

Ascension (A)

Gospel text (Mt 28,16-20): The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Jesus, they bowed before him, although some doubted. Then Jesus approached them and said, «I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples from all nations. Baptize them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to fulfill all that I have commanded you. I am with you always until the end of this world».

«I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth»

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Today, we are given to contemplate a pair of blessing hands —our Lord's last gesture on earth (cf. Lk 24:51). Or some footprints up on a mount —the very last visible sign of God's steps on our earth. At times, this mount is also represented like a rock, and His footprints remain carved on the rock, not on the earth. As if alluding to that rock He mentioned that, soon, would be sealed by the wind and fire of Whitsunday. Our iconography, since long, is using such suggestive symbols. And also the mysterious cloud —simultaneously, shadow and light— that, already in the Old Testament, accompanied so many theophanies. The Lord's face would simply dazzle and blind us.

St. Leo the Great helps us to go still further in this occurrence: «What was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries». Which mysteries? Those He has entrusted His Church with. The blessing gesture is developed in the liturgy, the footprints on the earth show the path to the sacraments. And they are the way that lead us to the plenitude of our definite meeting with God.

The Apostles had time to get used to that other singularity of their Master throughout that period of forty days, when the Lord —according to exegetes— does not “appear”, but, —faithfully following the literal translation— “lets himself be seen”. Now, in this last encounter, the amazement is renewed. Because they now

discover that, in future, they will not only announce the Word, but they will instil life and health, with the visible gesture and the audible word: through the baptism and the other sacraments.

«I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth» (Mt 28:18). All authority... Go to all nations... Teaching them to fulfill all... And He will be with them —with his Church, with us— always (cf. Mt 28:19-20). And this “always” reverberates through space and time, while reaffirming us in our hopefulness.