



Every Nation, Race, People, and Tongue

Today's readings tell us of the Church's universality.

The Church might have been born of the people of Israel, but from its beginning it was meant to spread throughout the world—and it has.

The first reading describes the success that Paul and Barnabas enjoyed in cities in what today is Turkey. Believing that Jesus was the fulfillment of Jewish expectation, these missionaries naturally went first to the synagogues, where they preached to the Jewish people and those who had recently converted to Judaism. The next week the entire city came to hear them. This angered many of the Jewish people. The text says that this was because they were jealous of Paul and Barnabas. Jealous of what?

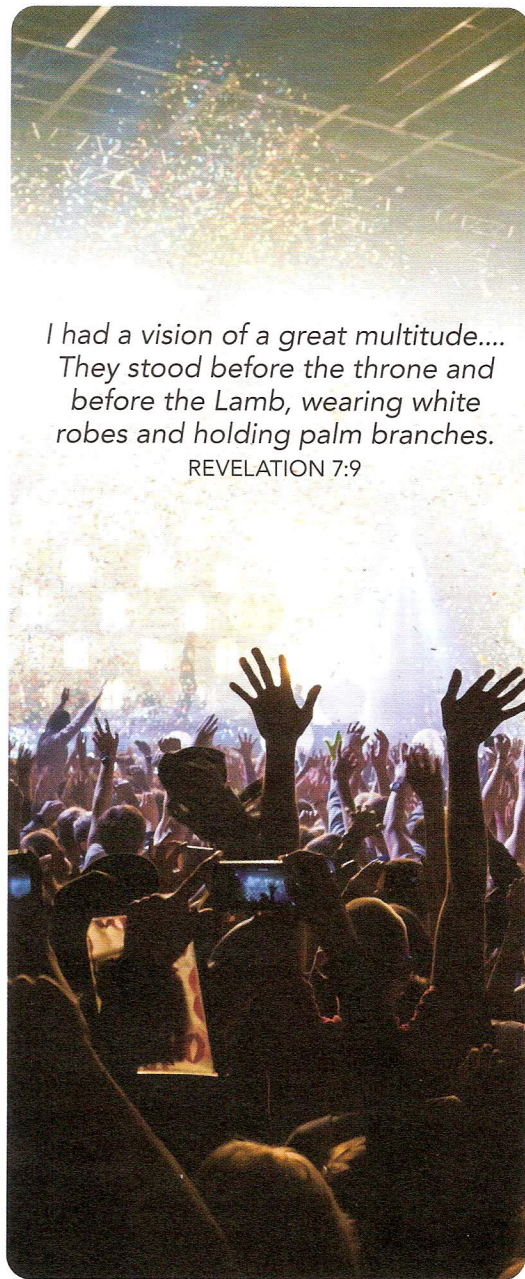
We know that many Jewish-Christians believed that converts had to accept the practices of Judaism before they were considered full members of the Jesus movement (see Acts 15:1). They maintained that everyone should be the same. Mention of converts in this story suggests this may have been the issue. Whatever the problem might have been, the movement spread, adapting itself as it did.

The vision reported in Revelation assures us that, in the end, the spread of the gospel will see completion. It will have been preached to and accepted by "every nation, race, people, and tongue" (7:9). This speaks of genuine universality rather than uniformity. This is unity among diversity. The distinctiveness of nation, race, people, and tongue will be respected because what really unites them is the "blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

FOR Reflection

- * *How open are you to people of other nations, races, or tongues?*
- * *What might you learn from people with different backgrounds?*



*I had a vision of a great multitude....
They stood before the throne and
before the Lamb, wearing white
robes and holding palm branches.*

REVELATION 7:9

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