



The Book of Revelation

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Opening Prayer & Announcements

Presentation 1 – Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature

Apocalypse: Literary Genre, Definitions, Characteristics

Symbolism and Numerology; History and Theology

Book of Revelation: Author, Date, Context, Purpose, Outline

Use of Revelation in the Lectionary for Mass

Q & A

Presentation 2 – Revelation 1—5 (by. Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ)

Introduction (Rev 1)

Letters to Churches (Rev 2—3)

Initial Visions (Rev 4—5)

Group Discussions: How is Jesus portrayed in Rev 1—5 similar/different from John's Gospel?

Lunch Break

Presentation 3 – Revelation 6—19

Various Cycles of Visions

Q & A

Presentation 4 – Revelation 20—22

New Heavens, New Earth, New Jerusalem

Group Discussions: How is the Book of Revelation relevant for us as Christians today?

Announcements & Closing Prayer

BOOK of REVELATION – A BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY

Fourteen Recent Commentaries:

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Preliminary Description of “Apocalypse”:

- In **popular terminology** today, an “apocalypse” is a catastrophic event (e.g., nuclear holocaust).
- In **biblical terminology**, an “apocalypse” is not an event, but a “revelation” that is recorded in written form:
 - it is a piece of crisis literature that “reveals” truths about the past, present, and/or future in *highly symbolic* terms;
 - the revelation often comes in *dreams or visions*, and usually needs to be *interpreted* with the help of an angel;
 - it is usually intended to *provide hope and encouragement* for people in the midst of severe trials and tribulations.
- **Caution 1:** “**The Apocalypse**” is an alternate name (used esp. by Protestants) for the “**Book of Revelation**” in the NT.
- **Caution 2:** “**The Little Apocalypse**” or “The Apocalyptic Discourse” are names sometimes given to **Mark 13** (and parallel texts Matt 24 and Luke 21), containing Jesus’ teachings about the future of Jerusalem and the end of the world.

Scholarly Definition of “Apocalypse” (from the SBL’s “Apocalypse Group”; in J. J. Collins, *Semeia* 14 [1979] 9):

“ ‘Apocalypse’ is a **genre of revelatory literature** with a **narrative framework**, in which a revelation is **mediated** by an **otherworldly being** to a **human recipient**, disclosing a **transcendent reality** with is both **temporal**, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and **spatial** insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.”

Addition to the Definition, incorporating the **purpose** of the genre (from suggestions of Hellholm 1982 & Aune 1986):

“...intended to **interpret** the present, earthly circumstances *in light of* the supernatural world and of the future, and to **influence** both the *understanding* and the *behavior* of the audience by means of divine authority.”

The Symbolism of Numbers in the Bible:

1	singularity; God in monotheism (Deut 6:4); unity for humans (John 10:16; Eph 4:4)
2	duality: contrary (light/dark, good/evil) or complimentary (material/spiritual; human/divine)
3	God’s actions: 3 “visitors” (Gen 18:2); “third day” (Exod 19:11); later “Trinity” (Matt 28:19)
3½	half of seven; thus things in process, still incomplete
4	earth, directions, winds, empires; later the four Gospels/Evangelists
6	human work/effort (Luke 13:14); incompleteness, imperfection, lack (<i>not yet 7</i>)
7	days in a week, sabbath rest (Gen 2:1-3); thus natural & divine completeness/perfection
[8]	Jewish day of Circumcision (Exod 22:30); Christian day of Resurrection (John 20:26)
10	completion; basis of many number systems (# digits on fingers/toes!)
11	incompletion; only eleven apostles remain after Judas’ death
12	months per year, tribes of Israel, apostles of Jesus; human completion
[13]	[used in later superstition; based on Judas, but not used in the Bible itself!]
24	Christian number for completion/restoration: OT tribes + NT apostles
30	days in month in ancient lunar calendars
[40]	very long time: years of Israel’s Exodus, days of Jesus’ temptation
42	number of months in 3½ years (see also 1260 days)
144	= 12x12, thus perfect completion
360	number of days in a lunar year (12x30)
365	number of days in a solar year (cf. Gen 5:23)
666	number of the beast (only in Rev 13:18; variant reading is 616)
1000	= 10x10x10
1260	number of days in 3½ years (thus incompleteness)
10,000	“ <i>myriad</i> ”; highest ancient number with its own name

