



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

Christ the King of the Universe Children's Liturgy of the Word

Overview

The readings on the feast of Christ the King present two kings: first, David, anointed by the tribes of Israel, and then Jesus, who reigns from the Cross.

In the first reading, the people approach David and declare, "We are your bone and your flesh." They chose him as their king because he had shepherded, protected, and led them. David's kingship is founded on service and a covenantal relationship.

In contrast, the Gospel reveals the true essence of kingship in an unexpected way. Jesus, the Son of David, is lifted up—not on a throne, but on a cross. He is mocked by leaders, soldiers, and even a criminal. Calvary does not appear royal in any way; however, this is precisely where Jesus demonstrates His true authority.

One of the criminals sees beyond the suffering. While others demand miracles, he recognizes Jesus' innocence and mercy. With trust, he says, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Here, on Calvary, the kingship of Christ is unveiled: a King who forgives, a King who welcomes sinners, a King who saves not through force, but through love.

David united the tribes of Israel, while Jesus unites all humanity through His sacrifice. David shepherded his people, but Jesus laid down His life for His flock. David's reign pointed forward, while Jesus' reign fulfills.

Background

2 Samuel 5.1-3 depicts the unification of Israel's tribes under King David at Hebron, a foundational event in biblical history that prefigures Christ's eternal kingship. The passage highlights themes of covenant, divine anointing, and shepherd-like leadership, pointing to Jesus as the ultimate fulfillment of these promises.

Psalms 122 is a joyful pilgrimage hymn that expresses delight in communal worship, the city's unity, and prayers for its peace. The verses highlight themes of gladness, solidarity, and divine order.

Colossians 1:12-20 is a majestic Christological hymn in Paul's letter to the Colossian church, celebrating Christ's preeminence in creation, redemption, and the Church. Attributed to Paul around A.D. 60-62 while imprisoned, this passage counters early heresies by affirming Christ's full divinity and cosmic lordship. It directly resonates with the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, underscoring Christ's eternal kingship as the ruler of the universe, fulfilling Old Testament prophecies and inviting believers to joyful submission to His reign.

Luke 23:35-43 is the scene of Jesus' crucifixion, where mockery gives way to revelation: the mocked "King of the Jews" responds with mercy, promising paradise to a repentant criminal. This passage vividly illustrates the paradoxical nature of Christ's kingship—not one of earthly power, but of forgiving love and salvific authority, which fulfills messianic prophecies and invites all to enter his eternal reign through repentance and faith.

Luke emphasizes Jesus' innocence, prayerfulness, and compassion, portraying him as the innocent sufferer who intercedes for everyone. The reading unveils the Cross as the revelation of Christ's kingship: a reign of mercy that saves not by power but by promise, directly illuminating the solemnity as an invitation to acclaim Him as the eternal King and enter His paradise through faith.

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: Dear children, Jesus is King and reigns with love, the same love he shows for the least among our sisters and brothers. Listen and learn from him so that he may love the least among you through you.

One of the leaders carries the Book of God's Word, held high for all to see. The second leader assists by directing the children. Once most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the celebration site. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the celebration location, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting, welcome them, and participate in the prayer, helping them to settle.

The leader may say the prayer.

Today, we celebrate Jesus as our King—not a king with a fancy crown, but the best kind who loves everyone.

Let us pray:

**O God, help us to increase our faith in Jesus as King of the Universe.
Amen.**

Invite the children to sit and listen to the readings.

Readings

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 5.1-3

A reading from the second book of Samuel.

All the tribes of Israel came to David¹ at Hebron², and said,

"Look, we are your bone and flesh.

For some time, while Saul³ was king over us,
it was you who led out Israel and brought it in.

The Lord said to you:

'It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel,
you who shall be ruler over Israel.'

