



### **SUNDAY REFLECTION**

The crowds were so attracted to Jesus that they put themselves in a precarious position following Him and remaining with Him for such a long time without a supply of food in a desert place.

Jesus' heart was moved by their hunger. Perhaps, the hungry are a privileged class in that they need God to fill them with what they need. But those who are already full – what need have they of food or drink or the presence of God?

In feeding the multitude Jesus comes across as the true shepherd of God's people, the compassionate 'new David' foretold by Ezekiel, who would care for the flock of God (Ezek. 34). Through the leadership of Moses, God shepherded the people in the desert. He fed them with manna and gave them water from the rock. It was expected by many that when the Messiah came He would repeat the miracle of Moses and feed the people in the desert. Jesus here fulfill that role.

As the plight of the people becomes obvious, Jesus challenges the disciples to give them food. They are overwhelmed at the challenge. The little food they had, when given to Jesus, became

through His word and action an endless supply, like the miraculous catch of fish when they put down the nets at His word.

This story is profoundly Christological. It points to the deeper meaning of Jesus' mission, His shepherding role in teaching, healing and feeding not only on the physical, but also on the spiritual level. The language used is language reflecting the Eucharistic celebration of the community, *'taking the bread, saying the blessing and sharing the bread.'*

A widespread mis – understanding of the multiplication has taken root in popular thinking and preaching. It argues that the people were so moved by Jesus' words that they shared what they had. This, however, is to miss the theological point of the story. Matthew, and indeed all the other evangelists, wish to emphasize the graciousness and unexpectedness of the gift. Nor was it a gift for just that one occasion. Unlike the manna of old, this food was to be available at all times, a fact symbolized by the baskets of fragments that remained.

**STEWARDSHIP:** "The hand of the Lord feeds us," sings the psalmist; "He answers all our needs." Often, though, it is with the open hands of generous stewards willing to share His many gifts that God's People are fed and their needs met. (See Psalm 145)

## **READINGS FOR NINETEENTH SUNDAY**

**9 AUG '20**

**1 Kgs. 19:9, 11-13:** Elijah meets God not in the violent storm, but in the sound of a gentle breeze.

**Rom. 9:1-5:** St. Paul recalls the glories of God's covenant with the Israelites, and prays that they may recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

**Mt. 14:22-33:** Peter's faith is tested when he tries to walk to Jesus on the stormy water.

## **THE MASS**

Catholics worship God in a variety of ways, but the chief act of corporate or communal worship is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the Eastern churches, Catholic and Orthodox, this is known as the Divine Liturgy; in the West, it is known as the Mass, an English word derived from the Latin text of the priest's dismissal of the congregation at the end of the liturgy ("*Ite, missa est.*"). Throughout the centuries, the liturgy of the Church has taken a variety of regional and historical forms, but one thing has remained constant: The Mass has always been the central form of Catholic worship.

### **The Mass: An Ancient Practice**

As far back as the Acts of the Apostles and Saint Paul's epistles, we find descriptions of the Christian community gathering to celebrate the Lord's Supper, the Eucharist. In the catacombs in Rome, the tombs of martyrs were used as altars for the celebration of the earliest forms of the Mass, making explicit the tie between the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, its representation in the Mass, and the strengthening of the faith of Christians.

### **The Mass as "Unbloody Sacrifice"**

Very early on, the Church saw the Mass as a mystical reality in which the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is renewed. Responding to Protestant sects who denied that the Eucharist is anything

more than a memorial, the Council of Trent (1545-63) declared that "The same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross, is present and offered in an unbloody manner" in the Mass.

This does not mean, as some critics of Catholicism claim, that the Church teaches that, in the Mass, we sacrifice Christ again. Rather, the original sacrifice of Christ on the Cross is presented to us once more — or, to put it another way, when we take part in the Mass we are spiritually present at the foot of the Cross on Calvary.

