

Seton Hall University

From the Selected Works of Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.

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Divine Titles and Activities

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Divine Titles and Activities

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Third Sunday of Easter

Sunday Readings for May 4, 2014 for Cycle A:

Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16; 1 Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35

DIVINE TITLES AND ACTIVITIES

Lawrence E. Frizzell

Our relationship with God is expressed in the titles by which we address him in prayer. The titles "Creator" and "Judge" point to our origins as creatures and to our responsibility as bearers of the divine image. Both titles stress the fact that we are subjects who owe obedience to a supreme sovereign; the experience of many peoples leads the Church to call God our King or Lord, whose rights flow from the divine prerogatives as Creator. Human creatures share an intimacy with God that allows us the privilege of using the title "Father". Just as the other titles instill the sense of awe (or reverence) and distance, the concept of parenthood brings an appreciation of divine love and forgiveness.

St. Peter helps us to keep both dimensions of the relationship in wholesome tension so that its complexity is not obscured. "Now if you invoked as Father him who judges impartially according to each one's works conduct yourselves with reverence during the time of your sojourning..." (1 Pt 1:17).

The sacrificial death of Jesus is the basis for our confidence that God forgives the enormity of sin and adopts us as his children. "You were ransomed...with the precious blood of Christ, as of a spotless, unblemished lamb" (1:18-19).

In the Acts of the Apostles, the first sermon of St. Peter reflects upon the responsibility of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem for the death of Jesus, emphasizing that this event was part of the divine design for the forgiveness of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit (2:23 and 38). The sermon is not an accusation of absent parties, but is addressed to those living in Jerusalem (2:14) as a call to understand the meaning of God's triumph over sin in the resurrection of Jesus. These words of St. Peter are not an indictment for a particular crime, but constitute an instance of human responsibility for sin and the need we all have for divine forgiveness. "Christ in his boundless love freely underwent his passion and death because of the sins of all people, so that all might attain salvation" (Vatican II, Declaration on Non-Christian Religions #14).

The Gospel continues St. Luke's portrayal of Jesus as a pilgrim who came to Jerusalem according to the Father's will (see 9:51). The two disciples, who fail to recognize the risen Jesus, hear his response to the question about divine purpose in his death. "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things then enter into his glory?" (24:26). With the hospitality typical of the culture, they invite Jesus to join them for the evening meal. Suddenly the Guest becomes the Host; Jesus took the bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them. Only then did they recognize the Master and they marveled at his teaching, which opened for them the meaning of the Scriptures in relation to his work.

Although we cannot be certain that this Gospel passage describes the Eucharist as such, St. Luke does wish his readers to learn here that there is an intimate bond between the Word and sacrament. Our liturgy is the privileged context for learning the profound meaning of the Scriptures because we believe that Christ is present both in God's Word and in the Sacrifice-and-Sacrament. As risen Lord, "Christ is always present in his Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations" (Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy #7). No longer a stranger, he shows us the way to conduct our lives with reverence for the Father as Creator and Judge during the time of our earthly pilgrimage. He forgives our sins and challenges us to walk in the new life the Father has bestowed upon us in the Holy Spirit (see Rom 6:4).