

# *A Vision of Great Multitude*

Fessahaye Mebrahtu

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Barnabas started reaching out to the Jews in the Diaspora, living outside of Israel. However, those assembled in the synagogue on sabbath were not receptive to the new teachings about the crucified and risen Messiah. The two Apostles shifted their attention to the Gentiles according to Jesus' mandate, "I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth." Their statement echoes Jesus' commissioning of the Apostles, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15). The readings states, "The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord." We are the descendants of such Gentiles, who were no people, because we believed now we are people of God. Through our baptism we become participants in the pascal mystery, passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the second reading, John's "vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue" is the outcome of Jesus' commissioning of the disciples, "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of age" (Matt. 28: 19-20). The Church, especially the Catholic Church must live up to its calling with the following attributes: universal, inclusive, diverse, multitude, different parts of the body, etc. Yet, we are one flock under one shepherd, unity in diversity.

The Church is not only the ideal, but it also reflects our weakness and our sinfulness, because we are members its body. This is true, especially when we shift our focus from "the Lamb, who is at the center of the throne" and we play the gatekeeper role instead of being gateways to what leads to the "springs of life-giving water."

We also call the Church, our mother, who nurtures and takes care of her children. When mother plays favoritism among her children, that becomes the cause of disunity and family dysfunction. Historically the Church has suffered from these and many communities aggrieve such dysfunction. As we celebrate Mothers' Day today, it is important also to celebrate our Mother Church and pray that the Holy Spirit continues to guide her flock to "life-giving water."