King of Compassion

We are to serve others with the compassion of Christ.

- Jesus tells us how he will come again as king of those who serve others.
- Young children have no historical or contemporary knowledge of kings, but they can take the first steps in learning about our beloved King Jesus as one who loves those who serve.
- Today’s session celebrates Christ our King through roleplay, storytelling, game and art.

Question of the Week
How do we help each other every day? How do we help when there’s a special need?

Core Session
- Getting Started (colored cloth, paper crown)
- Gospel Story: We Can Help Jesus
- Roleplay: I Was Hungry... (free-play materials such as water cups, play food, dress-up clothes, pillow, etc.)
- Praying Together

Enrichment
- Discover the Good News
- Singing Together
- Story-Review Game: I Was...
- Art: Crown Banner (large round carton, long dowel, string, foil, sequins, glitter, sharp knife for leader, optional: ribbons, small bells, clothespins and line)
- Story Sharing: Help
- Info: Season Review
- Info: Young Children and the Gospel
- Info: Where You’ll Find Everything Else

Helps for Catechists
- More about Today’s Scriptures
- Reflection
- The Scriptures and the Catechism
- Liturgy Link: The Feast of Christ the King
- The World of the Bible: A New Creation
Getting Started (5-15 minutes)
Children roleplay actions that would welcome Jesus.

Explain that we call Jesus our King. We don’t have many kings today, but they are like people with lots of money and the right to tell other people what to do. Jesus is not a king like that. Jesus didn’t have lots of money. Jesus didn’t want to tell other people what to do. Jesus came to love and help others.

Drape a chair in cloths. Put a paper crown on the seat of the chair. Say:
◆ Imagine Jesus is here today, sitting in that chair.
◆ What would we like to say to Jesus?
◆ What would we like to do with Jesus?

Encourage children both to act out their ideas. Explain that in today’s story, Jesus has some ideas about what to do, too!

Gospel Story (5-10 minutes)
Story Focus: Use 10 pennies as a visual focus for today’s story.

Young children often confuse the leader with God or Jesus. To minimize that possibility in today’s story, ask a volunteer to act as Jesus as you tell the story. Follow the directions printed in italics. Use the materials for the Getting Started activity above to tell today’s story. After the story, provide play materials for the children to use as props.

We Can Help Jesus
Once Jesus said, “This is what it will be like when I come back to you as King.

“I will sit on a throne. (Seat the child on the cloth-draped chair. Place the crown on his or her head.) I will gather all the people of the world together.

“Then I will say, ‘Good people, come to my side.’ (Encourage all the children to come close to the crowned child’s side.)

“Then I, King Jesus, will say to the good people, ‘We will be happy together forever; because…

I was hungry and you fed me.
I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.
I was a stranger and you invited me to your home.
I had no clothes and you gave me some.
I was sick and you took care of me.
I was in prison and you came to see me.’

“But the good people will say to me, ‘Jesus, when did we see you hungry or thirsty? When did we help you when you were a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison?’

“And I will tell them, ‘If you took care of anyone at all who was hungry or thirsty, if you took care of a stranger or someone with no clothes, if you took care of someone who was sick or in prison, it is just the same as if you did it for me!”

(Repeat with other children as volunteers, if interest is sustained.)

Roleplay (10-15 minutes)
I Was Hungry...
Invite children to roleplay the actions of the good people in today’s story.

Sit with the children in a semicircle. Begin by saying:
◆ Jesus says, “I was hungry and you fed me.”
◆ Who can show us what it’s like to be hungry? (Ask a volunteer to stand in front of the children and act out being hungry.)
◆ Who can feed this hungry person? (Ask a volunteer to act out giving food to the hungry person.)

Continue for the other sentences from today’s story, inviting volunteers to act out these parts:
◆ a thirsty person and someone who gives a drink
◆ someone who needs clothes and someone to give clothes
◆ a sick person and a caregiver

Children can use free-play materials to provide appropriate props.

Praying Together (5 minutes)
Invite children to thank King Jesus for people who help them.

Close by praying:
◆ Thank you, King Jesus, for everyone who helps us.
◆ Show us how to help others, too. Amen.

Note: Distribute this week’s At Home with the Good News to children before they leave, or e-mail it to their parents after the session.
Discover the Good News
(5-10 minutes)
On page 1 of today’s Discover the Good News, you’ll find an illustrated version of today’s story.

On page 2 you’ll find a matching game in which children link items to the people who need them.

Singing Together (5-10 minutes)
From Singing the Good News, sing together:
◆ “Live in Harmony” (songbook p. 4, also available as an MP3)
◆ “The Great Commandment” (songbook p. 8, also available as an MP3)

Note: To access both the songbook and its attached MP3 files, open your Fall-A Seasonal Resources folder, then click on Singing the Good News.

Story-Review Game (10-15 minutes)
I Was...
To play without competition, you will need only one team. Arrange the children in a line at one end of the room and the free-play materials from today’s story at the other end.

Read a need from today’s story:
◆ I was hungry and you fed me.
◆ I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.
◆ I was a stranger and you invited me to your home.
◆ I had no clothes and you gave me some.
◆ I was sick and you took care of me.
◆ I was in prison and you came to see me.

