

TENEBRAE

A SERVICE FOR WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

The word, *Tenebrae*, is a Latin word which means “darkness” or “shadows.” The Service of this name originated in ancient monastic Services which were conducted late at night. The emphasis is on the darkness and sorrow which gripped Jesus as the events happening to Him led Him to realize He was soon to suffer and die. Towards the end, small glimmers of hope are revealed in the Psalms. In this Service we are immersed in Psalms and passages of Scripture which allow us to share a sense of sorrow, and experience increasing darkness as candles and the lights of the church building are gradually extinguished. We begin and end in silence.

The Ministers enter in silence and proceed to their places. The Office begins immediately with the Psalmody. It is customary for all to sit for the Psalms.

Psalm 69:1-23

Zeal for your house has eaten me up; the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

Save me, O God, for the waters have risen up to my neck.
I am sinking in deep mire, and there is no firm ground for my feet.

I have come into deep waters, and the torrent washes over me.
I have grown weary with my crying; my throat is inflamed; my eyes have failed from looking for my God.

Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; my lying foes who would destroy me are mighty. Must I then give back what I never stole?
O God, you know my foolishness, and my faults are not hidden from you.

Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, Lord God of hosts; let not those who seek you be disgraced because of me, O God of Israel.
Surely, for your sake have I suffered reproach, and shame has covered my face.

I have become a stranger to my own kindred, an alien to my mother's children.
Zeal for your house has eaten me up; the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

I humbled myself with fasting, but that was turned to my reproach.
I put on sack-cloth also, and became a byword among them.

Those who sit at the gate murmur against me, and the drunkards make songs about me.
But as for me, this is my prayer to you, at the time you have set, O Lord:

In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Now the women sitting at the tomb made lamentation, weeping for the Lord.

At the end of the Canticle the remaining candle is taken from the altar and hidden. All other lights are extinguished, leaving the church in darkness. One appointed, having a small dim light sufficient only to see the words, says:

Christ for us became obedient unto death, even death on a cross; therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the Name which is above every name.

After a brief silence one appointed recites Psalm 51, followed by the Collect said without the usual conclusion.

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross.

Nothing further is said, but a loud noise is made, following which the remaining candle is brought back from its hiding place and returned to the altar. Only sufficient lights are now lit to permit the people to depart safely in silence.

Praise him with the blast of the ram's-horn; praise him with lyre and harp.

Praise him with timbrel and dance; praise him with strings and pipe.

Praise him with the resounding cymbals; praise him with loud-clanging cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

**O Death, I will be your death;
O Grave, I will be your destruction.**

V. My flesh also shall rest in hope:

R. **You will not let your holy One see corruption.**

The sixth candle and some electric lights are extinguished. The church is now but dimly lit and only one candle remains burning on the altar. The following Canticle is said by all..

Now the women sitting at the tomb made lamentation, weeping for the Lord.

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, born of the house of his servant, David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old, that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins.

“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.

Let not the torrent of waters wash over me, neither let the deep swallow me up; do not let the Pit shut its mouth upon me.

Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind; in your great compassion, turn to me.”

“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 dishonour; 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 I could find no one.

They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink.

Zeal for your house has eaten me up; the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

The first candle and some of the electric lights are extinguished.

Psalm 70

Let them draw back and be disgraced who take pleasure in my misfortune.

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.

Let them draw back and be disgraced who take pleasure in my misfortune.

The second candle and some electric lights are extinguished.

Psalm 74

Arise, O God, maintain my cause.

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 Mount Zion where you dwell.

Turn your steps toward the endless ruins; the enemy has laid waste everything in your sanctuary.

Your adversaries roared in your holy place; they set up their banners as tokens of victory.

They were like men coming up with axes to a grove of trees; they broke down all your carved work with hatchets and hammers.

They set fire to your holy place; they defiled the dwelling place of your name and razed it to the ground.

They said to themselves, "Let us destroy them altogether." They burned down all the meeting-places of God in the land.

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?

Why do you draw back your hand? why is your right hand hidden in your bosom?

My house is pulled down and I am uncovered, as when a shepherd strikes his tent.

My life is rolled up like a bolt of cloth, the threads cut off from the loom.

Between sunrise and sunset my life is brought to an end; I cower and hope for the dawn.

Like a lion he has crushed all my bones; like a swallow or thrush I utter plaintive cries; I mourn like a dove.

My weary eyes look up to you; Lord, be my refuge in my affliction.
But what can I say? For he has spoken; it is he who has done this.

Slow and halting are my steps all my days, because of the bitterness of my spirit.

