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## WORD MADE FLESH

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### **Baptism of the Lord\***

Isaiah 42: 1-4, 6-7; Acts 10: 34-38; Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22.

Baptism is recognition. In the act of baptism we are shown, again, the image and likeness of God.

"Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights." Isaiah.

Or, as the Gospel falls on our ear, "You are my Child, the Beloved: my favour rests on you." Luke.

In that extraordinary book on the struggle of the early Church for self-understanding, the Acts of the Apostles, Peter says that he has finally come to realize that the God of all creation favours no one above anyone else. The God of all creation recognizes and delights in all life.

Recognition of the suffering servant.

Recognition of all persons, not just the "legitimate" ones.

Recognition of the Christ, the image and likeness of God.

Recognition of the babe drawn from the waters of baptism, clothed in Christ, the image and likeness of God, glimpsed again by those gathered at the theophany, "the showing" forth of the divine image.

And what is the fruit of such recognition? Justice, says Isaiah, justice to all people. To right the wrongs of history, end domination, force.

The person who has recognized that he or she is created in the image and likeness of God is the person who brings light into the pockets of darkness which so often characterize experience; the person who opens the eyes of our blindness, who frees us from the many prisons built by memory and imagination. The Apostle Peter says that the anointed one went about doing good and curing *all*. *Curing all*. The anointed one is a bearer of healing, not simply for those thought worthy of the good things of life, but for all who had been claimed by the power of darkness and death.

To bring healing to those who do not have the fullness of life, is to restore the recognition that they also are the image and likeness of God, Christ bearers, the incarnation of the divine life. In such moments of healing one is anointed with life.

The creator delights in the chosen. And, the chosen, having heard that they are the delight of the soul of God, delight in all God's creation, blessing and healing.

To bless and to heal. The gifts of baptism. The gift that comes with the restoration of the divine image. The vocation of our created nature. The gift of fire, the fire of the Holy Spirit.

As it was with Christ in the waters of the Jordan, so also with you and me, with all who emerge from the waters of baptism.

Waters which cleanse, refresh, and recreate.

Waters which open us to the holy fire, the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Waters which free us to our vocation, the blessing and healing of God's creation, the blessing and healing of

life.

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