

Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service.
Sunday November 22nd 2026. "Reign of Christ Sunday,"
Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.

Call to Worship. Psalm 95:1-7
Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord, let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song.
For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.
The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.
Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.

STF 57
Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King!
The heavens are not too high,
his praise may thither fly;
the earth is not too low,
his praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King!
The Church with psalms must shout,
no door can keep them out;
but above all, the heart
must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing:
my God and King!

Prayers of adoration and confession
Sovereign God, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, you are our God. Sitting on your throne, you reign over earth and heaven, and in the lives of all who call you King. You are beyond our imagining, beyond our dreams and visions or our wildest hopes. You reign in us, and with us, and among us. Almighty God, we pray for your kingdom to be known on earth, for your love to spread out to all the nations, for your people to be blessed by your presence. **Amen**

With sorrow and sadness, we confess our sin. Our failure to listen to your message and lack of commitment to your way. Our readiness to speak when we should remain silent, and out hesitation to speak out when your voice needs to be heard.
We hold a moment of Silence….
The Lord God says, be assured your sins are forgiven, your slate is wiped clean. Listen to the word of God and know its truth and worship Him. **Amen**

Bible reading: Matthew 25: 31-46
'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. 'Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was ill and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."
'Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison and go to visit you?" 'The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." 'Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was ill and in prison and you did not look after me." 'They also will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or ill or in prison, and did not help you?" 'He will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.'

Reflection
Today is traditionally known as 'Christ the king Sunday', the name has recently changed to 'Reign of Christ Sunday'. It is the last Sunday in the liturgical year, the Sunday before Advent begins. We celebrate the life of Christ our King. In the Uk we are governed by a King, King Charles III, who follows the long line of succession of those that have also held the office of, 'The defender of the faith'. A very different scenario to what was

happening In Mexico many years ago. Under the 1917 constitution, President Plutarco Elías Calles and post revolutionary leaders enforced strict secular and anticlerical laws, limiting the Catholic Church's public role, banning foreign clergy, and closing spaces of worship. Which gave rise to the Cristero War. Mexican catholics known as Cristeros fought against the religious persecution and their rallying cry was "Viva Cristo Rey" translates from Spanish to English as 'Long Live Christ The King.' So firmly did they hold to their faith against the ruling regime that many were martyred in front of a firing squad.

Just one example of how ruling regimes were promoting secularism in the aftermath of World War I.To counter rising secularism, atheism, fascism, and aggressive nationalism in Europe, Christ the king Sunday was instituted in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. Originally celebrated on the last Sunday of October, just before the Feast of All Saints. In 1969, Pope Paul VI moved the date to the last Sunday of the liturgical year.

I wonder how we think about Christ as the king of kings? We have plenty to say about our reigning Monarch and what we expect from him. What do we expect from the king of kings? Christ the King Sunday reveals the embarrassing truth of how easily we impose our own royal fantasies on Jesus. We want a Saviour who endorses our worldview and punishes our rivals. We demand a Christ who is king in a way that spares us from any real moral upheaval.

This is why the hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" may be closer to the truth than the pageantry of Christ the King. Friends do not impose. Friends listen. Friends walk beside you in weakness. Kings, as history shows, do none of that. Kings demand, decree, tax, punish, and defend their own prerogatives. Christ, on the cross, fails on all of those accounts.

Today we proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord of all: Lord of history, Lord of the nations, Lord of every human heart. And the Gospel set before us is not a gentle parable about seeds or lost coins. It is a vision of the end: the Son of Man coming in glory, seated on His throne, with all the nations gathered before Him.

Jesus says: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left."

Then the King speaks. To those on His right: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." The righteous are astonished. "Lord, when did we see you…?" And the King answers: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

To those on the left the word is the mirror image and the opposite. They did not feed, did not welcome, did not clothe, did not visit. And again the King says: "Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

On this Sunday and in the light of our gospel reading we are challenged to think seriously about the kind of King we proclaim as Lord of all? On Christ the King Sunday we do not celebrate a distant monarch who rules by force or spectacle. We celebrate the King who identifies Himself completely with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner. The One who sits on the glorious throne is the same One who was hungry in the wilderness, a stranger with no place to lay His head, stripped and crucified, and who still bears the marks of suffering. His kingship is not proved by power as the world understands it, but by self giving love. And on the last day He will judge the nations by whether that same love has taken root in us.

The passage of scripture makes us question which will we be most like? The Sheep or the Goats?

Notice two things carefully. First, both groups are surprised. The sheep did not keep score. They simply saw need and responded. The goats are equally shocked they thought they had been religious enough, respectable enough, careful enough. They never noticed that Christ was standing in front of them in the person of the least.

Second, the criterion is not doctrinal precision, liturgical correctness, or even the intensity of religious feeling. It is practical, costly, ordinary mercy. Feeding, welcoming, clothing, visiting. These are the works that reveal whether we have truly met the King and been transformed by Him. This is not salvation by works. The inheritance was prepared "since the creation of the world." The sheep are blessed by the Father; they enter a kingdom already prepared for them. Their deeds are the evidence the fruit of a life already claimed by the Shepherd King. The goats' failure is not merely a failure of charity; it is a failure to recognise and love the King who comes to us in disguise.