### **The Mass as a Representation of the Crucifixion**

This representation, as Fr. John Hardon notes in his *Pocket Catholic Dictionary*, "means that because Christ is really present in his humanity, in heaven, and on the altar, he is capable now as he was on Good Friday of freely offering himself to the Father." This understanding of the Mass hinges on the Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. When the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, Christ is truly present on the altar. If the bread and wine remained merely symbols, the Mass could still be a memorial of the Last Supper, but not a representation of the Crucifixion.

### **The Mass as Memorial and Sacred Banquet**

While the Church teaches that the Mass is more than a memorial, she also acknowledges that the Mass is still a memorial as well as a sacrifice. The Mass is the Church's way of fulfilling Christ's command, at the Last Supper, to "Do this in remembrance of Me." As a memorial of the Last Supper, the Mass is also a sacred banquet, in which the faithful participate both through their presence and their role in the liturgy and through the reception of Holy Communion, the Body, and Blood of Christ.

While it is not necessary to receive Communion in order to fulfill our Sunday obligation, the Church recommends frequent reception, along with sacramental Confession, in order to join with our fellow Catholics in fulfilling Christ's command. (In addition, Catholics who are unable to attend Mass due to illness, bad weather, or other reasons beyond their control can still make an Act of Spiritual Communion.)

### **The Mass as an Application of the Merits of Christ**

"Christ," Father Hardon writes, "won for the world all the graces it needs for salvation and sanctification." In other words, in His Sacrifice on the Cross, Christ reversed Adam's sin. In order for us to see the effects of that reversal, however, we must accept Christ's offer of salvation and grow in sanctification. Our participation in the Mass and our frequent reception of Holy Communion brings us the grace that Christ merited for the world through His unselfish Sacrifice on the Cross.

## **DAILY SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS EIGHTEENTH WEEK 3 - 8 AUGUST**

**When Faith Falters**

## **Monday 3 August Year A**

Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." (Mt. 14:28-29)

What a wonderful expression of faith! St. Peter, caught in stormy conditions on the sea, expressed his complete confidence that if Jesus were to call him out of the boat to walk on water, it would happen. Jesus does call him to Himself, and St. Peter begins to walk on water. Of course we know what happened next. Peter was filled with fear and began to sink. Fortunately, Jesus caught him and all was well.

Interestingly, this story reveals much to us about our own lives of faith and much more about the goodness of Jesus. So often we begin with a faith in our head and have every intention of living that faith. Like Peter, we often make firm resolutions to trust in Jesus and to "walk on water" at His command. However, all too often we experience the same thing Peter did. We start to live the trust we express in Jesus, only to suddenly waver and give in to fear in the midst of our hardship. We begin to sink and have to cry out for help.

In some ways, the ideal would have been if Peter expressed his faith in Jesus and then walked to Him without faltering. But, in other ways, this is the ideal story in that it reveals the depth of Jesus' mercy and compassion. It reveals that Jesus will catch us and draw us out of our doubts and fears when our faith gives way. This story is much more about Jesus' compassion and the extent of His help than it is about Peter's lack of faith.

Reflect, today, upon any way that you have had great intentions of trusting Jesus, started down that path and then have fallen. Know that Jesus is full of compassion and will reach out to you in your weakness just as He did to Peter. Let Him grab your hand and strengthen your lack of faith out of His abundance of love and mercy.

*Lord, I do believe. Help me when I falter. Help me to always turn to You when the storms and challenges of life seem to be too much. May I trust that, in those moments more than any other, You are there reaching out Your hand of grace. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **Jesus is Always There**

### **Monday 3 August Years B&C**

When Jesus heard of the death of John the Baptist, he withdrew in a boat to a deserted place by himself. The crowds heard of this and followed him on foot from their towns. When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, and he cured their sick. (Mt. 14:13-14)

Humanly speaking, Jesus' heart was grieved by the death of John the Baptist. He loved John and was deeply saddened by his beheading. So He withdrew in a boat to a deserted place alone. But the crowds were hungry for more! They wanted to see Jesus and listen to Him. They knew many who were ill and wanted Jesus to heal them. So they sought Him out despite the fact that He had withdrawn from the crowd to be alone.

