

29th A October 16, 2011 (finance report also)

Well, we had a pretty good offering last weekend. Let me see... Here's a quarter: George Washington, In God We Trust; a nickel: Thomas Jefferson, In God We Trust; a five-dollar bill: Lincoln, In God We Trust. What's this: a denarius. We had a visitor from Rome, an OLD visitor! Whose face is on it? It's Tiberius Caesar, the emperor of Rome at the time of Jesus! And in Latin it says, "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, Great High Priest." The denarius was about one day's wage, although inflation lowered its value. And every Jew had to pay one denarius a year tax for the privilege of being occupied by Rome. That was the "census tax" in today's Gospel. All together, the peasants paid 35% of their income in taxes, and that was after they gave the landowner his share of the harvest. Jesus did not promote a revolution against Rome. He and the Twelve did not "occupy" Jerusalem.

Instead, Jesus said something far more radical: "give to Caesar everything that has Caesar's image on it. Give to God everything that has God's image on it." And what is it that has God's image upon it? Everything is God's gift: the air, the water, the land, the animals. Every hour belongs to God. Most of all, people. People are in God's image, and people belong to God. Care for people above all.

It has been written that our "tax" as believers is to give God a part of our heart at every Mass, to "tithe" our heart and pray that Jesus will transform it.

Well, everyone knows that the face of George Washington is on a one-dollar bill. Would it be just as obvious that God's face is written on ours? Would people be able to tell that we "belong to God" by looking at us?

At Mass, the bread and wine are transformed into Jesus. When we receive Communion, we pray that we may also be transformed to become Jesus, and we will give to him not just an hour a week, or a dollar a week, but our whole lives.