

Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe

November 20, 2016

Today You Will Be with Me

Scripture Background

Connections to Church Teaching and Tradition

- “That messianic people has as its head Christ. . . . Its law is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us. . . . Its destiny is the kingdom of God . . . brought to perfection by him at the end of time when Christ our life . . . will appear and ‘creation itself also will be delivered from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the sons and daughters of God’” (LG, 9).
- “The goal of salvation, the Kingdom of God embraces all people and is fully realized beyond history, in God. The Church has received ‘the mission of proclaiming and establishing among all peoples the Kingdom of Christ and of God, and she is, on earth, the seed and the beginning of that Kingdom’” (CSDC, 49).
- “Let us believe the Gospel . . . that the kingdom of God is already present in this world and is growing, here and there, and in different ways” (EG, 278).

2 Samuel 5:1–3 As we celebrate this last Sunday of the liturgical year, we focus on Jesus Christ as the King of the Universe, the Risen Lord who has conquered death and now lives in eternal union with the Father and Spirit. Christ’s kingship as deliverer and shepherd of the whole universe is prefigured in the person of David, king of Israel’s united kingdom and that of the holy city, Jerusalem. David’s anointing by all the other tribes as king of Israel is actually David’s third anointing. Samuel performed the first one while David was still a youth, setting God’s approval on David as future king (1 Samuel 16:13). David’s second anointing designates him king of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4). Here, all the tribes acknowledge their intimate kinship with David, “here we are, your bone and your flesh” (5:1); and are pleased with David’s previous leadership under Saul. David’s role as leader and shepherd of the people is God’s doing, and the tribes fully approve and promise loyalty and fidelity. As king, David promises to care for God’s people, exercising justice and right relationship, thus becoming the visible representative of God as shepherd of the people. Hence David prefigures Christ’s future Kingdom and rule over all creation.

Psalms 122:1–2, 3–4, 4–5 (see 1) This pilgrimage psalm expresses the great joy of those who cherished the opportunity to go to the Temple, “the house of the Lord” (122:1) situated at the very pinnacle of Jerusalem, the holy city established by King David. Jerusalem, the focal worship center of all the tribes, was admired for its Temple, its beauty, and its adherence to the covenant promises and Torah regulations. Both king and city were understood to be the living embodiment of the Lord’s intimate dwelling and covenant relationship with all the people. Thanksgiving to God for such marvels as the Temple and the city was the only fitting response any pilgrim could give. Thus Jerusalem, the Temple, and the unity therein expressed became a symbol for intimate covenant relationship with God for all time.

Colossians 1:12–20 The author of the letter to the Colossians inserts a preexisting liturgical hymn at the beginning of the letter to exalt Christ’s role as king over all creation. The author introduces the hymn by inviting disciples to offer praise and thanksgiving to God for the privilege “to share in the inheritance of the holy ones” (1:12). Through Christ’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection, God has gifted us with redemption, the forgiveness of sin, and “delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (1:13). Jesus is praised and exalted above all creation—the “firstborn of all creation” (1:15) in whom all things were created. In Christ “all things hold together” (1:17). He is “the head of the body, the church . . . in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell” (1:18). Through the Blood of his Cross, Christ reconciled all things, “making peace . . . whether those on earth or those in heaven” (1:20). Such high Christology exalting Christ as the reconciling king of the universe is a fitting hymn for this last Sunday of the liturgical year.

Luke 23:35–43 Death by crucifixion is very far removed from the human concept of kingship. Kings usually exercise power over others. Luke narrates this scene with irony and paradox, asserting that the world’s ways are not God’s ways. Jesus is the chosen one of God, the Christ (Messiah), the true king of the Jews in the line of David, who has come to establish God’s

Kingdom, and through his self-gift on the Cross is accomplishing his mission. But the rulers, the soldiers, and one of the criminals crucified with him cannot understand the cosmic events happening before their eyes. Paradoxically, everything they are saying in mockery about him is true, which they fail to see. One of the crucified criminals does see. Luke uses him to assert Jesus' innocence and undeserved punishment. This crucified criminal also acknowledges Jesus' kingly status, humbly asking to be remembered by Jesus when "you come into your kingdom" (23:42). Jesus, eagerly welcoming the repentant sinner, "today" (23:43) welcomes this lost son into paradise with him. Luke's main Gospel themes manifest themselves. Jesus, the universal savior of all, shows special care and concern for the rejected and for all repentant sinners. As Davidic king, Jesus came to establish God's Kingdom and to call all to repentance and mutual loving service. In so doing, we too can anticipate Jesus assurance that "today you will be with me in Paradise" (23:43).

Preparation

Lectionary #162C

2 Samuel 5:1–3

Psalms 122:1–2, 3–4,
4–5 (see 1)

Colossians 1:12–20

Luke 23:35–43

The promise of Christian faith is eternal life: Paradise. In this week's Gospel, Jesus tells the criminal that because of his faith, "today you will be with me in Paradise." When we believe that to be close to Jesus is Paradise, then our lives open up with love for the world. Not only do we mark the end of the liturgical year with this solemnity, we also celebrate the reign of Christ over the hearts of people and nations that strive for making peace and justice real in today's world.

Objectives

- To believe that Jesus offers all of us the chance to live with him in Paradise.
- To help children to understand that they can be evangelists and help build up God's family here on earth.

