



Holy Darkness – A Tenebrae Service for the

Wednesday of Holy Week

Introduction

***Tenebrae** (Latin for 'shadows' or 'darkness') is a service that has been held since the 4th century. This distinctive ceremony includes the gradual extinguishing of candles while a series of readings and psalms are chanted or recited. Tenebrae is a prolonged meditation on Christ's suffering. As lights are extinguished, we ponder the depth of Christ's suffering and death and through the return of the small but persistent flame of the Christ candle at the conclusion of the service, we anticipate the joy of the resurrection.*

Bell x3

Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us

Psalm 69

In your great mercy, O God,*
answer me with your unfailing help.
Save me from the mire; do not let me sink;*
let me be rescued from those who hate me and out of the deep waters.
Hide not your face from your servant;*
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.
Draw near to me and redeem me;*
because of my enemies, deliver me.
You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor;*
my adversaries are all in your sight.
Reproach has broken my heart, and it cannot be healed;*
I looked for sympathy, but there was none, for comforters, but could find no one.
They gave me gall to eat,*
and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink.

Matthew 26:20-25 When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.'

And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?' He answered, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' Judas, who betrayed him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' He replied, 'You have said so.'

We extinguish the shadow of betrayal

Holy God, Holy and Mighty Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us

Psalm 70

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me; *

O LORD, make haste to help me.

Let those who seek my life be ashamed and altogether dismayed; *

let those who take pleasure in my misfortune draw back and be disgraced.

Let those who say to me "Aha!" and gloat over me turn back, *

because they are ashamed.

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; *

let those who love your salvation say for ever, "Great is the LORD!"

But as for me, I am poor and needy; *

come to me speedily, O God.

You are my helper and my deliverer; *

O LORD, do not tarry.

Luke 22:40-44 When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.' Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, 'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.' Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.

We extinguish the shadow of agony

Holy God, Holy and Mighty Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us

Psalm 74

O God, why have you utterly cast us off? *

why is your wrath so hot against the sheep of your pasture?

Remember your congregation that you purchased long ago, *

the tribe you redeemed to be your inheritance, and Mt Zion where you dwell.

There are no signs for us to see; there is no prophet left; *
there is not one among us who knows how long.
How long, O God, will the adversary scoff? *
will the enemy blaspheme your Name for ever?

Matthew 26:40-45 Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.'

We extinguish the shadow of loneliness

Holy God, Holy and Mighty Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us

Psalm 27

The LORD is my light and my salvation; *
whom then shall I fear?
Though an army should encamp against me, *
yet my heart shall not be afraid;
And though war should rise up against me, *
yet will I put my trust in him.
For in the day of trouble he shall keep me safe in his shelter; *
he shall hide me in the secrecy of his dwelling and set me high upon a rock.
Even now he lifts up my head *
above my enemies round about me.
You have been my helper; cast me not away; *
do not forsake me, O God of my salvation.

Matthew 26:47-50, 55-56 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and

arrested him. At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, 'Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

We extinguish the shadow of desertion

Holy God, Holy and Mighty Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us

Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? *
and are so far from my cry from the words of my distress?
O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer; *
by night as well, but I find no rest.
Yet you are the Holy One, *
enthroned upon the praises of Israel.
Be not far from me, for trouble is near, *
and there is none to help.
I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint; *
my heart within my breast is melting wax.
My mouth is dried out like a pot-sherd;
my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; *
and you have laid me in the dust of the grave.
Packs of dogs close me in, and gangs of evildoers circle around me; *
they pierce my hands and my feet; I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me; *
they divide my garments among them; they cast lots for my clothing.
Be not far away, O LORD; *
you are my strength; hasten to help me.

Matthew 26: 59-67 Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death, but they found none, The high priest stood up and said, 'Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?' But Jesus was silent. Then the high priest said to him, 'I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so. But I tell you, From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? You

have now heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?' They answered, 'He deserves death.' Then they spat in his face and struck him; and some slapped him,

We extinguish the shadow of accusation

Holy God, Holy and Mighty Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us

Psalm 54

Save me, O God, by your Name; *
in your might, defend my cause.
Hear my prayer, O God; *
give ear to the words of my mouth.
For the arrogant have risen up against me,
and the ruthless have sought my life, *
those who have no regard for God.
Behold, God is my helper; *
it is the Lord who sustains my life.
I will offer you a freewill sacrifice *
and praise your Name, O LORD, for it is good.

Mark 15:12-20 Pilate spoke to them again, 'Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?' They shouted back, 'Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Why, what evil has he done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Crucify him!' So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

We extinguish the shadow of mockery

Holy God, Holy and Mighty Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us

Psalm 88

O LORD, my God, my Saviour, *
by day and night I cry to you.

Let my prayer enter into your presence; *
incline your ear to my lamentation.
For I am full of trouble; *
my life is at the brink of the grave.
I am counted among those who go down to the Pit; *
I have become like one who has no strength;
Lost among the dead, *
like the slain who lie in the grave,
Whom you remember no more, *
for they are cut off from your hand.
You have laid me in the depths of the Pit, *
in dark places, and in the abyss.
Do you work wonders for the dead? *
will those who have died stand up and give you thanks?
Will your loving-kindness be declared in the grave? *
your faithfulness in the land of destruction?
Will your wonders be known in the dark? *
or your righteousness in the country where all is forgotten?

Luke 23:33-46 When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.']] And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!’ One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, ‘Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’ But the other rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’ He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.’ It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.’ Having said this, he breathed his last... (silence is kept)

It is finished...

We extinguish the shadow of death

Strepitus

Bell rings 33 times...

Mark 15:38-47 Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was God's Son!' There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem. When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.

Dismissal

The Christ Candle is restored

May Jesus Christ who for our sakes became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you.

Amen.

We Depart in Silence