

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Total Giving Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time Monday, November 24, 2014
8:15 AM **Rv 14:1-3, 4b-5; Lk 21:1-4** St. Andrew Dung Lac, priest, martyr, and
Companions (Jesus' whole life was an offering of himself to the Father.)

Biblical imagery is not something we are actually familiar with even if we have heard it or been in touch with it for a long time. Starting in the first reading from the Book of Revelation, we read the number 144,000. Well, in modern terminology that's a small number and it gives rise to a certain sense of exclusivity, but that's not thinking biblically because in the biblical view of numbers, and **there is a sort of numerology in the Bible, 12 is the full number.** There are 12 tribes in the covenant, and whenever there's talk of the restoration it's always 12 is the fundamental number. That's why there are 12 apostles, not 11 or 13, but 12 because that's the full number of the restored Israel.

Now if you take 12 and you say 12,000, well, that is simply an enormous number, and then 12 times 12,000 you are talking practically an infinite number in their mind. So when we read **144,000**, we think, oh, that's not much, but when they read it, **it was an enormous, spectacular, uncountable number.** So we have to keep that in mind. **We have to try to get into the mindset of the authors;** that's not always so easy.

In a similar way when Jesus is looking at the treasury, he is seeing a woman with **two small copper coins** like two pennies. Now his point is that the value of what she is giving has absolutely nothing to do with the relative value in the economy, what it would actually buy. The point is what she is offering has almost no buying power; and yet even though it has no buying power, it is the greatest of all gifts because it is relative to her own indigence, her own neediness. **It's all she had. So she was giving herself totally.** This is very important and this is very basic to Jesus' way of looking at things.

This is taking place in the treasury, and you will remember that Jesus threw out the moneychangers from the treasury. What were they doing there? They were exchanging coins, Roman coins, which was what the economy needed, with Jewish shekels minted for religious reasons—an odd practice, but they insisted that you buy your sacrificial animals with Jewish shekels. So they had to change. That’s what they were doing. He threw them out. Why?

Well, actually **I think he objected to the whole idea of buying animals to sacrifice instead of giving yourself.** It was a nice symbol, but it was just that. And it was very easy to do that and not mean anything, whereas **Jesus’ whole life was an offering of himself to the Father.** It culminated in the Cross—it culminated in the Cross—but his whole life was leading to that. He was always offering his whole being to the Father. **That’s what we are invited to do as well.**

Today we celebrate the martyrs from Vietnam, who gave their lives for a witness. This is total giving. The widow in the Temple: total giving. **This is the theme of Jesus’ whole life and ministry: total giving.** When we come to the Eucharist, we are invited first of all to give Jesus, the Christ, to the Father as our gift and to add ourselves totally, not just a token, not just a symbol, not something in substitution, but **our real hearts and minds and wills.**