O Lord, I recounted all these things to you and you rescued me; when entreated, you restored my life.

I know now that my bitterness was for my good, for you held me back from the pit of destruction, you cast all my sins behind you.
The grave does not thank you nor death give you praise; nor do those at the brink of the grave hang on to your promises.

It is the living, O Lord, the living who give you thanks as I do this day; and parents speak of your faithfulness to their children.

You, Lord, are my Saviour; I will praise you with stringed instruments all the days of my life, in the house of the Lord."

From the gates of hell, O Lord, deliver my soul.

The fifth candle and some electric lights are extinguished.

Psalm 150

O Death, I will be your death;

O Grave, I will be your destruction.

Praise God in his holy temple; praise him in the firmament of his power.

Praise him for his mighty acts; praise him for his excellent greatness.

Psalm 63:1-8

Under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, by flesh faints for you, in a barren and dry land where there is no water.

Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory.

For your loving-kindness is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise.

So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name.

My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

When I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches.

For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.

Under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

The fourth candle and some electric lights are extinguished.

Canticle of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:10-20)

From the gates of hell, O Lord, deliver my soul.

In my despair I said, "In the noonday of my life I must depart; my unspent years are summoned to the portals of death.:

And I said, "No more shall I see the Lord in the land of the living, never more look on my kind among the dwellers on earth.

Yet God is my king from ancient times, victorious in the midst of the earth.

You divided the sea by your might and shattered the heads of the dragons upon the waters;

You crushed the heads of Leviathan and gave him to the people of the desert for food.

You split open spring and torrent; you dried up ever-flowing rivers.

Yours is the day, yours also the night; you established the moon and the sun.

You fixed all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter.

Remember, O Lord, how the enemy scoffed, how a foolish people despised your name.

Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts; never forget the lives of your poor.

Look upon your covenant; the dark places of the earth are haunts of violence.

Let not the oppressed turn away ashamed; let the poor and needy praise your name.

Arise, O God, maintain your cause; remember how fools revile you all day long.

Forget not the clamour of your adversaries, the unending tumult of those who rise up against you.

Arise, O God, maintain my cause.

The third candle and some electric lights are extinguished.

V. Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked:

R. **From the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.**

All stand for silent prayer. The appointed Reader then goes to the Lectern and the community sits.

Reader: A Reading from the Lamentations of Jeremiah. (*Lam. 1:1-5*)

How lonely sits the city that once was full of people!
how like a widow she has become, she that was great among the nations!
she that was a princess among the provinces has become a vassal.
She weeps bitterly in the night, with tears on her cheeks;
among all her lovers she has no one to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies.
Judah has gone into exile with suffering and hard servitude; she lives now among the nations, and finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

The roads to Zion mourn, for no one comes to her festivals; all her gates are desolate, her priests groan; her young girls grieve, and her lot is bitter.
Her foes have become the masters, her enemies prosper, because the Lord has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away, captives before the foe.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!

On the Mount of Olives Jesus prayed to the Father:
Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.
The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.
The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

From daughter Zion has departed all her majesty,
Her princes have become like stags that find no pasture;
They fled without strength before the pursuer.
Jerusalem remembers, in the days of her affliction and wandering,
all the precious things that were hers in the days of old.
When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was no one to help her, the foe looked on mocking over her downfall.
Jerusalem sinned grievously, so she has become a mockery;
All who honoured her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness;
She herself groans, and turns her face away.
Her uncleanness was in her skirts; She took no thought of her future;
Her downfall was appalling, with none to comfort her.
“O Lord, look at my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed.”

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!

My soul is very sorrowful, even to the point of death;
Remain here, and watch with me.
Now you will see the crowd who will surround me;
You will flee, and I will go to be offered up for you.

Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
You will flee, and I will go to be offered up for you.

Enemies have stretched out their hands over all her precious things;
she has even seen the nations invade her sanctuary,
those whom you forbade to enter your congregation.
All here people groan as they search for bread;
they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength.
Look, O Lord, and see how worthless I have become.
Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?
Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow,
which was brought upon me,
which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.
From on high he sent fire; it went deep into my bones;
he spread a net for my feet; he turned me back;
he has left me stunned, faint all day long.
My transgressions were bound into a yoke;
by his hand they were fastened together;
they weigh on my neck, sapping my strength;
the Lord handed me over to those I cannot withstand.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!

Lo, we have seen him without beauty or majesty;
with no looks to attract our eyes.
He bore our sins and grieved for us.
He was wounded for our transgressions,
and by his scourging we are healed.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
and by his scourging we are healed.