Those gathered begin with the Sign of the Cross, saying:

† Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.

Psalm 136:1–3, 4–6, 7–9
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever;
Give thanks to the God of gods,
for his mercy endures forever.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
for his mercy endures forever;
Who alone does great wonders,
for his mercy endures forever;
Who made the heavens in wisdom,
for his mercy endures forever;
Who spread out the earth upon the waters,
for his mercy endures forever.

Who made the great lights,
for his mercy endures forever,
The sun to rule in the day,
for his mercy endures forever,
The moon and stars to rule over the night,
for his mercy endures forever.

Reading
Isaiah 65:17 – 21
Thus says the Lord: / Lo, I am about to create new heavens / and a new earth; / The things of the past shall not be remembered / or come to mind. / Instead, there shall always be rejoicing and happiness / in what I create; For I create Jerusalem to be a joy / and its people to be a delight; / I will rejoice in Jerusalem / and exult in my people. / No longer shall the sound of weeping be heard there, / or the sound of crying; / no longer shall there be in it / an infant who lives but a few days, / or an old man who does not round out his full lifetime; / He dies a mere youth who reaches but a hundred years, / and he who fails of a hundred shall be thought accursed. / They shall live in the houses they build, / and eat the fruit of the vineyards they plant.

Reflection
The oracle of Isaiah announces an astonishing future for the people of Israel. The trials of God’s chosen people will be overcome and God will revisit the act of creation: a new heaven and a new earth will arrive. This is not a literal prediction, but rather a prophetic announcement that the future will be a time of great joy and prosperity for Israel. This comes true in the coming of the Messiah and is then fulfilled through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Even as we embrace a penitential mind-set during Lent, we know that great joy awaits us at Easter.

Prayers
Be with us, O Lord, we pray:

◆ Faithful God, hear our prayer.
That those who are preparing for the Easter sacraments know great joy, we pray:
◆ That catechists and sponsors be true companions in the love of the Lord, we pray:
◆ That young people find a new excitement in their faith, we pray:
◆ That all who have died in the mercy of the Lord be welcomed into the joy of heaven, we pray:

Gathering these and all unspoken prayers into one, we pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father
O God of all creation, you have promised a new heaven and a new earth to your beloved people.
Renew within us your spirit of love for all you have created that we might sing your praises in all our days.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Making the Sign of the Cross, saying:

† Taste and see the goodness of the Lord.