

Celebrate Christ the King with your kids (and a few superheroes)

We end the Church year with a bang on Christ the King Sunday—or, as we Catholics like to call it, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

In an age when kings and queens are better known through storybooks than as real life power-brokers, the feast might feel a little obscure for many Catholic kids. But it's worth taking a few minutes to highlight the feast for your kids. For one thing, the title "Christ the king" makes important connections to the Old Testament; it also directs our attention to Christ's triumph on the cross—and ultimately, at the end of time. For another, Christ is "king" in ways very different than ordinary human powerbrokers, and those differences can teach your kids something important about the Christian attitude toward leadership and power.

Below, you'll find some background on the feast, plus some talking points and discussion questions to use with your kids, and a fun printable activity that invites your kids to compare the "King of the Universe" to today's superheroes.

A little background on the Solemnity

The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, is relatively new, having been established in 1926 by Pope Pius XI. In his encyclical establishing the feast, [*Quas Primas*](#), he explained the appropriateness of the title:

If to Christ our Lord is given all power in heaven and on earth; if all men, purchased by his precious blood, are by a

new right subjected to his dominion; if this power embraces all men, it must be clear that not one of our faculties is exempt from his empire. He must reign in our minds, which should assent with perfect submission and firm belief to revealed truths and to the doctrines of Christ. He must reign in our wills, which should obey the laws and precepts of God. He must reign in our hearts, which should spurn natural desires and love God above all things, and cleave to him alone. He must reign in our bodies and in our members, which should serve as instruments for the interior sanctification of our souls, or to use the words of the Apostle Paul, as instruments of justice unto God.

Of course, the very first person to call Christ “king” was Pilate, the Roman governor who ordered Jesus crucified and a sign posted above his body reading: “King of the Jews” (John 19:19). In this title, Jesus fulfills God’s promise to David that he would raise up a successor to David whose kingdom would last forever (2 Samuel 7:16).

The solemnity has an eschatological dimension, pointing toward the end of time when Christ will return to reign over all.

You can [read more about the history of the solemnity](#) at Wikipedia. And if you like celebrating Church feasts with food, head over to Catholic Cuisine for [recipes suited for the feast of Christ the King](#).

Talking points for kids

Be sure to preview the readings for Mass. The [readings for Year A](#) are particularly interesting, highlighting the image of the good shepherd in the first reading and the psalm. The Gospel is from [Matthew 25:31-46](#), the parable of the sheep and the goats in which Jesus puts forward the works of mercy as the criteria by which he will judge his subjects at the end of time.

You can also remind kids about Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1-11). What kind of king rides the colt of a donkey? Not a warrior-king (who would ride a war horse), but a humble ruler who brings mercy, forgiveness, and peace.

On the way to church (or afterward), tell your kids about the feast and ask them questions like these:

- What is a king? What do they do, and what are they like?
- How is Jesus like a king?
- How is Jesus different from ordinary human kings?

Christ the King vs. today's superheroes

It's important to explain to kids the meaning of the title "Christ the King" if for no other reason because it will help them connect the Old Testament and the Gospel, making the "big picture" of God's plan of salvation clearer.

But most of today's kids have an easier time relating to their superheroes than to the kings and queens of old. The current superhero craze has its downsides—in many ways, superheroes function as demigods for a secular culture that still yearns for God, even as it protests it's "over" God.

On the other hand, today's superhero stories also can't help pointing to the true and the good; and as Bishop Barron points out in [Spider-man, Iron Man, Superman and the God-Man](#), they even carry some theological heft:

I can't help but hear an echo of the ancient Christological doctrine in the latest crop of films featuring Batman, Superman and Spider-Man. All three of these superheroes are hybrids—combinations of the extraordinary and the ordinary. In all three cases we have someone who, in his lowliness, is able completely to identify and sympathize with our suffering and, in his transcendence, is able to do something about it.

With all of that in mind, you might put a fun spin on the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, by imagining how Jesus fits into the superhero genre. What if there were a Solemnity of Christ the Superhero?

Here's what to do.

Jesus and the superheroes Game

1. Download the printable PDF, [Who is the real superhero?](#) It contains a chart that your kids can complete to compare Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, to their favorite superheroes.
2. Have your kids pick their favorite superheroes. Have them draw the heroes logo in the circle.
3. Have your kids fill out the chart.
 - In the first row, they should list the superhero's alias (e.g., Jesus, Bruce Wayne, etc.).
 - In the second row, they should list super powers. What are Jesus' "super powers"? Some possibilities: Healing; forgiving; calming storms; multiplying loaves and fishes; etc. Where does he get these powers?
 - In the third row, list the superhero's nemeses (enemies). For Jesus, possibilities might include sin and death; you can debate whether the Pharisees and other religious leaders who put him to death were really enemies or not. What does Jesus say about our attitude toward enemies? How would "loving your enemy" change the story of some of the other superheroes listed? Do any of the superheroes listed practice love of enemy?
 - In the fourth row, list "sidekicks" and close friends. For Jesus, these might include the twelve apostles, the women disciples who helped support him, and/or the saints and all the baptized

faithful.

- In the fifth row, have the kids write down the superhero's mission or motto. For Jesus' mission, see Luke 4 and John 3, among other possible Scripture references.

4. If your kids use one of the blank columns to list themselves as an imaginary superhero, let them have fun naming their own mission, motto, name, and superpowers. Point out that they have certain "superpowers" they acquired through baptism.