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Handbook for Proclaimers of the Word

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2019**

By

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December 16, 2018

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Lect.
No. 9

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

The first part of the Book of the Prophet Zephaniah speaks of a period of terrible judgment upon the earth. Today's First Reading is taken from the latter part of the book.

It speaks of the restoration of Jerusalem. God would visit the city to protect it. He would bring a great period of rejoicing.

This reading expresses well the theme of the Third Sunday of Advent. It is called *Gaudete* Sunday, a Latin word that means "Rejoice."

We rejoice because the birth of Jesus is near, but also because we have been working to transform our hearts during this season of conversion.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zephaniah

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!
Sing joyfully, O Israel!

Be glad and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!

The LORD has removed the judgment against you,
he has turned away your enemies;
the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,
you have no further misfortune to fear.

On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:

Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!
The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a mighty savior;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
and renew you in his love,
he will sing joyfully because of you,
as one sings at festivals.

The word of the Lord.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

We often think of doing penance as something that is a bit depressing. "Having a good time" is interpreted as doing things to excess. Yet, the exact opposite is actually closer to the truth. When we sin, we deny our dignity as human beings. We do things that make us little better than the animals. When we convert, we are becoming what we always wanted to be. We are choosing to live in our dignity as children of God. Our conversion does not have to make us into joyless religious automatons. By doing penance, we are not rejecting the world; we are attempting to use it in the proper manner.

Lect.
No. 9

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6 (R):6

The Responsorial Psalm is a hymn taken from the first part of the book of the Prophet Isaiah. Typical of the writings of Isaiah, it speaks of the salvation that the LORD would deliver to the city of Jerusalem, the city of Zion.

God's love and his intervention are so great that even the pagan nations should be informed of what God has done for his people.

The Response speaks of the joy that the people of God would experience because the LORD was present in their city. This continues the theme found in the First Reading that speaks of the fact that God is no longer far off, but has deigned to come into our midst.

While both of these passages from the Old Testament are referring to the future intervention in his people's history, we understand this passage to be fulfilled with the birth of Jesus into our world.

R). Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

God indeed is my savior;

I am confident and unafraid.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R). Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R). Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;

let this be known throughout all the earth.

Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,
for great in your midst
is the Holy One of Israel!

R). Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

There are two ways of understanding the word "salvation." It could mean that which happens to us when we die and go to heaven, or it could mean something that is already occurring in the here and now. In the former, Jesus saves us from eternal damnation; in the latter Jesus saves us from our worst enemies: sin, hate, alienation, etc.

During Advent, it would be good to reflect upon what one understands when one hears the phrase, "Jesus is my Savior."

Lect.
No. 9

SECOND READING: Philippians 4:4-7

This reading comes from the last part of the Letter to the Philippians. Saint Paul wrote that letter after he had been imprisoned and faced the possibility of being put to death. This gave him a clearer perspective on life and faith.

He wanted the Philippians to dedicate themselves to the only things that were really important. Thus, he speaks of prayer, petition, thanksgiving, and above all, joy. If God is the center of our lives, then we will find joy, no matter what might happen to us.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul
to the Philippians

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice in the Lord always.

I shall say it again: rejoice!

Your kindness should be known to all.

The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,

by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,

make your requests known to God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding

will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

Lect.
No. 9

ALLELUIA: Isaiah 61:1 (cited in Luke 4:18)

The Alleluia Verse speaks of the anointing of the Spirit that would come upon the Messiah. He would bring joy to those who were poor and felt themselves to be excluded from the Lord's blessings.

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

R/. Alleluia, alleluia.

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Gaudete Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, is supposed to be a day of joy. It is a good time to ask whether people would describe us as joy-filled people, or would they describe us as anxious, overwhelmed, and frustrated due to our Christmas preparations.

Lect.
No. 9

GOSPEL: Luke 3:10-18

The Gospel presents the preaching of John the Baptist to the people of Israel. Like the accounts found in the other Synoptic Gospels, Luke speaks of the coming of the Day of the Lord. This would be a day of judgment upon Israel and upon the world. John the Baptist invites his listeners to turn away from their sins.

Unlike the accounts found in Matthew and Mark, Saint Luke's version speaks of how tax collectors and soldiers could convert their ways.

He did not require them to abandon their occupations. Rather, he simply asked them to exercise their responsibilities as honestly as they could.

God does not ask us to reject who we are, but rather simply asks us to be as virtuous as we possibly can be.