Roman Emperors in the New Testament Era:

[Julius Caesar] - assassinated 44 BC	Galba & Otho & Vitellius (AD 68-69)
Octavian/Augustus (27 BC—AD 14)	Vespasian (AD 69-79)
Tiberius (AD 14-37)	Titus (AD 79-81)
Gaius/Caligula (AD 37-41)	DOMITIAN (AD 81-96)
Claudius (AD 41-54)	Nerva (AD 96-98)
NERO (AD 54-68)	Trajan (AD 98-117)

The Book of Revelation: An Overview

The last book in the New Testament, often called “Revelation” or “The Revelation of John,” is more properly entitled “**The Revelation of Jesus Christ to John.**” It is also called “The Apocalypse,” but should *not* be called “Revelations” (*not plural*; it is a *single* unified message of God, told in a series of deepening narrative cycles).

The Greek word *apokalypsis* literally means “uncovering” or “revealing” some truth previously hidden. An “**Apocalypse**” is not primarily an event (end of the world or another catastrophe), but is a **literary genre**, a style of writing that uses highly *symbolic narratives* to interpret a *historical crisis* and provide *hope for a better future*.

Literary and Historical Issues:

Abbrev. (length)	Rev (22 chapters, 404 verses, 9825 words in the original Greek text)
Attributed Author	“John” (1:1, 4, 9), a Jewish-Christian prophet; <i>not</i> the brother of James, son of Zebedee, named in the Gospels, <i>nor</i> the authors of the “Fourth Gospel” or the “Johannine Epistles”
Named Recipients	“Seven churches” in Asia Minor, modern SW Turkey (1:4; 2:1-22)
Date of Writing	Mid-90’s of the first century, near the end of the reign of Emperor Domitian (who died in 96 CE)
Location of Writing	Roman Province of Asia (possibly the capital city of Ephesus itself)
Unity & Integrity	A single work; possibly composed in stages, incorporating some older apocalyptic materials
Literary Genre	An “apocalypse” (1:1; 4:1), with an epistolary frame (letter introduction & conclusion: 1:4; 22:21)
Language	Highly symbolic Greek, including some Hebrew/Semitic influences
Purpose	Encourage Christians to persevere in faith in the midst of trials & tribulations (cf. 13:10b; 14:12)

Use of the Book of Revelation in the *Lectionary for Mass*: Sundays & Weekdays

L #	Sunday	Second Reading
45	2nd Sunday of Easter – Year C	Rev 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19 – Vision of the Risen Lord Jesus
48	3rd Sunday of Easter – Year C	Rev 5:11-14 – Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain
51	4th Sunday of Easter – Year C	Rev 7:9, 14b-17 – Uncountable Multitude of the Elect in Triumph
54	5th Sunday of Easter – Year C	Rev 21:1-5a – New Heaven and New Earth
57	6th Sunday of Easter – Year C	Rev 21:10-14, 22-23 – Vision of the New Jerusalem
61	7th Sunday of Easter – Year C	Rev 22:12-14, 16-17, 20 – Epilogue: Come, Lord Jesus!
161	Christ the King – Year B	Rev 1:5-18 – Jesus Christ, King of Kings, is Coming in Glory
260	Christ Mass (in Holy Week)	Rev 1:5-18 – Jesus Christ, King of Kings, is Coming in Glory
L #	Weekday	First Reading
497	Year II – Week 33 – Monday	Rev 1:1-4; 2:1-5 – Introduction; Letter to the Church in Ephesus
498	Year II – Week 33 – Tuesday	Rev 3:1-6, 14-22 – Letters to the Churches in Sardis & Laodicea
499	Year II – Week 33 – Wednesday	Rev 4:1-11 – Vision of God’s Throne; “Holy, holy, holy”
500	Year II – Week 33 – Thursday	Rev 5:1-10 – Scroll with 7 Seals; Lion of Judah; Lamb that was slain
501	Year II – Week 33 – Friday	Rev 10:8-11 – Take & eat the scroll; prophesy to many peoples
502	Year II – Week 33 – Saturday	Rev 11:4-12 – The Two Witnesses
503	Year II – Week 34 – Monday	Rev 14:1-3, 4b-5 – Mount Zion; the Lamb with the 144,000 Redeemed
504	Year II – Week 34 – Tuesday	Rev 14:14-19 – The Son of Man & the Angels Reaping
505	Year II – Week 34 – Wednesday	Rev 15:1-4 – The Sea of Glass; the Song of Moses
506	Year II – Week 34 – Thursday	Rev 18:1-2, 21-23; 19:1-3, 9a – Fallen is Babylon; Rejoicing in Heaven
507	Year II – Week 34 – Friday	Rev 20:1-4, 11–21:2 – Satan Bound for 1000 years; the Book of Life
508	Year II – Week 34 – Saturday	Rev 22:1-7 – River of Water of Life; Tree of Life; Final Blessing
622	Aug. 15: Assumption of the BVM	Rev 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab – Vision of the Woman & Dragon
667	November 1: All Saints	Rev 7:2-4, 9-14 – The 144,000 & Uncountable Multitude of the Elect

