

**GO AND 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 F. Alberto Maggi OSM**

***Mt 28.16-20***

***The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them.***

***When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted.***

***Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power 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, until the end of the age."***

Today's liturgy is the ending of Matthew's Gospel, verse 16 *"The eleven disciples"* – they're not twelve anymore, Judas is missing. He chose money and money destroyed him, consumed him; he didn't choose beatitude of poverty, that is sympathetic sharing, but only thought of himself and one who thinks of himself ruins himself.

The evangelist writes *"The eleven disciples went to Galilee"*. Three times in Gospels Jesus urges to go to Galilee after his resurrection. Jesus cannot be experienced in Jerusalem, the holy and murderous town, but one has to go to Galilee – and for three times in Matthew's Gospel we find this exhortation – *"to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them"*.

Three times he urged to go to Galilee, but he never urged to go to the mountain he had ordered. Jesus ordered no mountain. Why then did the eleven disciples not go to "a mountain" – Galilee is a mountain area, there are many – but to "the mountain"?

What does the evangelist mean by that?

Experiencing the risen Christ is not a privilege enjoyed 2000 years ago by a small group, but an opportunity for believers of all times. And how does the evangelist explain this opportunity to us?

He specifies that in order to experience the risen Christ one has to go to Galilee to “the mountain”. This expression containing a definite article “the mountain”, first appeared in Chapt. 5 when Jesus proclaimed beatitudes on “the mountain”.

He means therefore that if we are situated in Galilee on the mountain we are located in the heart of the message of Jesus, beatitudes. Beatitudes urge men to direct their lives towards others’ sake. The one who directs his life towards other’s sake can feel an extraordinary power which is able to let him experience the risen Christ. This is an opportunity for everybody.

The evangelist goes on: “*When they saw him*”.

The verb ‘to see’, in Greek, can be translated in different ways; the evangelist here doesn’t use an expression to indicate an “eyesight”, but an “inner” kind of viewing.

It’s a faith experience. Also in beatitudes, referring to the “clean of heart”, Jesus proclaimed: “*Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God*” (cf. Mt 5.8). Jesus never foretells apparitions or visions, but a deep and intense experience of the Lord. Then “*they worshiped*”. Worshipping or prostrating means recognizing the divinity of Jesus.

It’s strange to notice that “*they doubted*”. What did they doubt? That he had risen? Not at all, they see him! That he owns the divine condition? Not at all, they worship him! The only other time that the verb “to doubt” is used in this Gospel, is in chapt 14, when Peter thinks he can walk on water – and this means having the divine condition – but started drowning, instead. And Jesus warned him: “*You of little faith, why did you doubt?*”?” (Mt 14.31).

What does the term “doubt” refer in this passage? They think they can get the divine condition, just like Jesus, but what was Jesus forced to bear? The outrage of the cross.

So they doubt they would be able to face persecution and suffer martyrdom in order to get the divine condition.

Well, despite their hesitation, sends them. He says: “Go, and make disciples of all nations” – the term ‘nations’ indicates pagans, those who were excluded, those who were despised – just those people are the object of God’s love.

Here comes the order issued by Jesus “baptizing” means “to dip, to soak”. *Baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the holy Spirit* – in the name of somebody indicates a profound reality.

Now, it’s a task belonging to all believers, that of going towards the excluded, the outcast, those who are rejected by religion and let them experience the greatness of the love:

- of the Father, the one who gives life
- of the Son, the one in whom this life is fully accomplished
- of the holy Spirit, the vital force.

*“Teaching”*. For the first time in Matthew’s Gospel Jesus authorizes his disciples to teach. It’s not a matter of teaching a doctrine, but it refers to a practice – the observance of beatitudes is practicing them, *“to observe all that I have commanded you”*. It’s the only time that Jesus issues an order, the practice of beatitudes: teach people how to practice them, how to share everything for love, how to serve others.

If this is accomplished – he guarantees – *“I’m with you always”*. Matthew had started his gospel with the expression “God with us” and ends it with this same expression *“I’m with you always until the end of the age”*.

It’s not the end of the world as Jesus is not frightening: he only guarantees he will be always there when a Christian community lives to love. “Always” doesn’t mean an expiry of a term, but a quality of his presence.