

HOLY TRINITY- 27th MAY 2018

BAPTISING... (ALL NATIONS)... IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – Biblical Commentary by Father Alberto Maggi OSM

Mathew 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 theme of the Gospel of Matthew is that Jesus manifests the presence of God. In fact at the beginning of his work, the first verse of chapter 23, by specifying the meaning of the Emmanuel, the name of Jesus, the evangelist explains that it is God with us. With Jesus God is no more to search for but to welcome. There is no more going towards God, but with God and how God comes towards humanity. With Jesus man does no more live for God, but lives of God. This is the theme that the evangelist develops throughout his gospel. About half way through chapter 18, 20 Jesus states that where two or more are gathered in his name he is present and the last words with which Matthew's gospel closes, the assurance of Jesus "...behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." So this is the theme throughout Matthew's gospel.

The final mandate that Jesus gives to his disciples refers to the conclusion of the last book of the Jewish Bible. The evangelist Matthew opens his work with the a recall to the first book of the Jewish Bible, the book of Genesis, and writes Jesus' book of Genesis. And he closes with the reference to the last book of the Jewish Bible that is the book of which is the second book of the Chronicles where Cyrus, the Persian king, allows the Jews to return to their land to go and build a temple. So, Jesus' last words are "*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...*" Here is why the church for Holy Trinity has chosen this reading. Jesus' indication is not a liturgical one, the liturgy of baptism will come later. The verb baptize means to immerse, to impregnate.

So Jesus does not send his disciples to teach a doctrine about God, **but to have an experience of God**. Therefore the name of the Father, it should be remembered that in the Hebrew language there is no term for parents, but there is a father who generates and a mother who gives birth. So the father is he who gives life, the source of life. "...of the Son..." the son is the one who by accepting this life force fully realizes it, so in the child there is the full realization of the father's design. "...and the Holy Spirit" this is the force, this divine energy that if accepted, allows every creature to become the son of God. This Spirit is called Holy not so much for the excellent quality, but for the activity of sanctifying. Meaning that when this divine energy is accepted, man gradually becomes separated from the sphere of evil and darkness. This is the mandate that Jesus gives.

He says "...teaching them to observe..." meaning to do "...all that I have commanded you." the only time that the verb 'to command' appears is in referring to the beatitudes. Jesus refers to the mountain of the Resurrection which for Matthew is the same mountain of the Beatitudes and invites his disciples to go to practice. What is the meaning of this? They must not go and transmit a doctrine on who is God, but to make an experience that God is Father and this experience is made

through love and the practice of sharing that was formulated and summarized by Jesus in the proclamation of the Beatitudes.

And here are Jesus' last words, the conclusion, "*I am with you always, to the end of the age.*" The evangelist is not giving a deadline, but indicates a quality of the presence. Jesus assures the community of his disciples that if the beatitudes are practiced and allow people that they encounter the experience of God as the source of life, like the energy of love, his presence within the community is guaranteed.

We have said that the evangelist closes his gospel with the words that close the last book of the Jewish Bible with the invitation of Cyrus to build a new temple. It will not be a static temple, but it is the Christian community that will be the only true sanctuary from which will radiate the love, the mercy, the compassion and the tenderness of God.