The first child in line races to the materials to get the item necessary to meet the need and runs back with it.

For example, if you read, “I had no clothes,” the child runs to get a jacket or cloth and returns. The first child then goes to the end of the line and the next child races.

Art (10-25 minutes)
Crown Banner
Explain that today we celebrate our King, Jesus. One way we celebrate our King is to walk in church singing songs and carrying special decorations, such as candles and this banner.

Discard the lid of the ice cream carton. Cut out the bottom. Cut points along the rim to shape the carton like a crown. Glue aluminum foil or metallic paper to the crown.

Ask the children to decorate the crown with glue, glitter and sequins. At four points evenly spaced around the top of the crown, punch holes. Tie string through the holes to make a hanger.

Notch the top of the dowel with a knife, making perpendicular notches. Suspend the crown from the top of the dowel, fitting the string into the notches. If you like, punch holes at evenly spaced intervals around the bottom of the crown. Tie bells to ribbons and suspend the ribbons from the holes.

Story Sharing (5-15 minutes)
Helping
Children tell stories about helping and being helped. Not all young children enjoy this kind of verbal activity. If the children are restless and bored, move on to another activity. Ask:
◆ Have you ever helped anyone who was sick?
◆ Have you ever been sick? Did anyone help you?
◆ Have you ever given food to someone who was hungry?
◆ Who has given you food when you were hungry?
◆ Have you ever given a drink to someone who was thirsty?
◆ Does anyone bring you a drink when you are thirsty?

Explain that when we help others, it is the same as if we are caring for Jesus himself. When others help us, they are treating us as special people. They are treating us as if we are King Jesus.
**Season Review**
What went well this season? What still needs attention in the weeks to come?

We suggest you review the season and make notes for the next, whether you or another leader will be working with the children. Use this checklist:
◆ Do I have well-established routines for beginning and ending the session?
◆ Can I recall each child by name? Can I think of one positive thing I enjoy about each child?
◆ Which art activities (drawing, painting, working with clay, etc.) worked well?
◆ Which movement activities (games, creative drama, etc.) worked well?
◆ Are there changes I would choose to make next season?

**Young Children and the Gospel**
Today’s session celebrates the paradox of Jesus’ lordship on this Feast of Christ the King. Jesus proclaims himself our king and judge, but teaches us that we will find him, not in pursuit of power or luxury, but in humble service to those in need.

As we come to the last of this season’s sessions, we can reflect once more on the outreach opportunities our Church offers to its young children. If your church has been unresponsive to your efforts to include the children in its ministries, you may need to reflect on these words of Rabbi Hillel: If not you, who? If not now, when?

**Where You’ll Find Everything Else**
◆ Attached to this Session Plan you will find:
  — Backgrounds and reflections for today’s readings, titled *More about Today’s Scriptures*.
  — Today’s *Gospel Story*, to distribute or e-mail to children and their families.
  — Suggestions for exploring *Our Parish*.
  — Instructions for an alternative *Art Activity*.
  — An article on *Christ the King* to distribute or e-mail to families.
  — Today’s *At Home with the Good News*, to distribute or e-mail to families after the session.
◆ Open your Fall-A *Seasonal Resources* folder, then click on *Seasonal Articles* to find:
  — Information on Fall-A’s *Models of the Faith*.
  — A reproducible *LTGN Overview for Parents*, to e-mail to parents or to print and send home with participants.
  — An article for leaders on *The Lectionary and the Church Year*.
  — A printable article further exploring *The Feast of Christ the King*.
  — A reproducible handout exploring *Thanksgiving Day*. 
More about Today’s Scriptures

Today’s readings celebrate Christ our compassionate King. Ezekiel pictures God as our Shepherd who rescues and watches over us. Paul pictures Christ as reigning triumphantly over all his enemies, including death. In today’s gospel, Jesus presents a vision of final judgement, in which the Son of Man welcomes into God’s kingdom those who have treated others with compassion and mercy.

Ezekiel 34:11-12, 15-17

In the ancient Near East, the king was often pictured as a shepherd. But the pre-exilic kings and leaders were false shepherds, exploiting and neglecting their flock. Now God will act as the good shepherd, searching out God’s people scattered among the nations and gathering them back to their own land. The reestablished monarchy will act only as God’s faithful regent (vv. 22-24).

Ezekiel reveals God’s nature as one of both compassion and judgment. God’s mercy extends to the lost and injured—those who have suffered from the injustices of others as well as from their own wrong choices.

God’s judgment reaches the sheep as well as the shepherds. As the shepherds have been judged, so also the sheep must be judged for their behavior to one another (vv. 17-22).

1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28

In chapter 15, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the resurrection traditions he has passed on to them. He then points out that their doubts about the resurrection of the dead are logically incompatible with their belief in Jesus’ resurrection and their experience of its power in their lives.

In today’s reading, he goes on to show that Jesus’ resurrection is the basis for the resurrection of all and for the ultimate redemption of the universe. Christ is the first fruits of the dead; the offering of the first fruits of the harvest symbolized the dedication of the whole harvest to God.