Yet the time had come for people to make a decision. God was going to separate the good from the evil as one separates wheat from chaff.

This Third Sunday of Advent is a time to make some serious decisions concerning how we live, work, play, etc. Like the tax collectors and soldiers who spoke to the Baptist, we are called to conform our ways to the Good News.

A reading from the holy Gospel
according to Luke

The crowds asked John the Baptist,
"What should we do?"

He said to them in reply,

"Whoever has two cloaks

should share with the person who has none.

And whoever has food should do likewise."

Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they
said to him,

"Teacher, what should we do?"

He answered them,

"Stop collecting more than what is prescribed."

Soldiers also asked him,

"And what is it that we should do?"

He told them,

"Do not practice extortion,

do not falsely accuse anyone,

and be satisfied with your wages."

Now the people were filled with expectation,
and all were asking in their hearts
whether John might be the Christ.

John answered them all, saying,

"I am baptizing you with water,

but one mightier than I is coming.

I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his thresh-
ing floor

and to gather the wheat into his barn,

but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Exhorting them in many other ways,

he preached good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Lect.
No. 75

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Ps 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8 (R̄.: 1c)

The Responsorial Psalm continues the theme found in the First Reading. It is a celebration of the tremendous holiness of God.

We cannot even begin to comprehend the greatness and glory of our God. Our human mind and human experience are limited, but God is not.

Our only possible response to this encounter with the holiness of God is to praise the glory of God. We join in the hymn sung by the angels that proclaims the holiness of God.

Whenever we enter the temple of God (or our parish church or a shrine or any place where God's holiness is evident), we are filled to overflowing with a sense of joy and gratitude and wonder.

Yet, our God is not just great in the heavens, ruling over all of creation in splendor. Our God is also great in the way he has intervened in our own personal history.

God has rescued us when we were in danger (his right hand has saved us). God has answered us and will always answer us in the future when we call upon him.

R̄. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart,
for you have heard the words of my mouth;
in the presence of the angels I will sing your
praise;

I will worship at your holy temple
and give thanks to your name.

R̄. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Because of your kindness and your truth;
for you have made great above all things
your name and your promise.

When I called, you answered me;
you built up strength within me.

R̄. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

All the kings of the earth shall give thanks to you, O
LORD,
when they hear the words of your mouth;
and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD:
"Great is the glory of the LORD."

R̄. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Your right hand saves me.

The LORD will complete what he has done for me;
your kindness, O LORD, endures forever;
forsake not the work of your hands.

R̄. In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

Lect.
No. 39

GOSPEL: John 13:1-15

The account of the Last Supper found in the Gospel of John does not include an account of the institution of the Eucharist. Rather, it speaks of how Jesus washed the feet of his disciples and invited them to do the same to each other. It is not that this Gospel ignores the Eucharist (quite the opposite, for it speaks of the Eucharist here, in chapter 6, and also in chapter 21).

Rather, John presents this scene to teach us the spiritual significance of the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is the Sacrament through which Jesus serves us in a most profound manner, and in which he invites us to be of service to each other. This is what his ministry in this Gospel is all about. Jesus came into this world to save us.

This is why the beginning of the account mentions certain things. First of all, we hear that the feast of the Passover was near (in John the Last Supper is an anticipation of the Passover meal, for in this Gospel Passover does not begin until Good Friday night).

We also hear that Jesus is acting in the love of the Father. Thus, his action of humility is not one performed because he did not know he was God, but rather the opposite. As we hear in the First Letter of John, God is love. Therefore, we hear of the great love he had for his disciples, a love shown in humble service.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come

to pass from this world to the Father.

He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end.

The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over.

So, during supper,

fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power

and that he had come from God and was returning to God,

he rose from supper and took off his outer garments.

He took a towel and tied it around his waist.

Then he poured water into a basin

and began to wash the disciples' feet

and dry them with the towel around his waist.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

“Master, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus answered and said to him,

“What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later.”

Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.”

Jesus answered him,

“Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me.”

Simon Peter said to him,

“Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well.”

Jesus said to him,

“Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed,

for he is clean all over;

so you are clean, but not all.”

Lect.
No. 62

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56 (R): 52b)

This canticle serves as a hymn of praise to God, who is both the God who guides our history and the God who rules over the cosmos.

God's throne on the cherubim refers to the presence of God upon the wings of the angels that sit on top of the Ark of the Covenant. This was called the mercy seat, and it was that place where God would appear in glory to his people.

