



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?

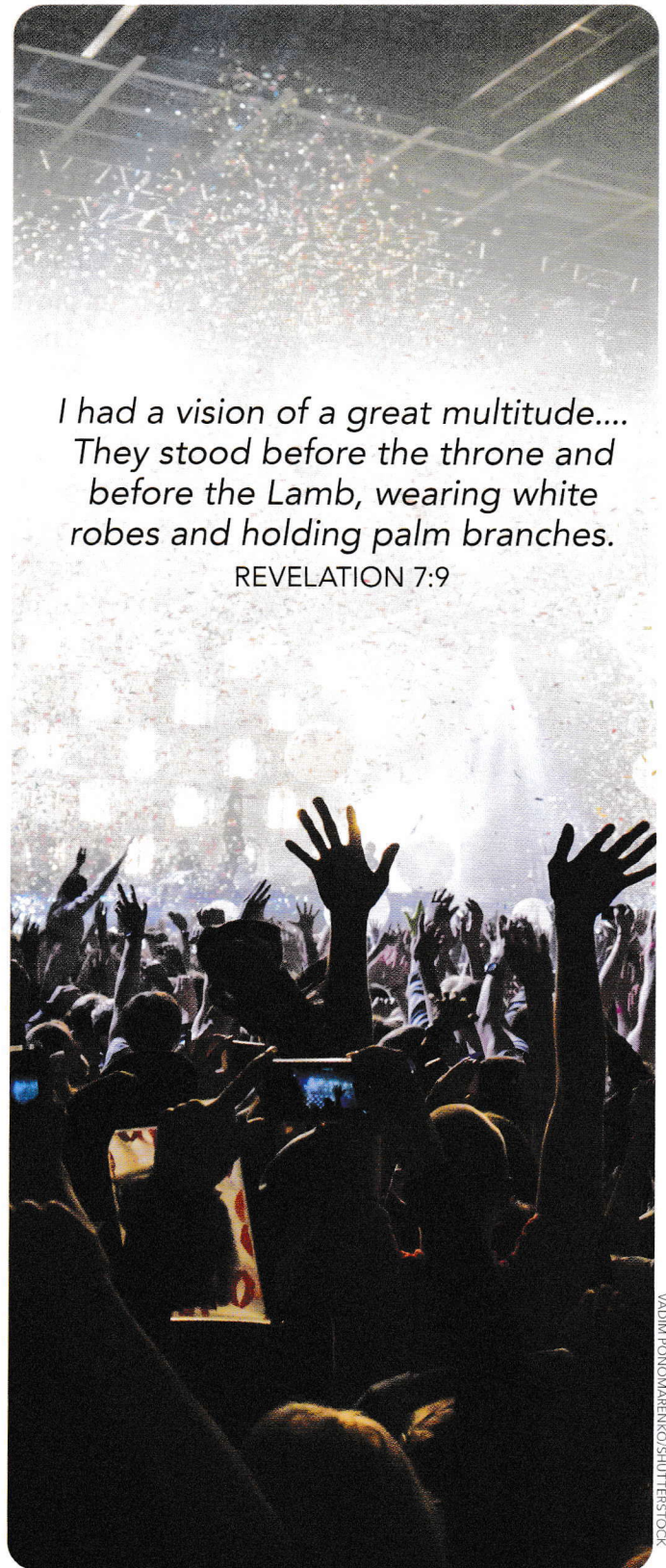
We know that many Jewish-Christians believed that converts had to accept the practices of Judaism before they were considered full members of the Jesus movement (see Acts 15:1). They maintained that everyone should be the same. Mention of converts in this story suggests this may have been the issue.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

Dear Padre,

Because it's not in the Bible, our Protestant friends don't believe in purgatory. When did the Catholic Church adopt this belief?

"All who die in God's grace and friendship, but [who are] still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they [must] undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter

the joy of heaven" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1030). This process of purification is purgatory.

The word *purgatory* may not appear in the Bible, but it does capture a truth found there. Scriptural imagery of figuratively passing through fire for spiritual refinement helped formulate the doctrine of purgatory in the patristic period (see 1 Corinthians 3:15). Forgiveness of sins after death is also suggested in Matthew 12:32 and 2 Timothy 1:18.

By the Middle Ages, purgatory had been defined at the Second Council of Lyons (1274), the Council of Florence (1439), and in the Decree on Purgatory at the Council of Trent (1563). The doctrine of purgatory

is part of our Tradition and deposit of faith. At one of his weekly general audiences in 2011, Pope Benedict XVI said, "Purgatory is like a purifying fire burning inside a person, a painful experience of regret for one's sins. A soul stained by sin cannot present itself to God" (see Revelation 21:27).

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REXUSA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Calendar

Monday

MAY 9

Easter Weekday

Acts 11:1–18

Jn 10:1–10

Tuesday

MAY 10

Easter Weekday

Acts 11:19–26

Jn 10:22–30

Wednesday

MAY 11

Easter Weekday

Acts 12:24–13:5a

Jn 12:44–50

Thursday

MAY 12

Easter Weekday

Acts 13:13–25

Jn 13:16–20

Friday

MAY 13

Easter Weekday

Acts 13:26–33

Jn 14:1–6

Saturday

MAY 14

St. Matthias, Apostle

Acts 1:15–17, 20–26

Jn 15:9–17

Sunday

MAY 15

Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 14:21–27

Rv 21:1–5a

Jn 13:31–33a, 34–35

A WORD FROM Pope Francis

It is vitally important for the Church today to go forth and preach the gospel to all: to all places, on all occasions, without hesitation, reluctance, or fear...The Book of Revelation speaks of "an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tongue and tribe and people."

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