Matthew 25:31-46

Today’s reading, the last of Matthew’s three end-time parables, is more a vision of the last judgment than it is a parable. Here the Son of Man, Jesus’ title for himself, is clearly identified as the King and Judge of all people, roles traditionally attributed exclusively to God.

The King offers only one criterion of judgment: deeds of compassion. Verses 35-45 list six representative good works, five of which are found in standard Jewish lists. The sixth service, visiting prisoners, was an issue of concern for the early Christian communities.

Here is Jesus’ unmistakable revelation of God’s true nature. As Son of Man, Jesus associates himself not with the brilliant, the pious, the famous or the powerful, but with the least—the hungry, thirsty, lonely, sick, naked and imprisoned. Jesus clearly delineates the values of the kingdom of heaven. Those who suffer are close to the heart of God. Those who minister to the suffering receive the Father’s blessing.

The hearts of the righteous in the vision are as pure as their actions; their surprise betrays the selflessness of their motives. The righteous did not serve those in need in order to score points with God; the accursed would certainly not have neglected the poor if they had known what they would have gained by deeds of mercy. Good intentions are insufficient; what counts are actions, not words.

Reflection

Most kings in Jesus’ day were warlords, but he refuses to do violence. The king’s subjects were expected to follow him, fighting bravely. In today’s gospel, Jesus proposes a different paradigm. He asks his followers to recognize him in the least majestic people, the unpalatial places and unglorious tasks.

Then he asks us to follow him, not into battle, but into the ordinary, almost unconscious tasks of cooking, providing clothes and drinks, welcoming strangers and visiting prisoners. Kathleen Chesto offers a wonderful
take on this parable (*Family Centered Intergenerational Religious Education*, Sheed & Ward, 1980, p. 29-30), in which parents voice their bewilderment about where they’ve met or nurtured Christ. To “when did I see you hungry?” he replies: “How could you ask? You of the three and a half million peanut butter sandwiches?”

To “Naked, Lord, homeless?” he responds: “I was born to you naked and homeless and you sheltered me, first in wombs, then in arms… And you spent the next twenty years keeping me in jeans.”

To “But imprisoned, Lord?” he says: “I was imprisoned in my littleness, behind the bars of a crib. I cried out in the night and you came…”

Perhaps we should all rewrite the parable to appreciate our own life works.

**The Scriptures and the Catechism**

We await Jesus’ return in glory (*CCC*, #668–70), but Jesus has been hidden among us all the time in the poor and needy. In today’s parable, Christ the Judge (*CCC*, #440, 668–79) evaluates all communities on their behavior to those in need. By responding to these needs, we share in God’s work to transform our world into the kingdom of God (*CCC*, #2046, 2443–49, 2186)—a kingdom of justice rather than domination, held together by love and respect for life not violence, and providing peace rather than conflict, hatred and war (*CCC*, #671–77).

**Liturgy Link**

**The Feast of Christ the King**

As we come to the end of the Church year, we focus on Christ our heavenly King and on the kingdom he proclaimed. This kingdom is embodied in the community of people who live in a new and different way because of God’s presence in their lives.

Following Jesus’ royal guidelines, his kingdom is the foundation of a new order—a new creation—that would be free from oppression, injustice, violence and suffering. In it, persons would finally return to the original ideal of relationships characterized by justice, rooted in love and bringing peace for everyone.

Christ robed as King and reigning from the cross, the Christus Rex, was for a number of centuries one of the dominant images of Christ shown in art. In the early centuries, looking at Good Friday from the perspective of Easter, Christians did not depict the crucifixion. It was not until the 13th century that the crucifix became a common motif.

This theme of the reigning King was emphasized once again when the Feast of Christ the King was established in 1925 by the Catholic Church. The feast was first held on the last Sunday of October.

After Vatican II, the desire grew to integrate the feast within the context of the liturgical calendar. Thus the celebration was moved to the last Sunday of the Church year, which has always had a strong eschatological (end-time) flavor. This puts the celebration of Christ’s kingship in its proper biblical setting, connecting it with the return of Christ and the final defeat of evil.

As King, Jesus calls us to become his new kingdom people—a community that will always stand in contrast to the values of earthly political and social systems. We cannot disconnect our relationship with God from our relationships with others.

As the bishops gathered at Vatican Council II reminded us, “This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age” (*The Church in the Modern World*, #43). Jesus’ twin commands to love God and neighbor challenge us to discover what it takes today to become a kingdom community living according to the mind of Christ.

**The World of the Bible**

**A New Creation**

Unlike ourselves, biblical people did not think the world was progressing but always regressing. From the Garden of Eden onward, God’s original vision for creation had steadily deteriorated. But since God alone rules creation, the only way things could really be made better was not by human effort but through a new creation by which God would re-order the world without sin and in which everything would finally be perfect.

Paul believed that God had begun this re-ordering in Jesus and so a new creation had actually taken place. He also believed that the whole world would soon be transformed by God’s power, but we realize that this transformation did not happen as fast as he wanted but continues even today.