Preparation and Materials

- Read the Season Background, the Lectionary readings, and the Scripture Background.
- Bookmark the appropriate readings (see page xiii) in the Lectionary, children's Lectionary, or Bible. Place the book in a convenient location for the leader.
- Write the words of dismissal on a card for the priest celebrant.
- Prepare the words of the song the children will sing as they gather in the space for Liturgy of the Word.
- Select volunteers (older children or adults) to proclaim the readings.
- Display the Responsorial Psalm refrain lyrics.
- Display the Apostles' or Nicene Creed.
- Prepare intercessions for the Prayer of the Faithful adapted for the needs of the Church, world, oppressed or marginalized, and local community.

Prayer Leader Reflection Questions

- ? What names for Jesus are helpful in your own prayer life?
- ? This is the last Sunday of the liturgical year. Is there anything you might do differently in your celebrations with the children as we begin a new liturgical season and year?

Procession Following the Collect of the Mass, the priest celebrant picks up the Lectionary and invites those who would like to participate in the Liturgy of the Word with children to come forward and gather in the center aisle. The people who will lead the children out and facilitate the Liturgy of the Word also come forward at this time. Holding the Lectionary so that all can see, the priest celebrant sends the children forth using his own words or the following:

Priest: **Dear children, go together to listen to God's holy Word. Listen closely to what God may have to say to you today. May you learn and grow in love for God so that you may live in the Holy Spirit, and share the Good News of Jesus Christ, this day, and every day. Go in peace.**

The leader processes out holding the Lectionary and the children follow behind. The parish music minister may have selected a song of dismissal for the assembly to sing while the children leave. A good option is "Listen to God's Word" (Haas).

Centering Continue to sing the song of dismissal that the assembly sang as you left the church. Or sing "Jesus, Remember Me" (Berthier), or "The King of Love My Shepherd Is" (ST. COLUMBA) or have instrumental music playing as the children gather in the space for the Liturgy of the Word.

Place the Lectionary on the ambo or lectern. Light the candle placed by the ambo or lectern and then lead the following prayer:

**God our Father,
open our hearts to your holy Word and help us to follow Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.**

Children: Amen.

First Reading 2 Samuel 5:1-3
Responsorial Psalm Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5 (see 1) *Sing the same musical setting that is used in your parish's celebration of the liturgy.*
Second Reading Colossians 1:12-20
Gospel Acclamation *Sing the Gospel Acclamation used in your parish's celebration of the liturgy.*
Gospel Reading Luke 23:35-43
Homily/Reflection ? What is your idea of paradise?

Many of us think of paradise as a place. Like a tropical rain forest, or a sunny beach, or a beautiful city, a wonderful place to live. What if I told you that paradise was as simple as just being with Jesus? Can you imagine loving someone so much that you just wanted to be with that person all of the time? The love of God is so beautiful, so wonderful, and so amazing, that just being with God is paradise.

In the second reading we hear that "Jesus is the son of the invisible God." Jesus, who is the Son of God, shares in the divinity of God. The title for Jesus that we celebrate today is: Jesus Christ the King. We believe that Jesus is our Savior and that he reigns over us all.

The early Christians knew that this truth and Jesus' message was so special that they wanted to shout it from the rooftops! They must have experienced the great love of God through Jesus.

? Do you want to feel that close to God? Have you ever felt the great love of God?

On the day you were baptized, Jesus promised to be with you always: you are invited into Paradise with Jesus today and every day. This really is good news! When we tell each other how much God loves us, it helps others to desire that closeness, too. We can help spread the wonderful Good News just like the early Christians did. Maybe you will be so excited and full of happiness about being a child of God that you will want to shout it from the rooftops, too!

Last week we learned that St. Paul was an evangelist.

? Do you remember what that means?

An evangelist is someone who shares the Good News of Jesus and invites other people to follow Jesus. St. Paul really did believe that being close to Jesus is like living in paradise. Do you know you can also be an evangelist? Here are some ways you can do that right now:

1. Live your faith: The first thing you can do is to live in the love of Jesus in your everyday life, to live as a child of God, to be a Christian disciple.
2. Invite others: Invite friends and loved ones to church so that they also can experience God's love in a faith community.
3. Be a witness to God's love in the world: Treat everyone you meet the way Jesus would treat them. When you do this you will help to make the world a better place.

Let's use some hand gestures to help us to remember how to be an evangelist.

1. Live your faith. *Hold your left hand in front of your chest, palm side up, then use your right hand to "walk" two of your fingers across your palm.*
2. Invite others. *Beckon with your hand.*
3. Be a witness to the world. *Begin with both hands open, in front of your waist in a receiving gesture, and then raise your hands forward, up, and out, as if you are giving what you have out to everyone.*

Have you got that? Let's do it again so we can remember. *Repeat the exercise.*

Profession
of Faith
Prayer of the
Faithful

Following the homily or 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.

Leader: **United in faith, let us bring our prayers before our loving God. Please respond, "Lord, hear our prayer."**

For the Church, the family of God, in thanksgiving we pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who work for justice and peace throughout the world, that God will protect and guide them, we pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who feel sad or lonely, that they might rely more wholeheartedly upon the love and mercy of God, we pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

For our parish community, that we may become one Body, one spirit in Christ, and that we may reach out with charitable concern to those around us in need, we pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

Invite other intercessions from the children, or add intercessions based on the current needs of the Church, the world, the oppressed or marginalized, and the local community. Conclude each of the children's petitions with, "we pray," and invite the response, "Lord, hear our prayer."

For all those who have died, that they may live with God forever, we pray: Lord, hear our prayer.

**God our Father,
we offer you these prayers, asking that you grant them if it is your will.
Through Christ our Lord.**

Children: Amen.

Quietly return with the children to the main assembly. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.