Praise is one of the four forms of prayer (praise, intercession, thanksgiving, and contrition) that we lift up to our Lord. While we either receive something or thank God for something we have received in the other three forms of prayer, praise is gratuitous. We praise God simply because God is worthy of praise. Praise draws us out of ourselves and our own interests and invites us to serve another (in this case God) simply for the joy of being able to serve.

R). Glory and praise for ever!

“Blessed are you, O Lord, the God of our fathers,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever;
And blessed is your holy and glorious name,
praiseworthy and exalted above all for all ages.”

R). Glory and praise for ever!

“Blessed are you in the temple of your holy glory,
praiseworthy and glorious above all forever.”

R). Glory and praise for ever!

“Blessed are you on the throne of your Kingdom,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.”

R). Glory and praise for ever!

“Blessed are you who look into the depths
from your throne upon the cherubim,
praiseworthy and exalted above all forever.”

R). Glory and praise for ever!

“Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven,
praiseworthy and glorious forever.”

R). Glory and praise for ever!

OR: Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11 (R): Jn 6:68c)

This Responsorial Psalm comes from the second part of Psalm 19, in which the community praises God who gave the law. The Jewish people considered the law to be a special gift from God, for it was a guide on how they might live a proper life pleasing to him. Most other people at that time feared their gods; Israel did not because the people knew that God was guiding them in his ways.

R). Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul;
The decree of the LORD is trustworthy,
giving wisdom to the simple.

R). Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.

The precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
The command of the LORD is clear,
enlightening the eye.

APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE THAT ARE READ IN THE THREE-YEAR CYCLE

GENESIS

The first book of the Bible tells of the history of the world in its earliest stages (the Primordial History) and during the period of the Patriarchs up to the time that the people of Israel went down to Egypt to escape the great drought during the days of Joseph.

The first eleven chapters contain stories that are not strictly historical in the sense of being a day-to-day account of the early history of the world. These chapters nevertheless contain important truths about the early days of humanity.

God created us out of love and called us to live in obedience to his commands. We, in the person of Adam and Eve, sinned against God and were punished for our disobedience. Sin grew in the world until God sent his punishment in the form of a great flood.

Beginning with chapter 12, we hear of the history of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and his wives and children, especially Joseph. These stories seem to contain more historic information than the earlier chapters. Some of the customs mentioned in the stories, for example, have been dated back to the period in which the Patriarchs were said to have lived.

It is believed that the information contained in this book comes from three major sources.

The first source is the Yahwist source. It was written during the reigns of David and Solomon (c. 950 B.C.) in the southern part of Israel. It emphasizes the role of the monarchy and the importance of Judah and his tribe in salvation history. This source is called the Yahwist source because it often refers to God by the name Yahweh.

The second source is the Elohist source. This dates to around 850 B.C. and was writ-

ten in the north of Israel. It emphasizes the importance of prophets and the Sinai covenant. Because the kings of the north were often unfaithful to the ways of the Lord, kings are not seen as laudable figures.

The third source is the Priestly source. It was written during the exile in Babylon (587-539 B.C.). It emphasizes the importance of law and tradition. This source tends to be very accurate in measurements of time and space.

The book achieved its present form sometime around the Babylonian exile (c. 587-539 B.C.).

EXODUS

This book tells of the miraculous events that surrounded the exodus of the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt. It begins with the infancy of Moses and ends with a description of the construction of the objects of cult that Israel was to use when it worshiped the Lord.

The same sources that appear in the Book of Genesis are also found in this book. This would explain why certain events are sometimes described twice in slightly different circumstances (for the two versions were derived from different sources).

This book contains one version of the ten commandments (20:1-7). The other version is found in the Book of Deuteronomy 5:6-21. The law is seen as a gift from God, for it instructs Israel on how it can follow the ways of the Lord and be faithful to their covenant.

The hymn that the community sings to celebrate its escape from the forces of Pharaoh in Exodus 15 is actually a very ancient hymn. Scholars believe the grammar and vocabulary of the hymn show it to date to the actual time of the exodus. Thus, this is one of the earliest parts of the Bible to have been written.

APPENDIX 2: THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM*

In his final recorded appearance to the apostles before his Ascension, Jesus spoke of what was written about him in “the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms” (Luke 24:44). Hence, the Church has always indicated, especially through the Liturgy, that there is a history of Christ in the Psalms.