What was Jesus' reaction? Did He look at them and sigh, saying to Himself, "Why don't they leave me alone. Don't they know I am grieving?" No. Instead, Jesus was filled with mercy and compassion for them, and He went to them to heal many of their sick.

This gives us insight into the heart and compassion of our Lord. Many times, we are afraid to go to God. We are afraid to turn to Him because of our sin. We are afraid of what He will think and say to us. We feel guilty and ashamed and, as a result, fail to seek Him out.

But just as Jesus had compassion for those who sought Him out in this story, so also He will ALWAYS have the deepest of compassion for us every time we seek Him out. If we find our lives steeped in sin, but run to Him anyway, He will look at us with compassion and mercy. He never tires of us returning to Him, seeking His healing and mercy. We should always have hope in Him and turn to Him with the greatest confidence.

Reflect, today, upon how comfortable you are in turning to Jesus just as you are. Are you afraid or worried about what He thinks of you? Are you ashamed of your sin or weakness? Do you worry He will judge you and not care? Have confidence in His abundance of mercy and run to Him without fear.

*Lord, help me to trust in Your love and compassion. Help me to know that You always long for me to come to You. As You never tire of me coming to You, may I never tire of coming to You. Jesus, I trust in You.*

Jeremiah 28:1-17; Psalm 118; Matthew 14:22-36

We read in the first reading today how the prophet Hananiah gave a prophecy in the Temple which was false but which the people accepted and believed. Hananiah even takes on Jeremiah in front of the people but God assures Jeremiah that Jeremiah is the true prophet. For leading the people astray, Hananiah died. In the Gospel, we see that Jesus has just heard of the death of his cousin, John, and goes away to be on his own. When he returns to the lakeside the disciples are having trouble fishing in their boats but he calls out to them and calls to Peter to walk across the water to him. St Peter starts out but soon his faith fails and he begins to sink. The text reminds us that we must trust the Lord at all times even when it is difficult to do so and our perceptions lead us astray.

## **Courage, Charity & Truth**

### ***Tuesday 4 August***

Then his disciples approached and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?” He said in reply, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Mt. 15:12-14)

Why were the Pharisees offended? In part because Jesus just spoke critically of them. But it was more than that. They were also offended because Jesus doesn't even answer their question.

These Pharisees and scribes came to ask Jesus what was, in their minds, a very important question. They wanted to know why His disciples failed to follow the tradition of the elders by not washing their hands before they ate. But Jesus does something interesting. Instead of answering their question, He gathers a crowd and says, “Hear and understand. It is not what enters one's mouth that defiles the man; but what comes out of the mouth is what defiles one” (Mt. 15:10b-11). So they were offended by Jesus both because of what He said and because He didn't even say it to them but spoke it to the crowds.

What's interesting to note is that sometimes the most charitable thing one can do will result in another being offended. We ought not recklessly offend. But it seems that one of the cultural tendencies of our day and age is to avoid offending people at all costs. As a result, we dumb down morality, ignore clear teachings of faith, and make "getting along" one of the most important "virtues" we strive for.

In the passage above, it's clear that Jesus' disciples are concerned about the fact that the Pharisees were offended by Jesus. They worry and appear to want Jesus to fix this tense situation. But Jesus makes His position clear. "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit" (Mt. 15:14).

Charity requires the truth. And sometimes the truth will sting a person to the heart. Clearly this is exactly what the Pharisees need even though they fail to change, which is evident by the fact that they ultimately killed Jesus. But, nonetheless, these truths spoken by our Lord were acts of charity and were the truth that these scribes and Pharisees needed to hear.

Reflect, today, upon how willing you are to speak the hard truth in love when a situation requires it. Do you have the courage you need to charitably speak an "offensive" truth that needs to be spoken? Or do you tend to cower and prefer to allow people to remain in their error so that you do not agitate them? Courage, charity and truth must become deeply intertwined in our lives. Make this your prayer and mission so that you will better imitate our divine Lord.

