

Homily Rerun: September 11, 2016 ~ Fr. Bill

The Lost Sheep and The Golden Calf



THE REST OF THE STORY: During the party celebrating the finding of the sheep that was lost one of the guests asked the host, “So where is this sheep that was lost and is found?” To which the man replied, “At this celebration in its honor it has been raised to its rightful place. We’re eating it.”

In our sinfulness we wander into the “wilderness of the lost.” This is always a wandering away from our true selves. We are lost to the image and likeness of God in which we are made (born); and we are lost from the adoption by God as His beloved sons and daughters in which we are remade (born again). Being found and carried back means we are carried back into the truth of God’s love.

There are many American idols which beguile us into the wilderness of the lost:

the Golden Calf Mutual Fund *for those who worship at the altar of* financial security

the Golden Calf SUV *for those who worship at the altar of* power and speed

the Golden Calf Personal Digital Assistant ... efficiency and organization

the Golden Calf Team ... sports

the Golden Calf of Nice ... political correctness

the Golden Calf Mind ... science or human knowledge

the Golden Calf Mall ... shopping

the Golden Calf Computer Accessory ... technology and gadgetry

the Golden Calf Lock ... their possessions

for those who worship at the many altars of health, youth and good looks we have:

the Golden Calf Tanning Salon

the Golden Calf Fitness Center

the Golden Calf Cosmetic Surgery Institute

and, of course, the Golden Calf Hair Restoration Foundation

the Golden Calf of comfort for those who become testy and edgy when the power goes off for a couple days – or even a couple hours

the Golden Calf cell phone which is probably ‘the king of kings and lord of lords’ of all golden calves

the Golden Calf of complacency for those who are not bothered by missing Mass on Sunday, even for the entire summer or for those who are not bothered by leaving Mass early; for those who do not accept the graces of the Sacrament of Reconciliation

In Psalm 90 we pray: “[O Lord,] Make us know the shortness of our life that we may gain wisdom of heart.” Awareness of the shortness of life cuts off the complacency to which we might be inclined concerning our own sins. The wisdom which comes from this quickly leads us to the Sacrament of Reconciliation in which we initiate “rejoicing in Heaven over one repentant sinner.”

In order to believe there is rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner we must take sin seriously, we must believe that we can truly repent of our sins {for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand}, and we must believe that God actually does forgive the repentant sinner. We must also reject the complacency which sins against God’s mercy telling us that: 1) sin, at least my sin, is not that big a deal so I don’t actually need this sacrament; 2) God forgives sin so I don’t have to worry about it; 3) I can set the standards and requirements for the forgiveness of my sins [the arrogance embedded in this believes that it is none of God’s business, much less that of the Church]; 4) it is between me and God so I do not need the Church telling me what to do, much less do I need some priest, himself a sinner, meddling in my spiritual affairs.

This past Friday, in the Office of Readings the Church offered a reflection on repentance and forgiveness in which Blessed Isaac of Stella wrote: “The Church is incapable of forgiving any sin without Christ, and Christ is unwilling to forgive any sin without the Church.” The first part is very easy to buy into. The second part, not so much. Without going into details, the truth of the matter is that the Church is the Body of Christ so for Him to do anything apart from the Church would destroy the Incarnation.

For over eight years now I have preached to this parish about the importance, necessity and joy of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Confession. It has had little to no impact on our spiritual life as indeed very few of you have paid any attention. So, I’m going to be quiet and let you think about these two questions for a couple minutes: *Why don’t I go to confession/reconciliation? Why don’t I take my children to confession/reconciliation?*

And while you are at it, think about one more golden calf that many of us choose to ignore in spite of its monstrous presence in our society (or perhaps we ignore it because of its monstrous presence in our society). That would be: the Golden Calf Vote for those who offer human sacrifice on the altar of abortion.