Each Sunday in the Responsorial Psalm at Mass, the liturgical assembly is invited to read a page of this history. In doing so, every one of us can discern some aspect of Jesus and hear his voice on a matter of importance to us.

However, in order for this result to be attained we must participate fully, consciously, and actively in the Responsorial Psalm, which occurs after the First Reading in the Liturgy of the Word.

Liturgists tell us that the Responsorial Psalm together with the Alleluia Acclamation before the Gospel is the most important part of the people’s responses in the Proper of the Mass for it functions as a kind of commentary on the Scriptures just proclaimed. It draws the soul to arrive at the interpretation of the Reading intended by the Church.

Indeed, the Responsorial Psalm is the only psalm used at Mass for its own sake rather than to accompany an action. It is the Word of God. That is why the Church insists that it may never be replaced by a nonbiblical text.

However, it is evident that in many cases, the people do not even know what is happening as the Responsorial Psalm goes flitting by during the celebration. This is even truer when the Responsorial Psalm is sung by the cantor with only a Refrain relegated to the people.

What is needed is to make information available to all about the function of this part of Mass, so that they will be able to take advantage of the music and the words to enter into the theme of response. The following observations may be of help in this respect.

CANTICLE OF THE COVENANT

Throughout the history of the Church, which is the people of God (in figure in the Old Testament and in fulfillment in the New), we find a pattern. God “speaks” to his people by accomplishing wondrous deeds for them. The people respond by celebrating these wondrous deeds.

God guides the people of the Exodus across the Red Sea. Miriam, following the lead of Moses her brother, celebrates the Lord who has cast horse and rider into the sea (Exodus 15:1, 21).

God delivers Hannah from her sterility by giving her a son, Samuel. Hannah responds by celebrating the Lord who enables a sterile woman to give birth (1 Samuel 2:5).

God delivers Tobit from blindness. Tobit responds by celebrating the Lord who lets his light rise over Jerusalem as well as in the hearts of his people (Tobit 13:11).

In New Testament times, God blesses Mary’s virginity by letting her become the Mother of Jesus. Mary responds by glorifying the Lord and exulting in God her Savior, in Jesus whom she is bearing (Luke 1:46-55).

In accord with these examples, the Responsorial Psalm plays a similar role in the liturgical celebration. The Word proclaimed recalls God’s wondrous deeds of old. The assembly celebrates these wondrous deeds and actualizes them in the celebration. It responds to the God of these wonders with the Responsorial Psalm.

The Word proclaimed is the word of the Covenant. The Responsorial Psalm is the canticle of the Covenant. It prepares for the Covenant, and asks God to keep us in it.

THE PSALTER: THE CHRISTIAN PRAYER BOOK

In order to sing the Responsorial Psalm well, we should get to know something about the Book of Psalms or Psalter. It has become the book of Christian prayer, the compendium of the entire biblical message.

According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the Psalter—in contrast to the other biblical writings—“embraces in its universality the matter of all of theology. The reason why this biblical book is the one most used in the Church is that it contains in itself all Scripture. Its characteristic note is to restate, under the form of praise, all that the other biblical books express by way of narrative, exhortation, and discussion.

“The purpose of the Psalter is to make people pray, to elevate souls to God through contemplation of his infinite majesty, through meditation on the excellence of eternal happiness, and through communion in the holiness of God and the efficacious imitation of his perfection” (*Exposition on the Psalms of David*).

The Psalms have been called with good reason “a school of Christian prayer.” These sacred songs cover a wide range of human experiences; they bring out our strengths and weaknesses, faith and wonderment, joys and sorrows.

The Psalms also show forth the prophesied glory of Jesus: for it is only in Christ that their full significance is revealed. The noted Bible scholar Joseph Gelineau has written that Jesus “personally described himself as the Lord whom God seated at his right hand (Psalm 110 - Matthew 22:44); as the

*Reprinted with permission from *Active Participation at Mass* by Anthony M. Buono, pp. 65-72, © 1994 by Alba House.

APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY AND PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

For purposes of pronunciation, a simple system of phonetic spelling has been devised and included in parentheses for every entry defined. The **accented syllable** is indicated by **capital letters**, and the pronunciation for the letters is as follows.

uh = a, e, i, o, u unaccented
(the Schwa)

a = hat

ah = father

ai = aisle, ice

aw = awful, for

ay = ape, care

e = get (short)

ee = eve

i = pit (short)

o = odd (short)

oh = no

oi = noise, joy

ow = cow

oo = boot

u = foot, book (accented, long)

uh = culture, cut (accented,
short)

yuh = nature (unaccented,
short)

yoo = use, unite (accented, long)

uhr = further

ch = church

sh = shame, wish

zh = vision

g = get

j = judge

k = cow, key

kw = quick

w = witch

Aaron (AR-uhn; ER-uhn). Brother of Moses and the first high priest of Israel (Ex 6:20; 28:1ff).

