

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Christ the King, Cycle A

Please Note: All scripture readings must be read from the Children's Lectionary

Opening Prayer:

Lord, you are gentle
and do not ask us to do more than we are able.
Give us the love to see Jesus, you Son,
in the hungry and the thirsty,
in strangers and the poor,
in those who are sick and criminals in prison.
Just as he died for those who needed him most,
so may we work and pray for the people with the most troubles.
We pray this prayer to you through Jesus
who lives with you, forever and ever. Amen.

First Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

Our God says, "I, myself, will take care of my sheep. As a shepherd watches over the flock, so will I watch over my sheep. I, myself, will feed them and give them rest. I will find those who are lost and bring them back. I will heal those who are hurt. I will be a good shepherd to my sheep. But remember, I will judge between one sheep and another, and I will judge between the sheep and the goats."

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46

(This reading is to be used for personal study. It should not be used in liturgy.)

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

A King Without a Crown: Gospel Reflection

Try to imagine a king, like the kings in your fairy tales. What does your king look like? He probably has a golden crown and is dressed in royal robes. He probably lives in a fairy-tale castle, surrounded by guards and high walls. He probably dines on all kinds of fancy foods and is greeted by important friends.

Jesus is not that kind of a king. Sometimes our King dresses in rags, sometimes he is cold and hungry, and sometimes he is very lonely. He doesn't live in a palace with guards and high walls. He lives in the hearts of his people, especially those who need his love the most.

Jesus says, "Whatever you do for my brothers and sisters, you also do for me." That's the secret of Jesus' Kingdom. If you want to serve Jesus, you must learn to serve others.

Serving Jesus: Class or Family Activity

"Just as you did it for one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it for me."

This message from Jesus is a challenge for us all. How will you serve Jesus this week?

1. Does your parish have a food and clothing collection between now and Christmas? Contribute!

2. Is there a hospital or home for the elderly within visiting distance to your home? Visit!

3. Is there someone in your neighborhood who lives all alone? Invite him or her to share a meal with your family!

Whatever you and your class or family decide to do, remember that you are serving Christ your King as you are serving others.

Things to Come: Gospel Reflection

Today we celebrate the fact that Jesus reigns over heaven and earth -- he is truly Christ the King. The gospel reading allows us a glimpse of things to come -- where our own place in heaven (or out of heaven) may be. Jesus tells us that even though he is truly Christ the King, he can be found in our sisters and brothers. Moreover, he can be most especially found in those sisters and brothers whom people most especially tend to look down upon -- the poor, the hungry, the homeless, the sick, the imprisoned.

"Come," Christ the King says to those who have served God's needy ones, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

HEIRS TO THE KINGDOM

Jesus suffered and died on the cross so that all who believe in him would share in the inheritance of heaven. You are made an heir by your faith in Jesus. That sounds easy, doesn't it? But what does it mean to believe in Jesus?

"I WAS HUNGRY..."

Every Saturday morning people who hardly know one another can be found scurrying around the kitchens of schools, churches, community centers -- anyplace where hungry strangers can go to get a nourishing meal. One young lady sets out bowls and utensils while her mother helps make giant pots of hot soup. There are dozens of loaves of bread to open, hundreds of vegetables to peel and cut, and sacks of fruit to wash. The volunteers begin working very early in the morning. Shortly before noon, the people come -- old and young, dirty and clean, educated and illiterate -- poor people who have no place else to go for a meal. Everyone is very busy, ladling out soup, clearing tables, washing dishes, and helping the guests. It is mid-afternoon before all the work is done and the volunteers go back to their own homes. "I like to come here on Saturdays. It is hard work, but it makes me happy to see sad people smile."

"I WAS THIRSTY..."

In the summer, the streets of midwestern America seem to steam under the hot sun. One day, while bicycling through a poor section of one midwestern town, a stranger noticed how folks were sitting on the porches of their shabby flats, fanning themselves and swatting flies with rolled up newspapers, trying to get cool. He saw one old lady slumped in a doorway. She looked sick. Her clothes, soaked with perspiration, clung to her frail body, her eyes were listless, and her face was red. The stranger stopped at a corner hot dog vender and asked for a large cup of water. The vender, hot himself, and generating no business in this run-down neighborhood, refused the request. "You want water, you'll hafta pay fer it," he growled. Quickly, the stranger pulled out a dollar bill, got a surprised look and a 16-ounce cup of water from the vender, and made his way back to the old lady. He handed her the water. The old lady smiled, took a sip, and then splashed some of the cool water on her hot face. The stranger thought, "I'm sure glad I could help that old lady. Maybe I'll ride through here more often, and carry a thermos of water with me."

