to save *himself* and live, he dies an ignoble death on the cross to save his kingdom, the whole world, from the alienating effects of sin.

The concept of 'Paradise' is an interesting one. The word itself is from ancient Persia meaning an enclosed park, and is used in other places to talk about the Garden of Eden before the fall of Adam. In telling the repentant thief that they would be together that day in paradise, Jesus gives a strong indication that in his death he is restoring humanity to a right relationship with God, an intimacy which had been severed since sin entered the world in the Garden.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, it would be useful to have a crucifix with the letters 'INRI' above Jesus, and holly ring to demonstrate as a crown.

The liturgical colour for today is white; you may wish to incorporate this colour into your gathering space, perhaps as part of a focal point.

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 whole 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 some further guiding to get them to realise that the greatest responsibility a ruler has is to look after the people in their country.)
- Who are the people in Jesus' kingdom? How does Jesus look after us?
- What did the second thief ask Jesus for? Do you think he knew what he was asking for? What did Jesus tell him?
- The soldiers who crucified Jesus made fun of him in many ways. What were some of these ways?

Response

The soldiers who crucified Jesus made fun of him in many ways. One of those was to put a sign above his head—we see this on some crucifixes with the initials 'INRI,' which stands for 'Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum,' or 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.' (Show a crucifix with this sign, if you have one.) Another was to make him a crown out of very sharp thorns. (Show the crown of holly. Allow the children to touch it carefully and imagine what it would be like to be forced to wear a crown like that, or even sharper.)

Even though the crowds and the soldiers did horrible things to Jesus, that was not the end of the story. Jesus was able to change and transform horrible events for the good of his people—all of humanity—and for the glory of God. We can use things that aren't very nice which we see as an opportunity for good, too. (Try to encourage the children to think of examples, like comforting someone who has fallen over on the playground, 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.

We Believe

Relating to the creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite 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, try to relate the bidding prayers to the 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 have a special concern and look out for those who are poor and weak. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for all earthly rulers: kings and queens, presidents, prime ministers, and other people 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 the members of our parish who are feeling sad or lonely for any reason. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, we know you need 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.

