

Sunday Message

SOLEMNITY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
KING OF THE UNIVERSE

THE WORD

Year C • 23 November 2025 • Psalter Week 2



A DIFFERENT KIND OF KING

LUKE 23:35-43

Instead of the Church's year ending on a blaze of glory on this feast of Christ the King, we are brought face to face with the crucified Christ to understand what his kingship really means.

Today's Gospel invites us to look lovingly and closely at two moments in Luke's account of the death of Jesus. There are three groups of people in the story. At a distance stand the ordinary folk, including probably the sorrowing women who accompanied him on the way to Calvary. They take no part in the mockery, in contrast to those closer to the cross.

Under the title on the cross that proclaims him as King of the Jews, Jesus' opponents are gathered. They form two groups; the religious leaders and the soldiers who are part of the execution squad. The religious leaders mock him for blasphemy, for his claim to be God's Messiah and Chosen One. The soldiers are less religiously motivated. They want to have fun with the dying criminal, toasting him mockingly with cheap wine (vinegar). As non-Jews, Jesus' religious claims mean nothing to them, so the kingship mockingly proclaimed by the sign on the cross is testimony to a poor, deluded madman whose claims to kingship have led him to the most humiliating form of death available.

The third group is closer still. It is made up of the three executed men on their crosses, Jesus and the two criminals alongside him. The first joins in the taunts of those gathered beneath: if you are the Christ, then save yourself and us as well.

His companion behaves differently. He is the last of those many people who throughout the Gospel story have come to Jesus in the hope of finding pardon and salvation. He admits that he is a sinner who has received a just reward for his deeds while Jesus has done nothing wrong. He asks for little, just to be remembered when Jesus finally enters his Kingdom. In a final act of kingly benefaction, Jesus grants this outcast a share in paradise.

In the midst of the misery and humiliation of the cross, Luke succeeds in painting a picture of someone who is every inch a king. He pardons his executioners, he bestows the gift of the kingdom on someone who has done little to deserve it until that moment, and in the act of dying he calmly resigns his Spirit into the hands of God.

The liturgical year closes with a powerful statement of Jesus as the one who brings salvation to no-hopers. In the Midnight Mass of Christmas, we are invited to rejoice with the shepherds, also a marginal and despised class, that a saviour or royal benefactor has been born for them. We close it on this feast of the Kingship with yet another view of the same royal benefactor who bestows the kingdom gift on those who have little claim on it. ■

REFLECT

Pope Pius XI inaugurated this feast in 1925 during a time of increasing political turmoil. Mussolini's Blackshirts were in power in Italy. A demagogue called Adolf Hitler was reorganising the Nazi party in Germany following his release from prison after an unsuccessful coup attempt. In Moscow, Josef Stalin was ruthlessly consolidating his control of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Democracies were crumbling across Europe, and populism and militant nationalism were on the rise. In creating this feast, Pope Pius was declaring to the world that despite dictatorships and economic collapse and the false values of the time, Jesus Christ remained King of the Universe and a model for how authority should be exercised.

Pius XI was declaring that in a world filled with division, conflict and tears, Christ the King offers both the ideal example and an uncomfortable model of behaviour.

Sadly, Pius XI could have been creating this feast for the world of today. There is so much fear and anxiety about, with war in Ukraine and the Holy Land, rising tensions between the United States and its traditional allies, increased political polarisation and intolerance, national leaders who abuse their position and treat their opponents with contempt, a world more on edge than at any time since the end of the Cold War.

Christ the King is the model for how power and authority should be exercised, now and always, and the model for how people should relate to one another. He shows us the true meaning of leadership. ■

PRAY

Pray for our leaders – of Church and state – that what they do and how they live will reflect Kingdom values of service, humility and love.

DO

Think about how you treat others. Do you treat everyone with kindness and respect, irrespective of who they are or what they do or where they come from?

SAY

"Lord, Jesus Christ, you are my Master and my King. Help me to follow you to the best of my ability. Amen."

LEARN

Jesus came to establish a new kind of kingdom, based not on power, wealth and military might but on justice, peace and love.

The followers of Jesus live by the values of his Kingdom.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*How worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and divinity,
and wisdom and strength and honour.
To him belong glory and power for ever and ever.*

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
whose will is to restore all things
in your beloved Son, the King of the universe,
grant, we pray,
that the whole creation, set free from slavery,
may render your majesty service
and ceaselessly proclaim your praise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING 2 Samuel 5:1-3

A reading from the Second Book of Samuel.

In those days: All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, 'Behold, we are your bone and flesh. In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the LORD said to you, "You shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel."' So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD, and they anointed David king over Israel.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 122(121):1-2. 4-5. R. cf. 1

R: Let us go rejoicing to the house of the LORD.

1. I rejoiced when they said to me,
'Let us go to the house of the LORD.'
And now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem. **R.**
2. It is there that the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD.
As it is decreed for Israel,
to give praise to the name of the LORD.
There were set the thrones for judgement,
the thrones of the house of David. **R.**

SECOND READING Colossians 1:12-20

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians.

Brothers and sisters: Let us give thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or

authorities – all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the Church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Mark 11:9, 10

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Luke 23:35-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

At that time: The rulers scoffed at Jesus, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged there railed at Jesus, saying, 'Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.' And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we offer you, O Lord, the sacrifice
by which the human race is reconciled to you,
we humbly pray
that your Son himself may bestow on all nations
the gifts of unity and peace.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord sits as King for ever.

The Lord will bless his people with peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the food of immortality,
we ask, O Lord,
that, glorying in obedience
to the commands of Christ, the King of the universe,
we may live with him eternally in his heavenly Kingdom.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.