

TENEBRAE

A Service of Darkness



GOOD FRIDAY

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TENEBRAE

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Leader's Guide

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About the Service

The traditional Tenebrae service is moving and dramatic, but can be complicated—especially for small congregations. This Tenebrae digital download captures the traditional Good Friday service in a simple format. Readings and instructions are included for this dramatic service of darkness.

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Newsletter Notice

Join us for a unique Tenebrae Service for Good Friday. In this service of darkness, words of Psalms and other Scripture readings that point to the reality of Christ and the cross are interspersed with responses from the congregation and the progressive extinguishing of candles, immersing us in the darkness of the day when Christ endured death for our salvation.

Bulletin Notice

Immerse yourself in the darkness of this day when our Savior endured death for us. Through the words of Psalms and other Scripture readings that point to the reality of Christ and the cross, and through the gradual extinguishing of candlelight, we will hear and respond to the sufferings of our Savior on our behalf that we might experience light and life in him.

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Complete Script For Worship Leaders

- This **Introduction** is read aloud by the pastor at the start of the service or silently by the congregation before the service begins:

¶ The Office of Tenebrae (meaning darkness or shadow), a Holy Week devotion dating back to the 7th or 8th century A.D., is characterized by Scripture readings and the successive extinguishing of candles as the service progresses.

Following the opening prayer, the service is divided into three divisions, or Responsories, each with 3 Psalms, with each Psalm followed by a responsive verse. Then follows the 3 Readings, with each reading followed by a responsive verse.

After the Third Responory, the service concludes with Psalm 51 and the removal of the Christ Candle for a time, symbolizing our Lord's death and burial. The strepitus is heard, a harsh noise indicating the closing of the tomb. The Christ Candle is then returned to its place in anticipation of our Lord's resurrection.

At the conclusion of the service, please leave silently, maintaining the spirit of solemn worship.

- This **Opening Prayer** is read responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

☐ Almighty God, we ask you to look with mercy on your family for whom our Lord Jesus was willing to be betrayed and to be given over to the hands of sinners and to suffer death on the cross, who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

☑ **Amen.**

- The **First Responsory** begins.
- **Psalm 2** is read aloud by the Speech Choir, concluding with a response by the pastor and the congregation:

Why do the nations plan rebellion?

Why do people make their useless plots?

The kings revolt, their rulers plot together against the Lord and against the king he chose.

“Let us free ourselves from their rule; let us throw off their control.”

From his throne in heaven the Lord laughs and mocks their feeble plans.

Then he warns them in anger and terrifies them with his fury.

“On Zion, my sacred hill,” he says, “I have installed my king.”

“I will announce,” says the king, “what the Lord has declared. He said to me:

‘You are my son; today I have become your father. Ask and I will give you all the nations;
the whole earth will be yours.

You will break them with an iron rod;

you will shatter them in pieces like a clay pot.”

Now listen to this warning, you kings; learn this lesson, you rulers of the world:

Serve the Lord with fear, tremble and bow down to him;

Or else his anger will be quickly aroused, and you will suddenly die.

Happy are all who go to him for protection.

P In response to this word, I say: The kings revolt; their rulers plot together against the Lord and against the king he chose.

C **Proud men are coming to attack me; cruel men are trying to kill me.**

- **Psalm 54** is read aloud by the Speech Choir, concluding with a response by the pastor and the congregation:

Serve me by your power, O God:

set me free by your might!

Hear my prayer, O God;

listen to my words!

Proud men are coming to attack me; cruel men are trying to kill me—

men who do not care about God.

But God is my helper.

The Lord is my defender.

May God use their own evil to punish my enemies.

He will destroy them because he is faithful.

I will gladly offer you a sacrifice, O Lord;

I will give you thanks because you are good.

You have rescued me from all my troubles,

and I have seen my enemies defeated.

P In response to this word, I say: Proud men are coming to attack me; cruel men are trying to kill me.

C **I am always aware of the Lord's presence; he is near, and nothing can shake me.**

- **Psalm 16** is read aloud by the Speech Choir, concluding with a response by the pastor and the congregation:
- Protect me, O God; I trust in you for safety.

I say to the Lord, “You are my Lord; all the good things I have come from you.”

How excellent are the Lord’s faithful people!

My greatest pleasure is to be with them.

Those who rush to other gods bring many troubles on themselves.

I do not take part in their sacrifices; I will not worship their gods.

You, Lord, are all I have, and you give me all I need.

My future is in your hands.

How wonderful are your gifts to me;

How good they are!

I praise the Lord, because he guides me.

And in the night my conscience warns me.

I am always aware of the Lord’s presence;

He is near, and nothing can shake me.

And so I am thankful and glad, and I feel completely secure, because you protect me from the power of death.

I have served you faithfully, and you will not abandon me to the world of the dead.

You will show me the path that leads to life;

your presence fills me with joy and brings me pleasure forever.

P In response to this word, I say: I am always aware of the Lord’s presence; he is near, and nothing can shake me. Christ himself carried our sins in his body to the cross,

C so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness. It is by his wounds that we have been healed.

- **The first candle is extinguished** by the acolyte.
- **Readings from the Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet** are read by the Lector, interspersed by responses from the pastor and the congregation:

Lamentations 2:8-11

L *The Lord was determined that the wall of Zion should fall; he measured them off to make sure of total destruction. The towers and walls now lie in ruins together. The gates lie buried in the rubble, their bars smashed to pieces. The king and the noblemen now are in exile. The Law is no longer taught, and the prophets have no visions from the Lord. Jerusalem's old men sit on the ground in silence, with dust on their heads and sackcloth on their bodies. Young girls bow their heads to the ground. My eyes are worn out with weeping; my soul is in anguish. I am exhausted with grief at the destruction of my people.*

P In response to this word, I say: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord, your God!

C **Even my best friend, the one I trusted most, the one who shared my food, has turned against me.**

Lamentations 2:13-15

L *O Jerusalem, beloved Jerusalem, what can I say? How can I comfort you? No one has ever suffered like this. Your disaster is boundless as the ocean; there is no possible hope. Your prophets had nothing to tell you but lies; their preaching deceived you by never exposing your sin. They made you think you did not need to repent. People passing by the city look at you in scorn. They shake their heads and laugh at Jerusalem's ruins: "Is this that lovely city? Is this the pride of the world?"*

P In response to this word, I say: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord, your God!

C **The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch.**

Lamentations 3:1-9

L *I am one who knows what it is to be punished by God. He drove me deeper and deeper into darkness and beat me again and again with merciless blows. He has left my flesh open and raw, and has broken my bones. He has shut me in a prison of misery and anguish. He has forced me to live in the stagnant darkness of death. He has bound me in chains; I am a prisoner with no hope of escape. I cry aloud for help, but God refuses to listen; I stagger as I walk; stone walls block me wherever I turn.*

P In response to this word, I say: Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord, your God!