The Ascension of the Lord (A)

Gospel text (*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.”

“All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me”

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Today we contemplate hands that bless - the Lord's final earthly gesture (cf. Luke 24:51). Or footprints marked on a mount - the last visible sign of God's passage through our land. At times, that mount is depicted as a rock, and the imprint of His steps is not engraved on the earth but on the rock. It's as if alluding to that stone which He foretold and which will soon be sealed by the wind and fire of Pentecost. Iconography has been using these suggestive symbols since ancient times. And also the mysterious cloud - shadow and light at the same time - that accompanies so many theophanies already in the Old Testament. The face of the Lord would dazzle us.

Saint Leo the Great helps us to delve deeper into the event: "What was visible in our Savior has now passed on to his mysteries." What mysteries? Those which He entrusted to His Church. The gesture of blessing unfolds in the liturgy, and the footprints on the earth mark the path of the sacraments —a path that leads to the fullness of the definitive encounter with God.

During those forty days in which the Lord does not “appear”, but rather, as the exegetes tell us, “let’s Himself be seen”, the Apostles will have had time to get used to their Master's other way of being. Now, in this last encounter, amazement is renewed. The Apostles discover that, from this moment on, they will not only proclaim the Word, but will also inspire life and health, with the visible gesture and the audible word: in baptism and in the other sacraments.

“All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). All authority... Go to all nations... And teach them to obey everything... And He will be with them - with His Church, with us - always (cf. Mt 28:19-20). That "everything" resounds through space and time, affirming us in hope.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The blessed Apostles made such progress after the Lord’s Ascension that everything which had previously filled them with fear was turned into joy. For they had lifted the whole contemplation of their mind to the Godhead of Him that sat at the Father’s right hand.” (Saint Leo the Great)

- “Jesus’ Ascension into heaven constitutes the end of the mission that the Son received from the Father and the beginning of the continuation of this mission on the part of the Church. This mission will last until the end of history and every day will have the assistance of the Risen Lord.” (Francis)

- “Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together, and communicate one with the other. For both of them, flowing out from the same divine well-spring, come together in some fashion to form one thing, and move towards the same goal. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ, who promised to remain with his own ‘always, to the close of the age’ (Mt 28:20).” (Catechism Of the Catholic Church, № 80)