*Lord, please do give me courage, truth, wisdom and charity so that I may be a better instrument of Your love and mercy to the world. May I never allow fear to control me. Please remove any blindness from my heart so that I can see clearly the many ways You desire to use me to lead others to You. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **When Faith Falters**

### ***Tuesday of the Eighteenth Week of Ordinary Time (Years B&C)***

Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." (Mt. 14:28-29)

What a wonderful expression of faith! St. Peter, caught in stormy conditions on the sea, expressed his complete confidence that if Jesus were to call him out of the boat to walk on water, it would happen. Jesus does call him to Himself and St. Peter begins to walk on water. Of course we know what happened next. Peter was filled with fear and began to sink. Fortunately, Jesus caught him and all was well.

Interestingly, this story reveals much to us about our own lives of faith and much more about the goodness of Jesus. So often we begin with a faith in our head and have every intention of living that faith. Like Peter, we often make firm resolutions to trust in Jesus and to "walk on water" at His command. However, all too often we experience the same thing Peter did. We start to live the trust we express in Jesus, only to suddenly waver and give in to fear in the midst of our hardship. We begin to sink and have to cry out for help.

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## **Humility + Faith = Mercy**

### **Wednesday 5 August**

But the woman came and did him homage, saying, "Lord, help me." He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs." She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters." (Mt. 15:25-27) Did Jesus really imply that helping this woman was like throwing food to dogs? Most of us would have taken great offense at what Jesus said as a result of our pride. But what He said was true and was not rude in any way. Jesus obviously cannot be rude. Nonetheless, His statement has the superficial appearance of being rude.

First, let's look at how His statement is true. Jesus was being asked by this woman to come heal her daughter. Basically, Jesus tells her she is not deserving of this grace in anyway. And that's true. No more than a dog deserves to be fed from the table do we deserve the grace of God. Though this is a shocking way to say it, Jesus says it this way so as to first illustrate the truth of our sinful condition and unworthiness. And this woman takes it.

Second, Jesus' statement allows this woman to react with the utmost humility and faith. Her humility is seen in the fact that she does not deny the parallel to a dog eating from the table. Rather, she humbly points out that even dogs eat the scraps. Wow, this is humility! In fact, we can be certain that Jesus spoke to her in this somewhat humiliating way because He knew how humble she was and He knew that she would react by letting her humility shine forth so as to manifest her faith. She was not offended by the humble truth of her unworthiness; rather, she embraced it and also sought out the abundant mercy of God despite her unworthiness.

Humility has the potential to unleash faith, and faith unleashes the mercy and power of God. In the end, Jesus speaks for all to hear, "Oh woman, great is your faith!" Her faith was made manifest and Jesus seized the opportunity to honor her for that humble faith.

Reflect, today, upon your own humility before God. How would you have reacted if Jesus spoke this way to you? Would you have been humble enough to acknowledge your unworthiness? If so, would you also have enough faith to cry out for God's mercy despite your unworthiness? These wonderful qualities go hand in hand (humility and faith) and unleash the mercy of God!

*Lord, I am unworthy. Help me to see that. Help me to see that I do not deserve Your grace in my life. But in that humble truth, may I also recognize Your abundance of mercy and never fear to call upon You for mercy. Jesus, I trust in You.*

## **The Keys of the Kingdom**

### **Thursday 6 August**

“And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Mt. 16:18-19)

The following is an excerpt from *My Catholic Faith!*, Chapter 7:

So was Jesus just being complementary to Peter, trying to build up his ego? Was He just thanking Peter for acknowledging who He really is? Or was Jesus doing something more? Was He making Peter a promise that would one day come to fulfillment? Certainly it was the latter of these. Jesus was telling Peter that he would become the rock foundation of the Church and that Peter would enjoy a unique spiritual power of the Keys of Heaven. Whoa! What an incredible gift that was!

Jesus says, “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven...” This is no small gift to have. We should take this as a literal commitment from Jesus to Peter. So, when Jesus did found His Church, when He did “breathe” on the Apostles after His Resurrection, He also bestowed this promised gift of supreme authority within His Church to Peter – the power to bind and loose.

