

Tenebrae



TENEBRAE

The name **Tenebrae** (the Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows") has for centuries been applied to the ancient monastic night and early morning services (Matins and Lauds) of the last three days of Holy Week, which in medieval times came to be celebrated on the preceding evenings.

Apart from the chant of the Lamentations (in which each verse is introduced by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet), the most conspicuous feature of the service is the gradual extinguishing of candles and other lights in the church until only a single candle, considered a symbol of our Lord, remains. Toward the end of the service this candle is hidden, typifying the apparent victory of the forces of evil. At the very end, a loud noise is made, symbolizing the earthquake at the time of the resurrection (Matthew 28:2), the hidden candle is restored to its place, and by its light all depart in silence.

The provision, set forth in the Book of Occasional Services, for Tenebrae to be on Wednesday evening only permits the proper liturgies for **Maundy Thursday** and **Good Friday** to find their place as the principal services for those days. By drawing upon material from each of the three former offices of **Tenebrae**, this service provides an extended meditation upon, and prelude to, the events in our Lord's life between the Last Supper and the Resurrection.

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

The Service of Tenebrae

The people remain seated as the ministers enter in silence.

THIRD NOCTURN

ANTIPHON 7

Leader

God is my helper; it is the Lord who sustains my life.

Psalm 54 *Deus, in nomine*

Said in unison

- 1 Save me, O God, by your Name; *
in your might, defend my cause.**
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God; *
give ear to the words of my mouth.**
- 3 For the arrogant have risen up against me,
and the ruthless have sought my life, *
those who have no regard for God.**
- 4 Behold, God is my helper; *
it is the Lord who sustains my life.**
- 5 Render evil to those who spy on me; *
in your faithfulness, destroy them.**
- 6 I will offer you a freewill sacrifice *
and praise your Name, O LORD, for it is good.**
- 7 For you have rescued me from every trouble, *
and my eye has seen the ruin of my foes.**

Leader

God is my helper; it is the Lord who sustains my life.

(One candle is extinguished)

ANTIPHON 8

Leader

At Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling is in Zion.

Psalm 76 *Notus in Judæa*

Said in unison

- 1 In Judah is God known; *
his Name is great in Israel.**
- 2 At Salem is his tabernacle, *
and his dwelling is in Zion.**
- 3 There he broke the flashing arrows, *
the shield, the sword, and the weapons of battle.**
- 4 How glorious you are! *
more splendid than the everlasting mountains!**
- 5 The strong of heart have been despoiled;
they sink into sleep; *
none of the warriors can lift a hand.**
- 6 At your rebuke, O God of Jacob, *
both horse and rider lie stunned.**
- 7 What terror you inspire! *
who can stand before you when you are angry?**
- 8 From heaven you pronounced judgment; *
the earth was afraid and was still;**
- 9 When God rose up to judgment *
and to save all the oppressed of the earth.**
- 10 Truly, wrathful Edom will give you thanks, *
and the remnant of Hamath will keep your feasts.**
- 11 Make a vow to the LORD your God and keep it; *
let all around him bring gifts to him who is worthy
to be feared.**

**12 He breaks the spirit of princes, *
and strikes terror in the kings of the earth.**

Leader

At Salem is his tabernacle, and his dwelling is in Zion.

(One candle is extinguished)

ANTIPHON 9

Leader

I have become like one who has no strength, lost among the dead.

Psalm 88 *Domine, Deus*

Said in unison

- 1 O LORD, my God, my Savior, *
by day and night I cry to you.**
- 2 Let my prayer enter into your presence; *
incline your ear to my lamentation.**
- 3 For I am full of trouble; *
my life is at the brink of the grave.**
- 4 I am counted among those who go down to the Pit; *
I have become like one who has no strength;**
- 5 Lost among the dead, *
like the slain who lie in the grave,**
- 6 Whom you remember no more, *
for they are cut off from your hand.**
- 7 You have laid me in the depths of the Pit, *
in dark places, and in the abyss.**
- 8 Your anger weighs upon me heavily, *
and all your great waves overwhelm me.**

- 9 You have put my friends far from me;
you have made me to be abhorred by them; *
I am in prison and cannot get free.**
- 10 My sight has failed me because of trouble; *
LORD, I have called upon you daily;
I have stretched out my hands to you.**
- 11 Do you work wonders for the dead? *
will those who have died stand up and give you thanks?**
- 12 Will your loving-kindness be declared in the grave? *
your faithfulness in the land of destruction?**
- 13 Will your wonders be known in the dark? *
or your righteousness in the country where all is forgotten?**
- 14 But as for me, O LORD, I cry to you for help; *
in the morning my prayer comes before you.**
- 15 LORD, why have you rejected me? *
why have you hidden your face from me?**
- 16 Ever since my youth, I have been wretched and at the point of
death; *
I have borne your terrors with a troubled mind.**
- 17 Your blazing anger has swept over me; *
your terrors have destroyed me;**
- 18 They surround me all day long like a flood; *
they encompass me on every side.**
- 19 My friend and my neighbor you have put away from me, *
and darkness is my only companion.**

Leader

He has made me dwell in darkness:

People

Like the dead of long ago.