The Purpose of the Book of Revelation:

To encourage Christians to persevere in faith in the midst of tribulations

“patient endurance” (Gk *hypomonē*) & “to hold fast” (Gk *kratein*) & “to keep” (Gk *tērein*) – NRSV texts

1:9 – I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the *patient endurance*, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

2:1-3 – “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who *holds* the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands: / “I know your works, your toil and your *patient endurance*. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. / I also know that you are *enduring patiently* and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary.”

2:13-16 – “I know where you are living, where Satan's throne is. Yet you are *holding fast* to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives. / But I have a few things against you: you have some there who *hold* to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication. / So you also have some who *hold* to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”

2:19 – “I know your works--your love, faith, service, and *patient endurance*. I know that your last works are greater than the first.”

2:25 – “...only *hold fast* to what you have until I come.”

3:10-11 – “Because *you have kept* my word of *patient endurance*, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth. / I am coming soon; *hold fast* to what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.”

13:10 – If you are to be taken captive, into captivity you go; if you kill with the sword, with the sword you must be killed. *Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.*

14:12 – *Here is a call for the endurance of the saints*, those who *keep* the commandments of God and *hold fast* to the faith of Jesus.

22:7 – “See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who *keeps* the words of the prophecy of this book.”

“those who conquer” (Gk *nikan*) – NRSV texts

2:7 – Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. *To everyone who conquers*, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.

2:11 – Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. *Whoever conquers* will not be harmed by the second death.

2:17 – Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. *To everyone who conquers* I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.

2:26 – *To everyone who conquers* and *continues to do my works* to the end, I will give authority over the nations;

3:5 – *If you conquer*, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels.

3:12 – *If you conquer*, I will make you a pillar in the temple of my God; you will never go out of it. I will write on you the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

3:21 – *To the one who conquers* I will give a place with me on my throne, *just as I myself conquered* and sat down with my Father on his throne.

5:5 – Then one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, *has conquered*, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”

6:2 – I looked, and there was a white horse! Its rider had a bow; a crown was given to him, and he came out *conquering and to conquer*.

11:7 – When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make war on them and *conquer* them and kill them,

12:11 – But *they have conquered* him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death.

13:7 – Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to *conquer* them. It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation,

15:2 – And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and *those who had conquered* the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.

17:14 – they will make war on the Lamb, and *the Lamb will conquer them*, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.”

21:7 – *Those who conquer* will inherit these things, and I will be their God and they will be my children.

An Outline of the Book of Revelation

adapted from various sources

PROLOGUE (1:1-8)

- The Introduction of the Book (1:1-3)
- An Epistolary Prescript (1:4-6)
- Two Prophetic Sayings (1:7-8)

VISIONARY REPORT (1:9 – 22:5)

John's Inaugural Vision & Commission (1:9 – 3:22)

- An Audition and Vision of the Risen Christ (1:9-20)
- Seven Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia** (2:1 – 3:22)
 - Ephesus (2:1-7); Smyrna (2:8-11); Pergamum (2:12-17); Thyatira (2:18-29); Sardis (3:1-6); Philadelphia (3:7-13); Laodicea (3:14-22)

John's First Cycle of Visions in the Spirit (4:1 – 11:19)

