

**ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME .- Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

**Matthew 28,16-20**

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

The episode of Jesus' ascension is found in Luke's gospel, and at the end of Mark's gospel but not in the gospels of Matthew and John. But the evangelist's message, in Luke's gospel is identical to that of the others: that Jesus is not a separation, but a closeness, it is not a distance, but an even more intense presence, because Jesus is in the fullness of the divine condition. At the ending of Matthew's gospel there are five verses, in which the evangelist encloses, and summarizes all his gospel, let's see.

*"Now the eleven disciples.."* the disciples are no longer twelve, and the number, in this gospel, is not reformed. The twelve meant the new Israel, the eleven means that the new Israel is not restored, therefore the message of Jesus is universal, it is for all humanity. *"...went to Galilee,..."* they went to Galilee because three times, there was an invitation to meet Jesus in Galilee - Jesus, raised from the gospel, will never appear in Jerusalem.

But, the evangelist says *".. to the mountain.."* so, to a particular mountain *"..to which Jesus had directed them.."* but Jesus in this gospel had not indicated a specific mountain. Why do the disciples go to *"the"* mountain? The meaning is not topographical, but theological: the mount, in this gospel, is the mount of the beatitudes, where Jesus proclaimed his message. The beatitudes that are eight, and the number eight is the digit of the resurrection in primitive Christianity, because Jesus rose from the first day after the week. So the disciples clearly go to *"the"* mountain: the evangelist means that the experience of the risen Jesus is not a privilege granted two thousand years ago to a few people, but a chance for all believers of all times, it is enough to situate oneself on *"the"* mountain of the beatitudes, that is, accepting his message, which was formulated and summarized in the beatitudes.

*"And when they saw him..."* the verb to see used by the evangelist does not indicate physical sight, but a deep inner experience, *"..they worshiped him,..."* therefore they recognised in Jesus the divine condition, and then the evangelist says *".. but some doubted."* But what did they doubt?

Not that Jesus has risen, they see him, not that he is in the divine condition, they bow down; then why doubt? The evangelist used this verb to doubt only once again, in the episode when Jesus walks on the water, which indicates the divine condition, and Peter, the disciple, also wanted to walk on the water, meaning, he also wanted the divine condition. Jesus tells him that he can go, but when he sees the difficulty, he begins to drown and asks for help. He believed that the divine

condition would be granted as a gift from above, and he did not know what difficulties he went through. Well Jesus reproached Peter that time with words “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*”(Matthew 14, 31) This doubt that the evangelist writes, what is it? They saw Jesus in the divine condition, but now they know what Jesus went through: the most infamous death, most despised for a Jew, the curse of the cross. So who do they doubt? They doubt themselves: they are invited to reach the divine condition, but they do not know if they will be able to face persecution and even death. Here is why they doubt

While the women approached Jesus, here it is Jesus who must approach the disciples: “*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”*”. here the evangelist refers to the prophet Daniel, where all power in heaven and on earth has been given to the son of man. But Jesus, does not use this power to be served, but, as he will say, “*the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.*” (Matthew 20,28) so it is a power to serve.

And here an order arrives: “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,..*” The nations are the gentile nations, “*.. baptizing them ..*” the verb to baptize means to immerse, to saturate “*.. in the name..*” the name indicates the deep reality of a being, “*..of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,..*” that is, immerse them in the profound reality of God, make them experience who God is, “*..teaching them ..*” and it is the only time that (the evangelist authorizes) Jesus authorizes his disciples to teach, “*..to observe all that I have commanded you.*” It is the only time the verb to command appears in this gospel, it is precisely in reference to the beatitudes

So what is the meaning of this command of Jesus? Jesus had invited his disciples to follow him to be fishermen of men: to catch men means to take them out of the water, which can give them death, therefore from the mortal situation, to give them life. Well Jesus now indicates how and where: how do you become fishers of men? By immersing them in the Spirit of the Lord, in the deeper reality than divine love, and where? Where to all humanity.

And then the final insurance of Jesus: “*I am with you always,..*” this is the common theme of the whole gospel. In the first chapter, verse 23, the evangelist had indicated Jesus as the “*God with us*” about halfway through his gospel Jesus had said that he was with his disciples: “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.*”( Matthew 18,20) and now Jesus concludes, with the assurance of his presence: “*..to the end of the age.*”

And the evangelist, who opened his gospel by referring to the book of Genesis - begins the gospel of Matthew writing "book of Genesis", closes it with the reference to the last book of the Jewish Bible ,Chronicles 2,23 where there is the invitation of Cyrus, king of Persia, who says to the Jewish population “*The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him and let him go up.*” It is Cyrus' invitation to the Jews to leave his kingdom to return to Israel, and build a temple to the Lord. Jesus also invites his disciples to go, to leave the religious institution, but not to build a temple, because the community of disciples will be the new one temple where love and mercy of the Lord are manifested.