"I WAS A STRANGER..."

"Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." Those are the words of the king in today's gospel -- Christ the King. Those words make us all members of the same family, brothers and sisters of Christ the King. So who is a stranger among us? And where will you be asked to sit when you come before the heavenly throne?

Prayers of the Faithful: Allow a few moments for the children to offer prayers aloud for their special intentions. Ask them to end with "Let us pray to the Lord". All respond, "Lord, Hear our Prayer".

Apostle's Creed: You may end the Liturgy of the Word by reciting the Creed as a group if there is time.

FOCUS OF THE READINGS:

The people of Israel saw in their leader the role and function of both shepherd and king. David, for example, is spoken of as both shepherd (which he was) and king (which he became.) The role of the king was not only to rule but to guide, feed, and care for his people. God is also spoken of in shepherd imagery (e.g. Psalm 23.) Here in this passage God says, "I myself will shepherd my flock."

In the Gospel reading, the last judgment, Jesus is both Shepherd and King. He will judge between sheep and goats. The focus is on the *real* manifestation of our faith in acts of charity; on that we will be judged.

REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

What did you hear? Encourage the children to reflect back on what they heard without comment or question. Throughout the homily, try to bring in the things said by the children.

Who are the people Jesus shows concern for in this Gospel reading?

Help the children to see that all of these people are needy in some way and depend on others.

Can you think of other stories in the Gospel where Jesus showed special love and concern for the poor, the hungry, and so forth?

It is important that the children realize that this text is a summary of all that Jesus taught and did in his life. They should not get the idea that this is a judgment scene which will catch people off guard. Jesus was always identified with the poor, the outcasts, and taught his followers the same. Some people rejected him during his life on earth for this identification. Today's Gospel isn't God's acceptance or rejection of us but *our* acceptance or rejection of what Jesus taught and who he is.

Do we have people in the world, our city or neighborhood, who are hungry, thirsty or who need help?

Help the children to be as specific as possible here. Especially help them to identify those persons in their parish who do things for others.

What do you think Jesus means when he tells us, "When you do those things for any of my brothers and sisters in need, you do it for me"?

This is a difficult concept. The children may not be able to verbalize this truth yet, but reflection on it will nourish the seed.

Jesus invites all people, young and old, to meet him in the poor, the hungry, the lonely, strangers. How can we show our love and our faith in the words of Jesus?

It is most important that children be able to experience themselves responding in action to the Gospel. Children must also be invited to respond according to their capacity. Discourage responses from outside their capacity. For example, sending money to foreign places. Children should be encouraged to help directly and with their own means, e.g. welcoming newcomers to school, helping a child who is hurt or feels rejected. They should not feel guilty for the problems of the world.

What does Jesus say to those who do what they can for others? This is what the children should remember: that Jesus has prepared a place for his followers and wants us to be there.

Christ the King

Thought for the day

In total humility, at one with the least of his people, Jesus, the Messiah or Christ, reigns as King, with full authority and honor for eternity.

Readings

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

Matthew 25:31-46

Aim: To know the parable of the sheep and goats, and its meaning.

Starter

Form teams and have the children pass a crown from head to head down the line, and the person at the end runs up to the front to start again. The first team to get back to the starting order wins.

Teaching

Jesus is like a Shepherd King, who looks after us all as his sheep, and searches for us when we are lost. Although he is King of the whole world and all time and space, he is always looking after our needs, more like a servant. Today we celebrate Christ as the humble King he is, full of glory but also full of love.

If we are going to be his people, we will act like him in our lives, and that is how he will recognize us as his people. Every time we do something kind or loving, or help someone, we are actually serving our King Jesus. Every time we are unkind and thoughtless, and don't notice that someone needs our help we are turning ourselves away from our King.

Jesus told one of his stories to help us understand. Place some carpet tiles, sheets or towels on the floor as the background for the story, and use cut-out pictures such as those shown on the activity sheet. You will need about twelve people. Move the pictures around on the background as you tell the story.

Jesus is talking about all the people standing before the throne of heaven who have not known him or been told about him during their lifetime. He says that the king is standing there and the people all stand in front of him. Just like a shepherd sorts out his sheep and goats he'll look at the people and put them into two groups, one on his right and the other on his left. To the ones on his right he will say, "Welcome to my kingdom! I can see from your lives that you belong to my kingdom of love. When you were alive, you gave me food when I was hungry, drink when I was thirsty, you welcomed me when I was a stranger, you gave me clothes when I needed them, and you visited me and helped

me when I was ill and in prison."

Very puzzled, the people looked at each other and at the king. (Show the question mark over them.) "We don't remember doing those things to you," they said, "When did we help you like that?"

