



Sestertius depicting Pietas and Caligula sacrificing in front of the Temple of Divus Augustus (37/38 CE)

Obverse sestertius depicting Pietas and Caligula sacrificing in front of the Temple of Divus Augustus (37/38 CE).jpg



[1]

[Reverse sestertius depicting Pietas and Caligula sacrificing in front of the Temple of Divus Augustus \(37/38 CE\).jpg](#) [2]



[3]

Denomination:

Sestertius

Date: 37 CE to 38 CE

Material:

Bronze

Mint:

Rome

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Münzkabinett Berlin; object number: 18215918

See: <http://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18215918> [4]

Name of Ruler:

Caligula

Obverse (Image and Inscription):

Image: Pietas seated left, veiled, holding patera, arm resting on small draped figure standing facing on basis

Inscription: C CAESAR AVG GERMANICUS P M TR POT // PIETAS

Reverse (Image and Inscription):

Image: Caligula sacrificing in front of the hexastyle temple of Divus Augustus; two attendants behind restraining bull and holding patera



Inscription: DIVO–AVG // S–C

Diameter (mm): 34.00mm

Weight (g): 27.38g

Commentary:

RIC I², Gaius, no. 36, p. 111.

This sestertius minted at Rome in 37/38 CE depicts on the obverse the personification of *pietas*, while the reverse depicts an elaborated sacrificial scene. On the obverse, Pietas is depicted seated, veiled and draped, holding a patera, with an arm resting on a small draped figure standing and facing. The inscription refers to Caligula as Caius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, *pontifex maximus*, holder of the *tribunicia potestas*, and mentions Pietas by name. On the reverse, the emperor, Gaius Caligula, standing left, veiled and togate, sacrifices over a garlanded altar with a patera in his hand; the *victimarius*, or the priest in charge of slaughtering the animal victim, is holding a bull for the sacrifice and an attendant is holding a patera. In the background, one sees the garlanded hexastyle temple of Divus Augustus with acroteria and statues of Romulus and Aeneas on top of it. The temple's pediment is decorated with a sacrificial scene. The inscription recalls the dedication of the temple to the deified Augustus by the Senate.

Pietas, whose Greek equivalent was *Eusebeia*, was one of the chief virtues among the Romans. It was the virtue par excellence of Aeneas. According to Carlos Noreña, *Pietas*, together with *Aequitas*, *Virtus*, *Liberalitas*, and *Providentia*, was one of the five core virtues displayed on Roman imperial coinage. Indeed, *Pietas* was in fact the virtue that was most frequently displayed. *Pietas* consisted in “fulfilling one's responsibilities toward anyone or anything with whom one was bound in any way. The fulfillment of these responsibilities could be motivated by duties or obligations, in which case *pietas* was often connected with the notions of *officium*, *fides*, or *religio*, or by the deeper sentiments of love and affection” (Noreña, *Imperial Ideals in the Roman West*, p. 71). Hence this virtue emphasized exemplary relations within the family, between men and gods, and between the Romans and their fatherland. The sacred nature of *pietas* was embodied by the divine personification *Pietas*, a goddess often represented on Roman coins from the Middle Republic onwards. *Pietas* is first represented on denarii issued by Marcus Herennius in 108 or 107 BCE. *Pietas* was depicted as a woman conducting a sacrifice on an altar.

The Temple of Divus Augustus, erected to commemorate the deified Augustus, was built between the Palatine and the Capitoline Hills, behind the Basilica Julia, on the site of the house that Augustus had inhabited before he started his public life. Although the temple is often depicted on coins as having an Ionic hexastyle design, its size, physical proportions and exact location are unknown. The decision to dedicate a temple to Augustus was taken by the Roman Senate shortly after the death of Augustus in 14 CE. However, it was not until 37 CE that the temple was finally completed and dedicated by Caligula. The emperor's purpose in linking himself to Augustus is obvious: he wished to emphasize his legitimacy as a descendant of Augustus, as well as his personal *pietas*. As the message is conveyed in Latin, and as this emission was minted in Rome for the West, it was probably directed at the Italic and at the Western provincial elites.

Keywords in the original language:

- [pietas](#) [5]
- [divus Augustus](#) [6]

Thematic keywords:

- [piety](#) [7]
- [temple](#) [8]
- [Gaius Caligula](#) [9]
- [Roman religion](#) [10]
- [sacrifice](#) [11]
- [Pietas \(goddess\)](#) [12]
- [patera](#) [13]
- [bull](#) [14]
- [Aeneas](#) [15]



- [Romulus](#) [16]

Bibliographical references: Foss, Clive, [Roman Historical Coins](#) [17] (London: Seaby, 1990)
Barrett, Anthony A., [Caligula: The Corruption of Power](#) [18] (Yale (Conn.): Yale University Press, 1988)
Noreña, Carlos F., [Imperial Ideals in the Roman West: Representation, Circulation, Power](#) [19] (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Other sources connected with this document: Numismatic item

[Sestertius depicting Caius Caligula and celebrating the emperor for saving citizens \(37-38 CE\) \[20\]](#)

- [Read more about Sestertius depicting Caius Caligula and celebrating the emperor for saving citizens \(37-38 CE\) \[20\]](#)

Realized by:

[Samuele Rocca](#) [21]



Source URL: <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/sestertius-depicting-pietas-and-caligula-sacrificing-front-temple-divus-augustus-3738-ce>

Links

- [1] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/demus-814819-18215918-av.jpg?itok=B9g7aK-3>
- [2] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/file/reverse-sestertius-depicting-pietas-and-caligula-sacrificing-front-temple-divus-augustus-3738>
- [3] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/demus-814819-18215918-rv.jpg?itok=FkedOUaq>
- [4] <http://ikmk.smb.museum/object?id=18215918>
- [5] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/pietas>
- [6] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/keywords/divus-augustus>
- [7] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/piety>
- [8] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/temple>
- [9] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/gaius-caligula>
- [10] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/roman-religion>
- [11] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/sacrifice>
- [12] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/pietas-goddess>
- [13] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/patera>
- [14] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/bull>
- [15] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/aeneas>
- [16] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/thematic-keywords/romulus>
- [17] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/roman-historical-coins>
- [18] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/caligula-corruption-power>
- [19] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/imperial-ideals-roman-west-representation-circulation-power>
- [20] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/sestertius-depicting-caius-caligula-and-celebrating-emperor-saving-citizens-37-38%C2%A0ce>



[21] <http://www.judaism-and-rome.org/erc-team/samuele-rocca>