



OPENING PRAYER Let us begin our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

READING : (JOEL 2:12-18) A reading from the book of the prophet Joel: “Even now,” says the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. “Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.” Who knows whether the Lord will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him: a grain offering and a drink offering to be presented to the Lord, your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion ; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep. Let them say, “Spare your people, O Lord, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, ‘Where is their God?’” Then the Lord became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.
(Pause)

The word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

Lord, as we begin this holy season of Lent, grant us a change of heart that we might turn away from sin and follow your Son’s Gospel. We ask you to fill us with a hunger for what is just. By your grace, may our lives become more deeply rooted in prayer, self-sacrifice and a willingness to share, in order that your Reign of justice might more fully flourish in our hearts, when we greet your risen Son at Easter. We ask you this, through Christ our Lord. Amen.