So what does this mean for us? On this feast of Christ the King, the question is not abstract. It is personal and urgent: Where is Christ standing among us right now, hungry, thirsty, lonely, sick, or imprisoned and do we see Him? He is in the refugee family looking for welcome. He is in the neighbour who has no one to visit.

He is in the person whose mental illness makes them hard to love. He is in the prisoner whose name we prefer not to speak. He is in the child who needs a meal, a coat, or simply to be noticed. The King does not ask us to solve every problem in the world. He asks us to notice the particular person in front of us and to act with the compassion that has first been shown to us.

To be living under the Reign of Christ is to confess "Jesus is King" and it is to renounce every rival claim on our loyalty the claims of comfort, of reputation, of indifference, of the thoughts that "someone else will do it." It is to live now as citizens of the kingdom that is coming, a kingdom in which the least are treated as the King Himself. So let us examine our lives not with paralysing fear, but with hopeful honesty. Where have we already been serving Christ without realising it? Give thanks. Where have we looked away? Ask for grace, and begin

again. The same King who will one day separate the sheep from the goats is the Shepherd who even now seeks the lost, binds up the wounded, and carries the weak.
On this Christ the King Sunday, may we hear His voice. May we recognise His face in the least of these. And may we live so that, when the day comes, we may hear those words of welcome:
"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world."

STF 185

Sing we the King who is coming to reign;
glory to Jesus, the Lamb that was slain!
Life and salvation his empire shall bring,
joy to the nations when Jesus is King:

Come let us sing: praise to our King,
Jesus our King, Jesus our King:
this is our song, who to Jesus belong:
glory to Jesus, to Jesus our King.

All shall be well in his kingdom of peace;
freedom shall flourish and wisdom increase;
justice and truth from his sceptre shall spring;
wrong shall be ended when Jesus is King:

Souls shall be saved from the burden of sin;
doubt shall not darken his witness within;
hell has no terrors, and death has no sting;
love is victorious when Jesus is King:

Kingdom of Christ, for your coming we pray;
hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day
when this new song your creation shall sing;
Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King:

Prayers of Intercession for Christ the King Sunday
Let us pray to the Lord our King, who reigns in glory and comes among us in all lowliness.

We pray for the Churches and our Circuit:
Almighty God, you have made your Son Jesus Christ King of kings and Lord of lords. Grant that your Church throughout the world may proclaim His reign with boldness and humility, serving Him in the hungry, the stranger, the sick and the prisoner. Strengthen all our local churches and our Circuit in every endeavour to proclaim your name and your love. May every member seek to live and serve you and to reflect your values and mercy.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the nations and those in authority
King of the nations, you gather all peoples before your throne. Guide the leaders of the world in the ways of justice, peace and compassion. Give wisdom to governments, courage to those who work for the common good, and a heart of mercy to all who hold power, that the least may not be forgotten and the vulnerable may find protection.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the poor, the hungry and the homeless
Lord Jesus, you were hungry and thirsty, a stranger and without a home. Open our eyes to see you in those who lack food, shelter or dignity. Stir us to generosity and practical love, that we may feed the hungry, welcome the stranger and clothe the naked in your name. We pray for the various ways that our churches and the community are involved in sharing food and shelter to those in desperate need. Help each of us to appreciate what we have and to be generous to those who have so little in comparison.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick, the lonely and those in prison
Compassionate King, you were sick and in prison, and you still identify with those who suffer. Bring healing to the sick in body or mind, we think about those known personally to us and pray that they will know that your presence is very close to them in their suffering. We ask you to comfort the lonely and forgotten, and bring hope to all who are by their circumstances, cut off from human care. May your people visit, support and uphold them as they would serve you.
We know many are still imprisoned and persecuted in our world for upholding the Christian faith. We pray that you will strengthen and support them. Many are imprisoned because of their wrongdoing, help them to find a better future and a way to live. We pray for all prison chaplains and prison visitors that they may show compassion and support for those who they serve.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for refugees, the persecuted and those who suffer injustice
Shepherd King, you know the pain of exile and rejection. Protect refugees and asylum seekers, defend the oppressed, and strengthen all who work for justice and reconciliation. Teach the nations to welcome the stranger and to treat every person with the dignity of your image.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have died.
Eternal King, you prepare a kingdom for those who have proclaimed you as their Lord and King. We commend to your mercy all who have died, especially those we love and those who have no one to remember them. Grant them rest in your presence and bring us, with them, to the inheritance prepared from the foundation of the world. **Amen**. **We say the Lord's Prayer**.

STF 256
When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?

I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?

When I needed a shelter, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you there?

When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?

Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
I'll be there.

Prayer of Blessing for Christ the King Sunday
May God the Father, who has prepared a kingdom for us from the foundation of the world, bless us and keep us. May God the Son, Christ our King, who comes in glory yet identifies Himself with the least of these, open our eyes to see Him in the hungry, the stranger, the sick and the prisoner, and strengthen us to serve Him in them. May God the Holy Spirit, who gathers all nations under the reign of Christ, fill us with compassion, courage and joy, so that we may live as faithful citizens of His kingdom until He comes again in glory.
And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us always. **Amen**.

I am not a chess player but I gather this position is known as 'the end game'. Each player has a number of pawns and in 'the end game' the king can protect the last pawn so that the pawn can promote itself. May we be worthy of the king of kings protection so that by the way we play life's game we can be worthy of promotion in life's end game.



This written Service was prepared on 3rd November 2026
'CCL Licence Number 178041'