So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron;
and King David made a covenant⁴ with them at Hebron before the Lord,
and they anointed⁵ David king over Israel.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

¹ The second and greatest king of Israel, whose forty-year reign and whose covenant with God made him the supreme model of kingship for all of his successors. In salvation history, David is both God's chosen king and a type of the future Messiah.

² An important city in the mountains of Judah, to the southeast of Jerusalem.

³ The first king of Israel.

⁴ A kinship bond between two parties, with conditions or obligations, established by an oath or its equivalent.

⁵ The ritual act of pouring oil on a person or thing with the intention of making the anointed one sacred.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 122.1-2, 3-4a, 4b-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

I was glad when they said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem. **R.**

Jerusalem—built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord. **R.**

As it was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
For there the thrones for judgment were set up,
the thrones of the house of David. **R.**

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians.

Brothers and sisters:

Give thanks to the Father,
who has enabled you

to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

The Father has rescued us from the power of darkness
and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,
in whom we have redemption,
the forgiveness of sins.

Christ is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation;
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created,
things visible and invisible,
whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—
all things have been created through him and for him.

Christ is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.

He is the head of the body, the church;
he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,
so that he might come to have first place in everything.

For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,
whether on earth or in heaven,
by making peace through the blood of his cross.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

GOSPEL

Ask the children to stand for the Gospel. Help them make the sign of the Cross over their forehead, lips and heart.

Luke 23.35-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

The leaders scoffed at Jesus saying,

"He saved others;

let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!"

The soldiers also mocked Jesus, 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

kept deriding Jesus and 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 have been condemned justly,

for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds,

but this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said,

"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus replied,

"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

The gospel of the Lord.

The children respond, Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask the children to sit.

RE-IMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

These readings are intended to be presented after the children have heard the original reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading during the CLoW. Read the original reading, and at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read them the re-imagined readings. If time permits, the Gospel has the highest priority, then the Psalm, and then the first reading. The intent is to allow the children to hear the original reading and help them understand it through the re-imagined reading. It is always essential to remain faithful to the original intent while adapting the readings to make them age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

2 Samuel 5.1-3

A reading from the second book of Samuel.

In a land called Israel, there was a brave and kind man named David. He wasn't just any hero—he was a shepherd boy who grew up protecting others and playing beautiful music on his harp. God had chosen David to be a special leader for His people, like a big brother who takes care of everyone.

After their king, Saul, died, all the families and tribes of Israel (that's like all the neighbourhoods coming together) gathered in a city called Hebron. They looked at David and said, "David! When Saul was king, you were the one who protected us, leading us on adventures and bringing us home safe. God told you long ago that you'd be our shepherd, guiding us like a gentle sheepdog, and our ruler, making sure everything is fair and fun." They made a special promise together—a covenant, like a super-strong pinky swear—to work as a team. Then, they poured oil on David's head (this was how kings were crowned back then, as a symbol of God's blessing). They shouted, "David is our king over all Israel!"

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

R: Let us praise Jesus, God of the Universe.

I jumped for joy, like when I'm eager to spend time with my friends.

We're here at last, in God's big, welcoming home,
where love wraps around us like a cozy hug.

Every piece fits just right, no one left out in the light. **R.**

All God's family groups climb up with smiles so wide,
coming together side by side.

Just like God planned from the start,
we sing our thanks with joyful hearts. **R.**

Kind leaders sit like wise teachers there,
making everything fair and full of care.

Strong and safe like a castle so grand,
God's protection holds every hand. **R.**

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Colossians.

Paul says to thank God because God rescued us from darkness and placed us in His bright, loving kingdom—Jesus is our home. Through Jesus, our mistakes are forgiven. He shines as God's light, showing us the best way to live.

Jesus is the perfect picture of God and the firstborn of all creation. All the stars, animals, and even you were made by Him and for Him. He holds everything together like a strong glue. Jesus is the head of the Church, the family of God.

He gives us new life and brings all His power inside us. By loving us on the cross, Jesus heals the broken world. He brings peace to everyone, uniting us all in one happy family.