Abba (AB-uh; ah-BAH). Aramaic word for “father” or “dad” used by Jesus of his Father (Mk 14:36).

Abelmoholah (ay-buhl-mi-HOH-uh). A city on the Jordan River and the residence of Elisha the prophet (1 Kgs 19:16).

Abiathar (uh-BAI-uh-thuh). Son of the priest Ahimelech (1 Sm 22:20) and himself a priest of David (2 Sm 8:17). He is mentioned by Jesus in the discussion with the Pharisees concerning the apostles’ picking grain on the sabbath (Mk 2:26).

Abijah (uh-BAI-juh). Son and successor of Rehoboam (1 Chr 3:10) and ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:7).

Abilene (ab-uh-LEEN; -LEE-nee). A district ruled by Lysanias (Lk 3:1) at the time of Jesus that lay to the northwest of Damascus.

Abishai (uh-BAI-shi). A brother of Joab, he accompanied David during his flight from Saul (1 Sm 26:6ff) and from Absalom (2 Sm 16:9).

Abiud (uh-BAI-uhd). An ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:13).

Abner (AB-nuhr). A commander of the army of Saul (1 Sm 17:55; 26:7). He first sided with a son of Saul, Ishbaal, after the death of Saul. He eventually betrayed him and furthered the cause of David among the tribes of the north.

Abraham (AY-bruh-ham). Founder of the Hebrew nation and father of the people of God (Gn 11:26ff; 17:4f, etc.). Originally called Abram (Gn 11:26), he received the name Abraham at the time of God’s covenant with him (Gn 17:4).

Abram (AY-bruhm). *See Abraham.*

Achaia (uh-KAI-uh). Roman province comprising the central part of modern Greece (Acts 18:12, 27).

Achim (AY-kim). An ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:14).

Acts of the Apostles (aks uhv thee uh-POS-uhlz). The book that continues the Gospel of Luke with a history of the primitive Church.

Adam (AD-uhm). The first man (Gn 2:8), who was placed in the garden of Eden (Gn 2:15) but disobeyed God and was expelled from the garden (Gn 3:23).

Advocate (AD-vuh-kut). *See Paraclete.*

Ahaz (AY-haz). Son and successor of King Jotham of Judah (2 Kgs 15:38) and father of Hezekiah (2 Kgs 16:20). It was to him that Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be Emmanuel, God with us (Is 7:14).

Alexander (al-ig-ZAN-duhr). Son of Simon of Cyrene and brother of Rufus (Mk 15:21).

Alpha (AL-fuh). First letter of the Greek alphabet. Used with “omega,” the last letter, it signifies completeness, as “from A to Z.” God is termed

the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (Rv 1:8), as is also Christ (Rv 22:13).

Alphaeus (al-FEE-uhs). Father of James the Less (Mt 10:3; Acts 1:13).

Amalek (AM-uh-lek). Eponymous founder of a nomadic tribe that dwelt in the Negeb (Gn 36:12). The Amalekites fought with the Israelites during their time in the Sinai (Ex 17:8ff). They also fought various battles against Israel, often in alliance with Israel’s enemies.

Amaziah (am-uh-ZAI-uh). A priest at Bethel at the time of the Prophet Amos (Am 7:12).

Amminadab (uh-MIN-uh-dab). Father of Nahshon (Nm 1:7), father-in-law of Aaron (Ex 6:23), and an ancestor of Jesus (Mt 1:4).

Amos (AY-muhs). The third of the 12 Minor Prophets of the Old Testament, who proclaimed the need for social justice in people’s relationships with each other. One of the ancestors of Jesus (Mt 1:10) bears the name Amos, but—as the NAB indicates in a footnote—a better reading is “Amon.”

Amoz (AY-muhz). Father of the Prophet Isaiah (Is 2:1).

Ancient One (AYN-chuhnt won). A new translation for the more traditional “Ancient of Days,” it is a name of God taken from apocalyptic writings that appears three times in Daniel (7:9, 13, 22).

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