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NEW WAY OF BEING CHURCH

BAPTISM OF THE LORD

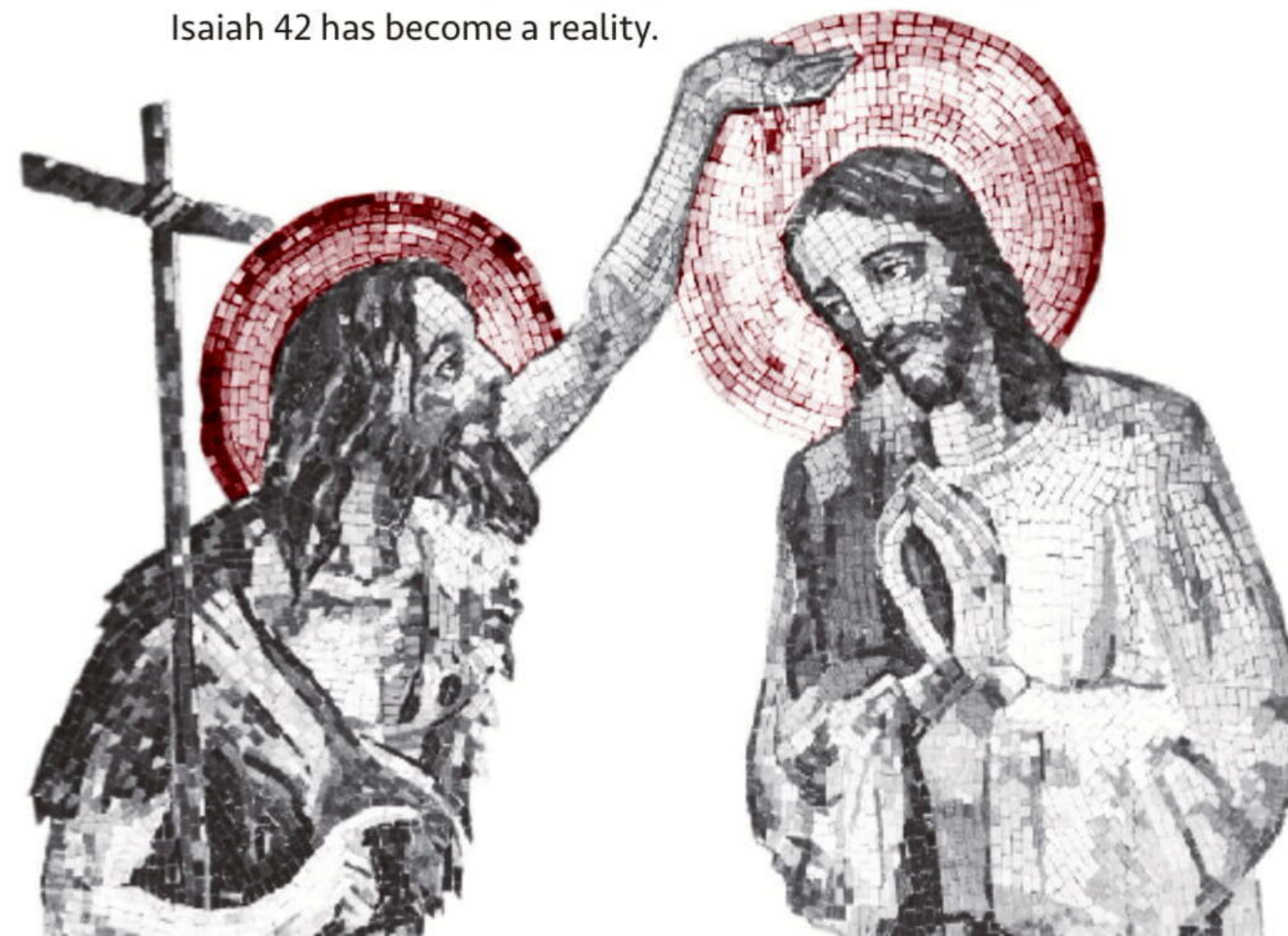
SALT OF THE EARTH AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION AND MISSION

MONTHLY THEME:

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

STRENGTHENING THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

Today, the Church celebrates the Baptism of the Lord. When God affirms the Divine Son-ship of Jesus after his baptism, the Holy Spirit descends upon him like a dove. In this dramatic narration, we grasp that what is pre-figured in Isaiah 42 has become a reality.



SCRIPTURE QUOTE TO MEMORISE:

...He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

(Luke 3:16)

God the Father sends His Son to redeem us. Jesus, as the Obedient Servant who, though is sinless, chooses to be amongst the repentant sinners seeking John's baptism; and the Holy Spirit who Sanctifies anoints Jesus at the start of his public ministry.

At our baptism, we become members of the Mystical Body of Christ, and we get into the dynamics of the Holy Trinity's intimate relationship. We receive a new identity as God's children and are drawn into the very life of the Trinitarian God. Pope John Paul II affirms this in his encyclical on the vocation and mission of the laity, *Christifideles Laici 12*, where he describes the result of baptism as a 'mystical unity' between Christ and his disciples, and the disciples with one another, like 'branches of a single vine.'

Paul was a persecutor of the Church. On the road to Damascus, he was knocked to the ground, saw the light, and he heard this voice asking him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' In this, Jesus affirms himself as One with His Body, the Church.

Bishop Robert Barron says in his homily, '**As a baptized person, a member of the living mystical body of Christ, you are connected to all baptized people.** Every one of these saints, brothers and sisters. But now, press it! Not just the saints, but the good, the bad, the ugly, the indifferent, everybody who is baptized is connected to us in the way organs in a body are connected to each other.'

When one part of the Body hurts, it must hurt us too. That is why the corporal and the spiritual works of mercy are so important. Once we realise the implication of our baptism, we know how necessary it is to strengthen this Mystical Body of Christ. We are not alone as Christ, by means of the Sacraments, is sustaining us.

May we take this time to ponder on our God-given gifts? Are we exercising these gifts to build the Body of Christ, or are dismembering it? In this troubled world, Christ needs to act through His Body. Are we in it or out? ❖

SCRIPTURE of the DAY

Isaiah 40: 1-5, 9-11;

Ps. 103: 1-4, 24-25, 27-30;

Titus 2: 11-14, 3: 4-7;

Luke 3: 15-16, 21-22.