

MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. – 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."

On the solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity, the liturgy proposes to us the last five verses of Matthew's gospel, in which the evangelist sums up his whole narrative. Let's see.

"Now the eleven disciples .." so, the disciples are no longer twelve, why? Who is missing? Judas is missing, but not because he betrayed Jesus, Peter also denied Jesus and yet he is there; why is Judas missing? Jesus had said *"You cannot serve God and money."* (Luke 16,13) that is the interest. Judas made his choice for himself, he chose interest, he chose money and destroyed himself.

"Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them." But Jesus never indicated any mountain. If there is an invitation three times, two from Jesus and one from an angel, to the disciples to go up to Galilee to meet the risen Christ, never had it been said a particular place and much less a mountain. Because the evangelist here does not say a mountain, Galilee is a mountainous region, but he says on *"the mountain"*, with the definite article, therefore a mount which is known? What is this mount? The expression the mountain has appeared in this gospel for the mount of beatitudes. What is the evangelist saying that is also valid for us? The experience in the risen Christ was not a privilege granted to a group of people two thousand years ago but a possibility for all believers of all times. How can this be done? Just go to Galilee on *"the mountain"* of the Beatitudes, that is, to welcome the message of Jesus which has been summarized and formulated in the Beatitudes, which have this meaning: take care of the good of others and you will allow God as Father to take care of you and in this you will have the visible experience of God.

So they went to this precise mountain, it is the mountain of the Beatitudes. *"And when they saw him they worshiped him,.."* so they see in Jesus the fullness of the divine condition, says the evangelist *".. but some doubted."* But what do they doubt? They do not doubt that they see him because they have seen him, not they doubt his resurrection because they prostrated themselves; what is it that they doubt? They were the disciples that had said *"Siamo pronti a morire per te"*

But as soon as they saw the guards they ran away, they have all abandoned him, denied him and do not know if they are capable of reaching this level of life going through death and persecution. Here's what they doubt: not Jesus, but they doubt themselves. The only time this appeared

in the gospel, was when Jesus had invited Peter to walk on the water and he began to sink and Jesus had rebuked him, “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*” Well, Jesus goes to meet the weaknesses, the frailties of men, “*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”*” It was the devil at the beginning of the gospel who offered the Lord power through the adoration of power, well Jesus shows that he has reached the divine condition not through power, but through the gift of himself, love.

And Jesus to these imperfect disciples, who have not yet understood much, are still linked to the idea of the restoration of the kingdom of Israel and do not understand the universality of the kingdom of God, a these disciples who proved unable to stand the test, but Jesus says to them as they are “*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...*”, Jesus does not give a of specialization why? He doesn't need perfect people, but people like that, with their weaknesses. Paul writes in a letter that we have this treasure within ourselves but it is very fragile, hence the strength of the message of the Lord is what counts, in the weakness and fragility of people and Jesus sends them to make disciples in all gentile nations, that is “*..all nations...*”, “*..baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..*”, It is not a liturgical formula. Jesus had invited the disciples to follow him to make them fishers of men and save them from what death can give and now he invites them to give them what life communicates. "Baptize", the verb means to immerse: let them experience the full love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the full reality, the completeness of God.

“*...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*” The only time we talk about commandments, of something commanded by Jesus is precisely in the explanation of the beatitudes. Then Jesus does not invite to announce a doctrine, but to make people learn, to make them learn a practice that is that of the Beatitudes: taking care of the good of others to allow God as Father to take care of his own. Well if there is this, here is Jesus' great guarantee, “*And behold, I am with you always...*” Jesus from the beginning of the Gospel was defined as the God with us, a God who is not to be sought, but to be welcomed and like him to go with him towards others, “*..I am with you always to the end of the age.*” It is not an expiration date, but a quality of presence: if the community commits itself to Jesus and like Jesus go to proclaim these beatitudes, it has the certainty that the Lord accompanies them and strengthens their activity.