Jesus is our friend, our guide, and the builder of everything— so let's follow Him and spread His love.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

GOSPEL

Ask the children to stand for the Gospel. Help them make the sign of the Cross over their forehead, lips and heart.

Luke 23.35-43

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

People stood around watching Jesus on the cross. Some of them made fun of Him and said, "Look at Him! If He is really God's chosen one, He should save Himself!"

The soldiers also laughed at Jesus. They offered Him sour wine and said, "If You are the King of the Jews, then save Yourself!" Above Jesus' head, they put a sign that said: "This is the King of the Jews." Jesus was between two men, also on a cross. They had done bad things.

One of the men made fun of Jesus and said, "If You are the Messiah, save Yourself—and save us too!" But the other man told him, "Don't you fear God? We are being punished because we did wrong things. But Jesus has done nothing wrong."

Then this man turned to Jesus and said, "Jesus, please remember me when You come into Your kingdom." Jesus looked at him with love and said, "Today you will be with Me in paradise."

The gospel of the Lord.

The children respond, Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask the children to sit.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions. An excellent place to begin is the question:

What did you hear?

Long ago, God's people needed a leader and chose David, a brave shepherd boy, to be their king. David agreed, and God blessed him to lead with kindness. This shows that God selects leaders who care for others, just as Jesus does for us.

How does the story of David becoming king inspire you?

St. Paul thanks God for bringing us from darkness into Jesus' kingdom and forgiving our mistakes. Jesus, the head of the Church, created everything in a beautiful manner. On the cross, He restored what was broken and made peace for all. Jesus is the strongest and kindest King!

When you come to church or pray, what do you feel?

In the Gospel, Jesus is nailed to a cross with two criminals beside Him. People mocked Him, saying, "If you're King, save yourself!" Yet, Jesus forgave them. One thief asked Him to remember him in His kingdom, and Jesus replied, "Today, you'll be with me in paradise!" Even in pain, Jesus showed that His kingdom is about love, offering heaven to all who seek forgiveness.

These stories fit together like a crown: David points to a good leader, Paul explains Jesus' big power, and the cross shows His saving love. Jesus isn't a bossy king; He's our friend who died for us and rose to rule with mercy.

What does this mean for you? Be a Mini-King/Queen: Help others like David, forgive like Jesus, and be excited for church like the psalm.

How can you be a "mini king" or "mini queen" in your family or classroom? Jesus' kingdom is here in your heart—full of hope and hugs from God.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith. Together, sing or recite the Apostles' or Nicene Creed. Refer the children to the words of the prayer that you have displayed.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith.

Together, recite the Creed.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: We believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who became our brother and gave his life for us?

All: We believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: We believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Invite the children to consider the needs of others and to share their petitions. The leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they are aware of. It may be necessary for the leader to repeat and/or paraphrase the petition and conclude it with the cue for the response: For this, we pray. All respond to each petition by saying: Lord, hear our prayer. Sample intercessions are below.

Leader: Dear Jesus, our loving King, we present to you our prayers.
The response is: Lord, hear our prayer. **R**

For the Church: That we will always remember that Jesus is a King who loves and forgives us.

We pray to the Lord. **R**

For our world: That all people—especially leaders—will choose peace, kindness, and fairness, just as Jesus our King teaches.

We pray to the Lord. **R**

For our families: That our homes may be filled with love, forgiveness, and patience.

We pray to the Lord. **R**

For our school and parish community: That we will treat one another the way Jesus the King treats us: with mercy and kindness.

We pray to the Lord. **R**

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children or add intercessions based on the Church's current needs, the world, or the local community.

For the faithful departed: That they may be welcomed into paradise, just as Jesus welcomed the good thief. We pray to the Lord. **R**

Leader: Lord Jesus, King of the Universe, accept our prayers. Amen.

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and consider what they have heard and are now doing.

Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

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