- Worship in the Heavenly Court (4:1-11)
- The Scroll, the Lion of Judah, and the Lamb (5:1-14)
- Seven Seals** (6:1 – 8:5)
 - The first four seals (6:1-8)
 - The fifth and sixth seals (6:9-17)
 - Two interrupting visions:
 - 144,000 Israelites sealed by God (7:1-8)
 - Countless Gentiles robed in white (7:9-17)
 - The seventh seal and the angel with a golden censer (8:1-5)
- Seven Angels with Seven Trumpets** (8:2 – 11:19)
 - The first four trumpets (8:2-12)
 - The fifth and sixth trumpets (8:13; 9:1-21)
 - Two interrupting visions:
 - An angel with a small scroll (10:1-11)
 - The temple and two witnesses (11:1-14)
 - The seventh trumpet (11:15-19)

John's Second Cycle of Visions in the Spirit (12:1 – 22:5)

- Seven Symbolic Visions** of the Past, Present & Future (12:1 – 15:4)
 - The Woman, the Child, and the Dragon (12:1-17)
 - The First Beast, from the Sea (13:1-10)
 - The Second Beast, from the Earth (13:11-18)
 - The Lamb and the 144,000 (14:1-5)
 - The Three Angels with Messages (14:6-13)
 - The Final Harvest and Vintage (14:14-20)
 - The Victory Song of Moses and of the Lamb (15:1-4)
- Seven Angels with Seven Plagues** (15:1 – 19:10)
 - The Seven Angels (15:1-8)
 - The Seven Bowls (16:1-21)
 - Elaboration on the Destruction of Babylon (17:1 – 19:10)
 - The whore on the scarlet beast: Rome (17:1-18)
 - The fall of Babylon: Rome's destruction (18:1-24)
 - The Rejoicing in Heaven (19:1-10)
- Seven Visions of the Last Things** (19:11 – 22:5)
 - The Coming of Christ, the Word of God (19:11-16)
 - The Invitation to a Great Banquet (19:17-18)
 - The Final Battle (19:19-21)
 - The Binding of Satan (20:1-3)
 - The Millennial Reign (20:4-10)
 - The Final Judgment (20:11-15)
 - The New Heaven, New Earth, New Jerusalem (21:1-8)
 - An Elaborate Description of the New Jerusalem (21:9 – 22:5)

CONCLUSION (22:6-21)

- A Collection of Short Prophetic Sayings (22:6-20)
- An Epistolary Benediction (22:21)

Blocks of Seven in the Book of Revelation

Seven churches (1:4, 11, 20; 2:1--3:22), seven spirits of God (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6), seven lampstands (1:12, 20; 2:1), seven stars (1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1), seven angels (1:20; 8:2, 6; 15:1, 6-8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9), seven torches (4:5), seven seals (5:1, 5), seven horns & seven eyes on lamb (5:6), seven trumpets (8:2, 6), seven thunders (10:3-4), seven heads & seven diadems on dragon (12:3), seven heads on sea beast (13:1; 17:3, 7), seven plaques (15:1, 6-8; 21:9), seven bowls (15:7-8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9), seven mountains & seven kings (17:9).

- The **seven churches** are explicitly named near the beginning: "Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamum, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." (1:11).
- The lamb receives **seven-fold praise** from myriads of angels: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" (5:12; similar seven-fold praise in 7:12).
- As the sixth seal is opened, **seven groups of people** flee: "Then the kings of the earth and the magnates and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and all slaves and free people, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains..." (6:15)
- **Seven beatitudes** are scattered throughout the book (1:3; 14:13a; 16:15; 19:9a; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14).

Letters to the Seven Churches:

City in Asia Minor: Ref.	Ephesus 2:1-7	Smyrna 2:8-11	Pergamum 2:12-17	Thyatira 2:18-29	Sardis 3:1-6	Philadelphia 3:7-13	Laodicea 3:14-22
Description of Christ:	7 stars; 7 lampstands	first & last; died & lived	with 2-edged sword	eyes of fire; feet of bronze	seven spirits; seven stars	holy & true; key of David	amen; <i>archē</i> of Creation
The Church: Good things	vv. 2-3	v. 9	v. 13	v. 19	?	v. 8	?
The Church: Bad things	v. 4	?	vv. 14-15	vv. 20-21	v. 1b	?	vv. 15-17
Admonitions & Encouragements:	vv. 5-6	v. 10	v. 16	vv. 22-25	vv. 2-4	vv. 9-11	vv. 18-20
Promises to the victors who hear:	v. 7	v. 11	v. 17	vv. 26-29	vv. 5-6	vv. 12-13	vv. 21-22