The king explained to them that whenever they had done any of those kind things to anyone, they had been doing it to him. Their kind way of living showed, and that's how he could tell they were members of his kingdom of love.

Then he turned to the other group. "I can see that you don't belong to my kingdom," said the king. "The way you lived your life shows up now. I was hungry but you never fed me, I was thirsty but you never gave me a drink. When I was a stranger you never invited me in, and when I needed clothes you didn't give me any. When I was ill and in prison you never came to visit me."

The people were very surprised. (Show the question mark again.) "We didn't do any harm in our life," they protested. "And we don't know what you mean—we don't even know you; when did we not help you?" The king looked at them sadly. "I was there when you ignored the needs of those all around you and you just got on with your own lives without even noticing their pain and needs. When you failed to do good to those around you, you were failing to do good to me. That's how I can tell you don't belong in this kingdom of love. So you'll have to leave."

And those people were sent away. Suddenly they realized that there is more to good living than just not hurting people. Good living is noticing needs and caring for them.

Praying

O Jesus, our King and our friend,
help us to live as your people,
aware of others' needs and ready to help.

Activities

Have the letters of "Christ the Servant King" drawn on separate sheets of paper and let the children color them all in, so they can be strung onto a length of yarn and displayed in church. On the activity sheet is a pop-up card to make.

Notes

Feast of Christ the King

Christ is King

INTRODUCTION

Today is the last Sunday of the church's year, the feast of Christ the King. As the year draws to an end, we turn our thoughts to the time when Christ will return as king.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Say together:

May the light of Jesus shine in our lives.

SORRY

We ask God's forgiveness for any mistakes we have made as we pray:

Pick me up, Lord,
if I have made a mistake and fall again.
Take my hand
and surround me with your goodness
so that I can try again.

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing this acclamation to the tune of *Hickory, Dickory, Dock*:

Christ is the king of the world.
One day he will come back,
And we will see his full glory.
Christ is the king of the world.

GOSPEL (MATTHEW 25:31-46)

Jesus told his disciples: "One day I will return in glory to sort the good people from the bad, and I will turn to you and say:

When I was hungry, you fed me.
When I was thirsty, you gave me a drink.
When you did not know me,
you made me welcome.
When I had nothing to wear,
you gave me clothes.
When I was ill, you took care of me.
When I was alone, you came to visit me.

And you will ask, 'When did I do all these things for you, Lord?'

"I tell you, whenever you did any of these things for others, you did them for me; and because of your goodness you will share in the glory of my kingdom. Those people who turned others away and did not care, did the same to me. On judgment day they will be sent away, never to share eternal life with me in heaven."

DISCUSSION

Jesus will come back at the end of time as Christ the King. Imagine all the nations of the world standing before Jesus. How will he sort the good people from the bad?

Jesus knows each one of us better than we know ourselves, even down to the number of hairs on our head! He remembers all the times we have been kind and the times when we have been selfish. He will sort out the good people from the bad, according to the lives they have led, and whether they have been loving or unloving people.

If we have lived for Christ, then we will share the joy of everlasting life and happiness with him in the kingdom of heaven.

How can we make sure that we are sorted with the good people, and not the bad, on judgment day? No one is good all the time, but we can make our loving actions outweigh the unloving ones. If we fill our lives with love and kindness, seeing Jesus in each person we meet and always treating others with kindness and respect, then our goodness will never be forgotten.

