

Solemnity of Christ the King 2022

Summary

- On the last Sunday of each liturgical year, the Church celebrates the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, or Christ the King.
- Pope Pius XI instituted this feast in 1925 with his encyclical *Quas primas* (“In the first”) to respond to growing secularism and atheism. He recognized that attempting to “thrust Jesus Christ and his holy law” out of public life would result in continuing discord among people and nations. This solemnity reminds us that while governments come and go, Christ reigns as King forever.
- During the early twentieth century, in Mexico, Russia, and some parts of Europe, militantly secularistic regimes threatened not just the Catholic Church and its faithful but civilization itself. Pope Pius XI’s encyclical gave Catholics hope and—while governments around them crumbled—the assurance that Christ the King shall reign forever. Jesus Christ “is very truth, and it is from him that truth must be obediently received by all mankind” (*Quas primas*, 7).
- The USCCB encourages Catholics to learn more about this important feast day. Resources, including a brief background on *Quas primas*, are available at www.usccb.org/ChristtheKing.
- The Lectionary readings this year emphasize the preeminence of Christ, through whom and for whom all things were created. He is head of the Church, the firstborn from the dead, the one who kindles in us the flame of hope in God’s mercy.
- The goal of life in the Church—the sacramental, moral, and spiritual life—is communion with the Triune God, which we realize by being drawn ever more deeply into the life of Christ. The eternal life we receive in the midst of the Church comes ultimately from Christ, and the Church connects us to Christ, “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” In following him and allowing ourselves to be transformed by grace, we find authentic freedom.
- The repentant thief who was crucified alongside Jesus, St. Dismas, beautifully shows what hope in the mercy of God looks like. Although he faces execution for wrongs he has committed, he entrusts himself to Jesus’ mercy.
- One of the most important virtues that Christians must ask for is hope. Hope is often thought of as a desire for a good that is possible to achieve. To share eternal life in communion with God can only be achieved by God’s grace, and so hope in Christ is a gift from God. Hope is a kind of engine that pushes us forward in the Christian life. When we stumble in sin, as we so often do, hope drives us to get up, seek healing in the confessional, and carry on in the journey. On the other hand, when we lose hope, we fall into despair, refusing to stand back up and accept God’s healing mercy. But St.

Dismas shows us that it is never too late to reach out to the Lord and ask for mercy. On this day, we can ask Christ the King, the firstborn from the dead and head of the Church, to kindle in us that flame of hope.

- Further reflections on the lectionary readings are available at <https://www.usccb.org/committees/religious-liberty/christ-king-2022-lectionary-notes>.
- November 11-19, the nine days preceding the Solemnity, the USCCB encourages Catholics to participate in a Novena to Christ the King. Daily intentions and a concluding Prayer to Christ the King can be found <https://www.usccb.org/committees/religious-liberty/christ-king-2022-novena>. Let us take this time to offer prayers to our sovereign king for the freedom of the Church.
- Since 2020, the Catholic Church also marks the **Global Celebration of Young People** on the Solemnity of Christ the King. There are ways to connect the promotion of religious liberty and young people, which can be found on page 39 of the PDF of the USCCB's *National Pastoral Guidebook for the Global Celebration of Young People* (<https://www.usccb.org/resources/usccb-christ-the-king-guidebook.pdf>). For more details about this particular celebration, go to <https://www.usccb.org/topics/world-youth-day/annual-celebration> or contact Fatima Godfrey in the USCCB Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth at fgodfrey@usccb.org.
- Connect with the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty. Text FREEDOM to 84576 and [Sign up for First Freedom News](#), the USCCB Committee for Religious Liberty's monthly newsletter.