Cycles of Seven Visions:

#	7 Seals	7 Trumpets	7 Signs	7 Bowls/Plagues	7 Stages	7 Final Visions
Intro	5:1-14	8:2-6	11:16-19	15:1 – 16:1	17:1-2	19:9-10
1	6:1-2 white horse: <i>conqueror</i>	8:7 earth set on fire	12:1-2 woman with child	16:2 on the earth	17:3-6 description of Babylon	19:11-16 rider on a white horse
2	6:3-4 red horse: <i>war</i>	8:8-9 sea turned to blood	12:3-6 dragon	16:3 on the sea	17:7-18 explanation of Babylon	19:17-18 supper of God
3	6:5-6 black horse: <i>famine</i>	8:10-11 rivers & springs become bitter	12:7-17 war in heaven	16:4-7 on the waters	18:1-3 fall of Babylon	19:19-21 capture of two beasts
4	6:7-8 pale-green horse: <i>death</i>	8:12-13 heavenly bodies are dimmed	13:1-10 beast from the sea	16:8-9 on the sun	18:4-8 rescue of God's people	20:1-3 angel of the abyss
5	6:9-11 souls of martyrs under the altar	9:1-12 1 st woe: locusts	13:11-18 beast from the earth	16:10-11 on the beast's throne	18:9-20 mourning for Babylon	20:4-10 first resurrection & millennial reign
6	6:12-17 earthquake and sky signs	9:13–21 2 nd woe: horses	14:1-5 Lamb & virgins	16:12 on the Euphrates	18:21-24 Babylon's final ruin foretold	20:11-15 final judgment scene
Pause	7:1-17 – people sealed & saved	10:1 – 11:14 scrolls & witnesses	14:6-20 3 angels; son of man; 3 more angels	16:13-16 3 frogs / fous spirits	x	x
7	8:1 – silence for about a half-hour	11:15 – loud voices: kingdom of God	15:2-4 – sea of glass	16:17 into the air	19:1-8 songs of praise at Babylon's fall	21:1 – 22:5 New Heavens/Earth; New Jerusalem

666: Who or What Is the Beast?

The answer to this nearly 2000-year-old question depends on how you choose to interpret the Book of Revelation. Near the middle of this highly symbolic book are descriptions of several strange creatures:

- First, “**a great red dragon**, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads”; it is described further after being defeated by Michael and his angels in a battle in heaven: “The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” (Rev 12:3-18).
- Second, “**a beast rising out of the sea** having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names... [it] was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority...” (Rev 13:1-10).
- Third, “**another beast that rose out of the earth**; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast...” (Rev 13:11-18).

At the end of the paragraph about this third beast, the author challenges the reader with an intriguing puzzle: “**This calls for wisdom: let anyone with understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a person. Its number is six hundred sixty-six.**” (13:18).

- To understand this text, one must know that ancient Hebrew (like Greek and other ancient languages) did not have a separate set of characters to indicate numbers, but simply used the letters of its alphabet to represent numbers. This fact provides the basis for the ancient practice of “**gematria**,” in which numerical equivalents of words and names are calculated (still a popular game today!).
- There are several different ways of assigning numbers to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but the system most commonly used is this:
alef = 1; bet = 2; gimel = 3; dalet = 4; hey = 5; waw = 6; zayin = 7; chet = 8; tet = 9; yod = 10; kaf = 20; lamed = 30; mem = 40; nun = 50; samek = 60; ayin = 70; pey = 80; tsadeh = 90; qof = 100; resh = 200; shin = 300; taw = 400.
- The basic idea is that every word (and every name) has a number associated with it, obtained by adding up the numerical equivalent of each letter in the word. So, every person has a number, the numerical value of his or her name. For example, “**David**” has a value of **14** in Hebrew (it is written *dalet-waw-dalet*, which is 4+6+4); see Matt 1:17.
- The same game can be played in any language by assigning numerical values to each letter of the alphabet: for example, a = 1, b = 2, c = 3, etc. However, the results you want to get may determine which numerical system you choose; for example, you can get HITLER = 666 if you choose a system in which a=100, b=101, c=102, etc.

