



a Kendall Hunt Company

Christ the King, Year C, catechist - RCLB Lectionary



Catechist Background and Preparation

To prepare for this session read all the readings.

2 Samuel 5:1-3

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

Colossians 1:12-20

Luke 23:35-43

Spend a few minutes reflecting on what these readings mean for you today. Was there a particular reading that appealed to you? Was there a word or image that engaged you?

Read the Word in Liturgy and Catholic Doctrine sections. These give you background on what you will be doing this session. Read over the session outline and make it your own. Check to see what materials you will need for the session.

The Word in Liturgy



On this last Sunday of the liturgical year, the church celebrates the feast of Christ the King. Instituted by Pope Pius XI in 1925 to combat the growing secularism and atheism of his time, it is one of the so-called “idea feasts” that do not celebrate an event in the life of Jesus but rather some aspect of his identity. In it we recognize and honor Christ as ruler of all. The original feast of Christ the King is the Ascension, in which the church celebrates the exalted Christ, crowned with glory at the right hand of God. Today’s celebration should remind us of that more important feast as the liturgical year comes to a close.

The readings will not allow us to take a shallow view of Christ’s reign, confusing earthly power and prestige with the Savior’s divine majesty and goodness. Instead, the feast fixes Christ’s messianic kingship squarely in the mystery of the cross, stretching us uncomfortably on the crossbeam of a paradox. Our salvation is won by having our king die a horrible, ignominious death, betrayed by his friends and the people he came to save. In Luke’s gospel, further paradoxes abound. A common criminal facing death alongside him is moved to confess faith in him. Despite themselves, his torturers acclaim him. Those who taunt him ironically announce the truth of his identity (the three taunts forming a parallel with Satan’s three temptations in Luke 4:1-13). What kind of a king is this? Luke’s account invites us to see that Christ is the king who cannot be overcome by the world, or by sin, or by death. His reign from the wood of the cross indeed brings salvation to the outcast and the sinner.

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The first reading recalls a foundational event in the life of the chosen people: the act of anointing David king of Israel. David was Israel's first true king, and a towering figure in its religious and political history. The Hebrew Scriptures chronicle his rise to leadership through military victories and acclamation by the people. They also attest his selection by God through the prophet Samuel before he had done a single great deed. In today's passage from 2 Samuel, the accent falls on the human, political element in David's ascent to power. The leaders of the northern kingdom of Israel come to Jerusalem to acclaim David as king. By so doing, they unite two kingdoms in the person of king David: Judah in the south, and Israel in the north. The etymology of the Hebrew word *nagid* which here is translated "commander," may mean "one who is proclaimed" or "one who steps to the fore."

Catholic Doctrine

Christ the King

The vision of Christ the King which is presented in the Gospel text for this Sunday contradicts all our worldly notions of what a king or ruler should be. He is not seated in comfort upon a throne. He is not accepting the adulation of the people or the acclaim of foreign dignitaries. It is a scene of violence and murder, a horrid event, which is transformed by the power of God into the venue of grace and the work of Christ for our salvation (CCC 312). Thus, truly the cross is the throne of Christ the King who is Lord and ruler over a dominion that confounds and overturns worldly calculations.

Catholic teaching asserts that Christ's lordship extends over all of human history (CCC 450) and that he reigns above every earthly power and principality (CCC 668). What does this mean? First, this means that Jesus Christ is the redeemer of all people. Past, present and future generations are offered salvation in the one who by his suffering, death and resurrection has achieved what we could never achieve on our own. Second, no earthly reality or person is above Jesus; he reigns supreme and everything and everyone is subject to the power of his saving love and goodness.

Because believers are in this world as pilgrims who are journeying toward the kingdom yet to come, there is a tension we experience. We are subject to human authority, and yet, our ultimate allegiance belongs to Christ alone. As the Second Vatican Council noted, "the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate one another" but in the mystery of human history, the Church and its members serve to endow daily activity with a deeper meaning (GS, 40). That deeper meaning is the kingdom of Christ and the Lord of history's saving actions.