I’m sure that at first Peter did not fully understand this unique gift. Perhaps as the Church began, within the first few years, the other Apostles would have been reminded by the Holy Spirit that Jesus said this. Perhaps Peter in his humility would have been reminded by the Holy Spirit that Jesus said this. And as time went on there should be no doubt that Peter began to embrace and own this unique gift of supreme authority. We see the first clear exercise of this authority in Acts 15, at the Council of Jerusalem, when there was a disagreement about circumcision. After much debate, Peter stood up and spoke with authority. From there, others followed and we see that the question they were debating was clarified and settled. From that time on, the Apostles continued their work of teaching, shepherding and sanctifying. Peter eventually went to Rome to preach and to become the first bishop there. It is in Rome that he died and it was every successor of the Apostle Peter, in Rome, who took on this unique gift of the supreme authority within the Church. Certainly Jesus did not intend this gift of supreme authority to last only as long as Peter lived. That’s why we see this authority passed on to all his successors who are the bishops of Rome. And that’s why we call our Church the Roman Catholic Church. Interestingly, if Peter would have gone to Malta, or Jerusalem, or Asia we would today most likely have the Malta, or Jerusalem, or Asian Catholic Church instead. So the Church is Roman primarily because that’s where Peter went and, therefore, that’s where the supreme authority lies.

Over the centuries we have come to understand this unique gift of supreme authority and have defined it more clearly. It means that St. Peter, and all his successors, enjoy full and immediate authority to teach definitively on faith and morals and to govern, or shepherd, according to the mind and will of Christ. So if the pope says something is true regarding faith or morals then, quite frankly, it is true. And if he makes a decision on the governance of the Church then, quite simply, that’s what God wants done. It’s as simple as that.

This gift of supreme authority, in regard to teaching on faith and morals, is called “infallibility.” It’s used in various ways. The most powerful way it’s used is when the pope speaks “ex cathedra” or, “from the chair.” This means symbolically from the chair of Peter. In this case he teaches what’s called a “dogma” of the faith. Every dogma is true and certain and

we are bound in faith to believe. For example, in 1950 the pope spoke “ex cathedra” about the Assumption of Mary into Heaven. With that declaration we are bound in conscience to believe. Mary truly was taken body and soul into Heaven upon the completion of her earthly life. Period!

Of course this power does not apply to those things that have nothing to do with faith and morals. So if the pope says he believes that Argentina will win the next World Cup, then he is only hoping, and I wouldn't go bet all your money on them. He has no special grace to teach things of that nature. But wouldn't it be fun if he did!

*Lord, I thank You for the gift of Your glorious Catholic Church! I pray that I may always be faithful to all that You reveal through Your Church and I pray that the leaders of Your Church, especially the pope, will always seek to grow daily in holiness of life. Jesus, I trust in You.*

### **How Far Will You Go?**

#### **Friday 7 August**

“Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”  
(Mt. 16:24)

There is a very important word in this statement of Jesus. It's the word “must.” Note that Jesus did not say that of you have to follow me by carrying your cross. No, He said that whoever wishes to follow me

So the first question should be easy to answer. Do you wish to follow Jesus? In our heads that's an easy question. Yes, of course we do. But this is not a question we can answer only with our heads. It must be also answered by our choice to do what Jesus said was a necessity. Namely, wishing to follow Jesus means denying yourself and taking up your cross. Hmmm, so do you wish to follow Him?

Hopefully, the answer is “Yes.” Hopefully, we resolved deeply to embrace all that is involved in following Jesus. But that's no small commitment. Sometimes we fall into the foolish trap of thinking that we can “kinda” follow Him here and now and that all will be fine and we'll certainly get into Heaven when we die. Maybe that's true to a certain extent, but if that's our thinking then we're missing out on what life is all about and all that God has in store for us. Denying yourself and taking up your cross is actually a far more glorious life than we could ever come up with on our own. It's a blessed life of grace and the only path to ultimate fulfillment in life. Nothing could be better than completely entering into a life of total self-sacrifice by dying to ourselves.