So, who is the person whose number is 666?

Throughout history, attempts have been made to identify 666 with many famous people (usually one’s enemies)!

- Since the Reformation (and still today!), some **Protestants** have tried to connect 666 with the Pope, either with the “Roman Pontiff” in general or with a specific Pope in particular. On the other hand, some **Catholics** used to see a link between the apocalyptic beast and Martin Luther.
- Some **Democrats** have tried to associate the beast with Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush, while some **Republicans** might argue it was John F. Kennedy or Bill Clinton.

Most biblical historians agree that the Book of Revelation is simply referring to the **Roman Emperor NERO**, the most “beastly” ruler of the first Christian Century:

- The Hebrew equivalent of “**Emperor Nero**” could be written NRWN QSR (*nun-resh-waw-nun qof-samek-resh*); thus, the first word is 50+200+6+50, the second word is 100+60+200, and the total is no surprise!
- For more extensive discussion of the first-century Roman Empire and the historical references behind the dragon, the sea beast, and the land beast in Rev 12–13, see any good biblical commentary on the Book of Revelation.

Does Rev 13:18 really contain the number 666, or was it originally 616?

- Most ancient Greek manuscripts of the NT read “six hundred sixty-six” in Rev 13:18; but some ancient manuscripts contain the alternate reading “six hundred sixteen” (616), which might well be the older or original reading of this text.
 - A branch of biblical scholarship called “textual” criticism deals with such issues, trying to determine which variant was more likely the original reading. If the text originally said 666, how and why was it changed to 616 in later manuscripts? Or vice-versa, if the original text was 616, how and why was it later changed to 666?
- The proposal that 616 is the older and better reading of Rev 13:18 was recently bolstered by some newly published Oxyrhynchus Papyri. Moreover, the change from “616” to “666” can easily be explained, especially if the historical reference was originally to Emperor Nero.
 - The final letter “nun” is optional in the Hebrew spelling of Nero. So NRW QSR = 50+200+6+100+60+200 = 616.
 - If 616 was the original reading, it is easy to see how the text of Rev 13:8 would later have been changed to 666, due to its more highly symbolic value (since 6 represents incompleteness, in contrast to 7 representing completion, the triple 666 represents evil even more obviously than 616.)

CONTENT OF THE SEVEN LETTERS
(by Sr. Christine Hilliard, CSJ)

IN THE LETTER TO	CHRIST REFERS TO HIMSELF AS	CHRIST PRAISES THE CHURCH FOR	CHRIST CRITICIZES THE CHURCH FOR	CHRIST PROMISES ETERNAL REWARD UNDER THE SYMBOL
<i>Ephesus</i>	holding 7 stars and walking among the 7 lampstands	their works, endurance, testing false apostles, hatred of the works of the Nicolaitans	laxity: <i>You have lost the love you had at first.</i>	eating from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God
<i>Smyrna</i>	the first and the last, who died and came to life	bearing tribulation, poverty, and slander		the crown of life, preservation from the "second death"
<i>Pergamum</i>	the one with the sharp two-edged sword	fidelity to Christ's name and faith	harboring those who hold to the teaching of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans	the hidden manna, a white stone/amulet with a new name written on it
<i>Thyatira</i>	the Son of God having eyes like a flame of fire and feet like polished brass	works, love, faith, service and endurance	tolerance of "Jezebel" who misleads Christians to practice "harlotry" or idolatry and eating idol-offerings	authority over the nations and the morningstar
<i>Sardis</i>	having the 7 spirits of God and the 7 stars	having a few people who have not "soiled their garments" but who walk with Christ	having the reputation of being alive but are dead	being dressed in white garments and not having name erased from the book of life
<i>Philadelphia</i>	the holy one, the true one, the one who holds the keys of David	loyalty to Jesus' word, to his name, and to his message of endurance		a pillar in the temple of God upon whom will be written the name of God and the name of the new Jerusalem, and Jesus' own name
<i>Laodicea</i>	the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the source of God's creation		being lukewarm	sharing food with Christ and sitting with him on his throne