(One candle is extinguished)

All kneel, as able, for silent prayer

All sit as the reader goes to the lectern

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews.

(4:15–5:10; 9:11-15a)

LESSON 7

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.

RESPONSORY 7 *Eram quasi agnus*

Leader

I was like a trusting lamb led to the slaughter.

People

I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes, saying, Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living.

Leader

All my enemies whispered together against me, and devised evil against me, saying:

People

Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living.

LESSON 8

And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also, Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, this day have I begotten you;” as he says also in another place, “You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and, being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

RESPONSORY 8 *Velum templi*

Leader

The veil of the temple was torn in two,

People

and the earth shook, and the thief from the cross cried out, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Leader

The rocks were split, the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who slept were raised:

People

And the earth shook, and the thief from the cross cried out, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

LESSON 9

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that are to come, then, through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

RESPONSORY 9 *Sepulto Domino*

Leader

When the Lord was buried, they sealed the tomb,

People

rolling a great stone to the door of the tomb; and they stationed soldiers to guard him.

Leader

The chief priests gathered before Pilate, and petitioned him:

People

and they stationed soldiers to guard him.

LAUDS

ANTIPHON 10

Leader

God did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.

Psalm 63:1-8 *Deus, Deus meus*

Said in unison

- 1 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; *
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,
as in a barren and dry land where there is no water.**
- 2 Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, *
that I might behold your power and your glory.**
- 3 For your loving-kindness is better than life itself; *
my lips shall give you praise.**
- 4 So will I bless you as long as I live *
and lift up my hands in your Name.**
- 5 My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness, *
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,**
- 6 When I remember you upon my bed, *
and meditate on you in the night watches.**
- 7 For you have been my helper, *
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.**
- 8 My soul clings to you; *
your right hand holds me fast.**

Leader

God did not spare his own Son, but delivered him up for us all.

(One candle is extinguished)

ANTIPHON 13

Leader

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

The Song of Hezekiah [Isaiah 38:10-20]

Said in unison

- 1 In my despair I said, “In the noonday of my life I must depart; *
my unspent years are summoned to the portals of death.”**
- 2 And I said,
“No more shall I see the Lord in the land of the living, *
never more look on my kind among dwellers on earth.**
- 3 My house is pulled down and I am uncovered,*
as when a shepherd strikes his tent.**
- 4 My life is rolled up like a bolt of cloth,*
the threads cut off from the loom.**
- 5 Between sunrise and sunset my life is brought to an end; *
I cower and hope for the dawn.**
- 6 Like a lion he has crushed all my bones; *
like a swallow or thrush I utter plaintive cries;
I mourn like a dove.**
- 7 My weary eyes look up to you; *
Lord, be my refuge in my affliction.”**
- 8 But what can I say? for he has spoken; *
it is he who has done this.**

- 9 Slow and halting are my steps all my days,*
because of the bitterness of my spirit.**
- 10 O Lord, I recounted all these things to you and you rescued me; *
when entreated, you restored my life.**
- 11 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.**
- 12 The grave does not thank you nor death give you praise; *
nor do those at the brink of the grave hang on your
promise.**
- 13 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.**
- 14 You, Lord, are my Savior; *
I will praise you with stringed instruments all the days of my life,
in the house of the Lord.”**

Leader

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

(One candle is extinguished)

ANTIPHON 14

Leader

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

Psalm 150

Said in unison

- 1 Praise God in his holy temple; *
praise him in the firmament of his power.**
- 2 Praise him for his mighty acts; *
praise him for his excellent greatness.**
- 3 Praise him with the blast of the ram's-horn; *
praise him with lyre and harp.**
- 4 Praise him with timbrel and dance; *
praise him with strings and pipe.**
- 5 Praise him with resounding cymbals; *
praise him with loud-clanging cymbals.**
- 6 Let everything that has breath*
praise the Lord.**

Leader

O Death, I will be your death;

People

O Grave, I will be your destruction.

Leader

My flesh also shall rest in hope:

People

You will not let your holy One see corruption.

(One candle is extinguished)

All stand

*As the following Cantic is said,
the candles at the Altar are extinguished,
except the one candle remaining at the center.*

ANTIPHON

Leader

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

Canticle 16: *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel*

Said in unison

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 savior, *

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 his people knowledge of salvation *

by the forgiveness of their sins.

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.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Leader

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

All kneel (as able)

The following is said in unison

**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.**

A brief period of silence is observed

All lights are turned off and the last candle is hidden

Silence

The leader continues in a quiet tone

Psalm 51 *Miserere mei, Deus*

- 1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your
loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.
- 2 Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.
- 3 For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.
- 4 Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.
- 5 And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.
- 6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.
- 7 For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.
- 8 Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.
- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
- 14 I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.
- 15 Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.
- 16 Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- 17 Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.
- 18 The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
- 19 Be favorable and gracious to Zion, *
and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
- 20 Then you will be pleased with the appointed sacrifices,
with burnt-offerings and oblations; *
then shall they offer young bullocks upon your altar.

Presider

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 noise is made, and the remaining candle is brought from its hiding place and replaced on the stand.

By its light the ministers and people depart in silence.



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