Reflect, today, on whether or not you are willing to say “Yes” to this question not only with your head, but also with your whole life. Are you willing to embrace the life of sacrifice to which Jesus is calling you? What does that look like in your life? Say “Yes,” today, tomorrow and every day through your actions and you'll see glorious things take place in your life.

*Lord, I do wish to follow You and I choose, today, to deny all my selfishness. I choose to carry the cross of selfless living to which I am called. May I embrace my cross with joy and be transformed by You through that choice. Jesus, I trust in You.*

### **Hope for Those in Need**

#### **Saturday 8 August**

A man came up to Jesus, knelt down before him, and said, "Lord, have pity on my son, who is a lunatic and suffers severely; often he falls into fire, and often into water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." (Mt. 17:14-16)

OK, so perhaps this prayer is similar to the prayer of many parents. Many young people may "fall into fire" or "into water" in the sense of falling into trouble and sin. And many parents end up on their knees begging God for help.

This is a good prayer and it's an honest one. Though we do not commonly use the word "lunatic" today except as a derogatory comment, this word should be understood in this passage as the man acknowledging that his son is suffering from some form of psychological and spiritual illness. In fact, the passage goes on to reveal that Jesus cast a demon out of him. This demonic spiritual oppression also caused serious psychological issues.

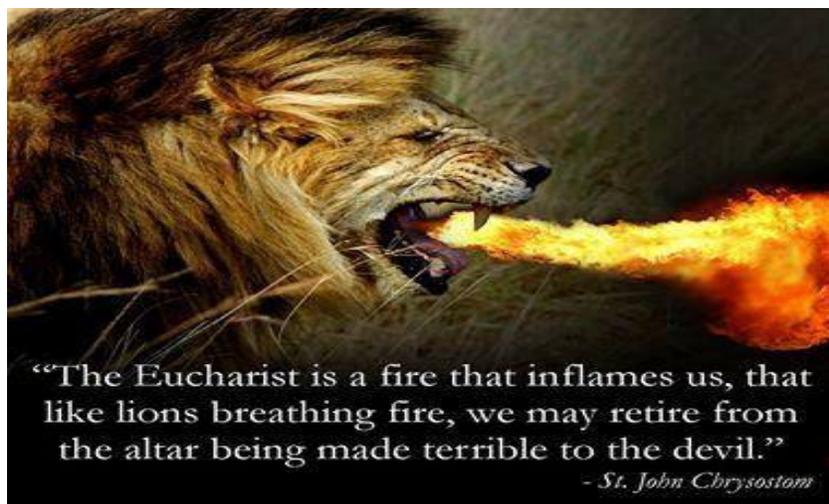
The first good news about this passage is that the father cared and did not give up on his son. Perhaps it would have been easy for the father to simply disown his son out of anger, hurt or frustration. It would have been easy for him to treat his son as someone who was no good and not worth his continued attention. But that's not what happened.

The man not only came to Jesus, he also knelt down before Jesus begging for "pity." Pity is another word for mercy and compassion. He knew there was hope for his son and that the hope resided in the mercy and compassion of Jesus.

This passage reveals to us the simple truth that we must pray for one another. We must pray, especially, for those who are closest to us and in the greatest need. No one is beyond hope. All is possible through prayer and faith.

Reflect, today, upon whether there is someone in your life you have started to give up on. Perhaps you've tried everything and the person continues to turn away from the path toward God. In that case, you can be certain that your calling is to pray for that person. You are called to pray not just in a casual and quick way; rather, you are called to deep and faith-filled prayer for them. Know that Jesus is the answer to all things and can do all things. Surrender that person to the mercy of God today, tomorrow and every day. Do not give up, but retain hope that God can bring healing and transformation of life.

*Lord, please have pity on me, my family and all those in need. I especially pray for (\_\_\_\_\_) today. Bring healing, holiness and transformation of life. Jesus, I trust in You.*



Holy Communion is the shortest  
and safest way to Heaven.

- Pope St. Pius X -



"IN THE BEGINNING..."

by chris sushynski



"I understand, but the order says 'one golden calf' ..."