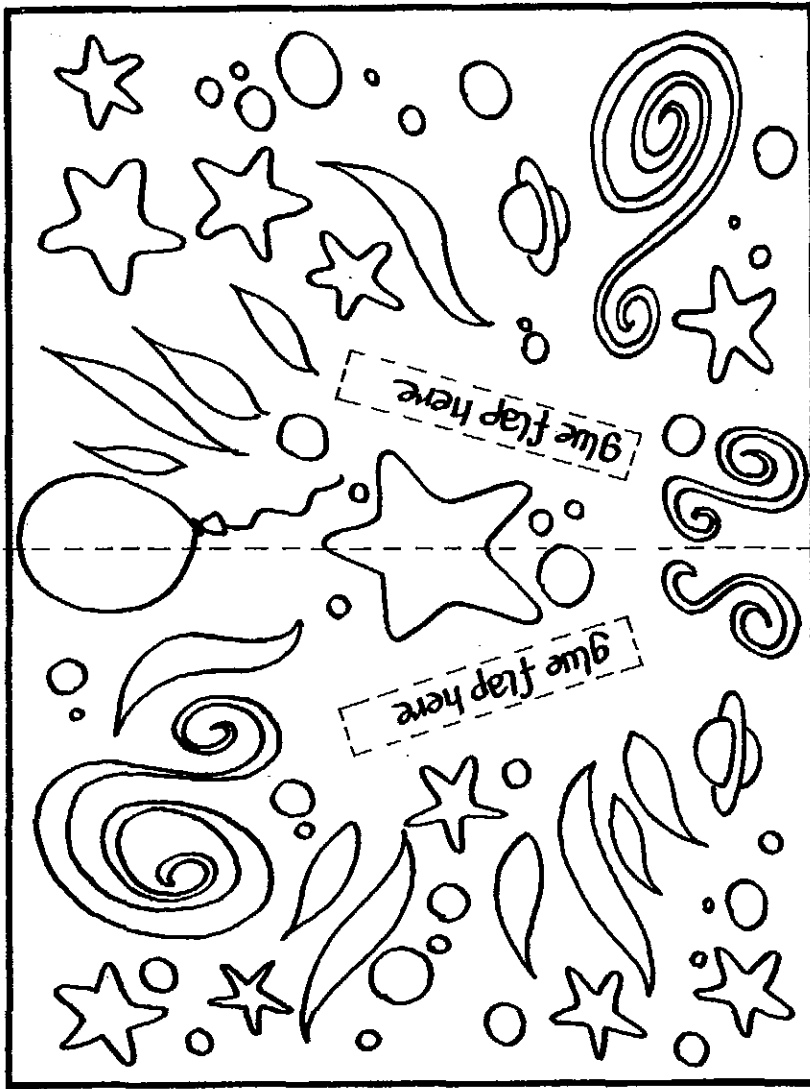
ACTIVITY

Draw some large, old-fashioned scales tilting heavily to one side. On squares of paper, write down some loving and unloving actions. Ask the children to color these, and place them on the relevant side of the scales. Add the caption, "Christ will weigh up our goodness."

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ,
King of the Universe,
watch over us and guide us.
Help us to remember
that whatever we do to others,
we do to you.



pop

Color these in,
stick on the crown to make
a pop-up card

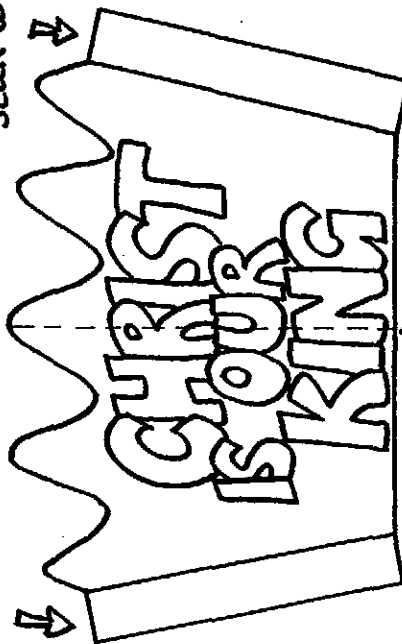


To pray this week

O Jesus, our King and friend,
help us to live as your people,
aware of others' needs
and ready to help.

stick to card

stick to card



fold

Read 'The Last Battle' by C. S. Lewis.
Especially, Chapter 15 - Further up and further in.

Liturgy of the Word for Children

Christ the King

1. The King's Secret: Coded Message

To discover the true secret of serving Christ the King, decode the message below.

1 2 3 4 5 6 5 7 8 9 10 11 9 12 9 7 9 4 2 5 7 13

8 9 10 11 9 12 9 7 14 5 13 10 13

KEY: 1 = W; 2 = H; 3 = A; 4 = T; 5 = E; 6 = V; 7 = R; 8 = Y; 9 = O; 10 = U; 11 = D;
12 = F; 13 = S; 14 = J

2. The King's Crown: Family Activity

In today's gospel reading, Jesus separates true believers from in-name-only Christians. Here is an idea to help you become loyal servants of Jesus, our King.

1. Cut a large crown out of heavy paper, decorate it, glue it into a circle, and place it in a "center of attention" location.

2. On each of six small slips of paper write one of the following phrases: "I was hungry and you gave me food." "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink." "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." "I was naked and you gave me clothing." "I was sick and you took care of me." "I was in prison and you visited me."

3. Place the slips of paper in the center of the crown.

4. Each day this week, have someone draw out one slip of paper and read Christ's message. Then discuss how all of you can best serve Jesus that day. (For example, if you draw "I was naked and you gave me clothing," the whole family or class can go through closets and drawers to find extra or outgrown clothing. Donate it to the St. Vincent de Paul Society or some similar charitable organization.)

Answer to #1: Whatever you do for others you do for Jesus.

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