

Tenebrae

The Liturgy of Shadows



The name Tenebrae is the Latin word for “darkness” or “shadows,” and has for centuries been applied to the ancient monastic night and early morning services of the last three days of Holy Week.

This service is marked by a reading from the book of Lamentations in which each verse is introduced by successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet (part of the traditional chant). There is a gradual extinguishing of candles and other lights until a single candle, considered a symbol of the Lord, remains. Towards 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 the service ends in silence.

*The congregation will speak the Antiphons and **bolded** words in Unison. The Psalms and Canticles have directions for praying, i.e. responsively by whole or half verse or in unison.*

Antiphon 1

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

Psalm 69:1-23 – Responsively by whole verse

¹ Save me, O God, *

for the waters have risen up to my neck.

² **I am sinking in deep mire, ***

and there is no firm ground for my feet.

³ I have come into deep waters, *

and the torrent washes over me.

⁴ **I have grown weary with my crying;**

my throat is inflamed; *

my eyes have failed from looking for my God.

⁵ 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?

⁶ **O God, you know my foolishness, ***

and my faults are not hidden from you.

⁷ 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.

⁸ **Surely, for your sake have I suffered reproach, ***

and shame has covered my face.

⁹ I have become a stranger to my own kindred, *

an alien to my mother's children.

¹⁰ **Zeal for your house has eaten me up; ***

the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

¹¹ I humbled myself with fasting, *

but that was turned to my reproach.

¹² **I put on sack-cloth also, ***

and became a byword among them.

¹³ Those who sit at the gate murmur against me, *

and the drunkards make songs about me.

¹⁴ **But as for me, this is my prayer to you, ***

at the time you have set, O Lord:

¹⁵ "In your great mercy, O God, *

answer me with your unfailing help.

¹⁶ **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.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ **Answer me, O Lord, for your love is kind; ***

in your great compassion, turn to me.

¹⁹ "Hide not your face from your servant; *

be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.

²⁰ **Draw near to me and redeem me; ***

because of my enemies deliver me.

²¹ You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonor; *
my adversaries are all in your sight."

²² **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.

²³ They gave me gall to eat, *
and when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink.

The first pair of candles are extinguished.

Antiphon 2

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

Psalm 70 – Unison

¹ Be pleased, O God, to deliver me; *
O Lord, make haste to help me.

² Let those who seek my life be ashamed
and altogether dismayed; *
let those who take pleasure in my misfortune
draw back and be disgraced.

³ Let those who say to me "Aha!" and gloat over me turn back, *
because they are ashamed.

⁴ Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; *
let those who love your salvation say for ever,
"Great is the Lord!"

⁵ But as for me, I am poor and needy; *
come to me speedily, O God.

⁶ You are my helper and my deliverer; *
O Lord, do not tarry.

The second pair of candles are extinguished.

Antiphon 3

Arise, O God, maintain my cause.

*Psalm 74 – Responsively by half verse **

¹ O God, why have you utterly cast us off? *
why is your wrath so hot against the sheep of your pasture?

² Remember your congregation that you purchased long ago, *
the tribe you redeemed to be your inheritance,
and Mount Zion where you dwell.

³ Turn your steps toward the endless ruins; *
the enemy has laid waste everything in your sanctuary.

⁴ Your adversaries roared in your holy place; *
they set up their banners as tokens of victory.

⁵ They were like men coming up with axes to a grove of trees; *
they broke down all your carved work with hatchets
and hammers.

⁶ They set fire to your holy place; *
they defiled the dwelling-place of your Name
and razed it to the ground.

⁷ They said to themselves, "Let us destroy them altogether." *

**They burned down all the meeting-places of God
in the land.**

⁸ There are no signs for us to see;

there is no prophet left; *

there is not one among us who knows how long.

⁹ How long, O God, will the adversary scoff? *

will the enemy blaspheme your Name for ever?

¹⁰ Why do you draw back your hand? *

why is your right hand hidden in your bosom?

¹¹ Yet God is my King from ancient times, *

victorious in the midst of the earth.

¹² You divided the sea by your might *

and shattered the heads of the dragons upon the waters;

¹³ You crushed the heads of Leviathan *

and gave him to the people of the desert for food.

¹⁴ You split open spring and torrent; *

you dried up ever-flowing rivers.

¹⁵ Yours is the day, yours also the night; *

you established the moon and the sun.

¹⁶ You fixed all the boundaries of the earth; *

you made both summer and winter.

¹⁷ Remember, O Lord, how the enemy scoffed, *

how a foolish people despised your Name.

¹⁸ Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild beasts; *

never forget the lives of your poor.

¹⁹ Look upon your covenant; *

the dark places of the earth are haunts of violence.

²⁰ Let not the oppressed turn away ashamed; *

let the poor and needy praise your Name.

²¹ Arise, O God, maintain your cause; *

remember how fools revile you all day long.

²² Forget not the clamor of your adversaries, *

the unending tumult of those who rise up against you.

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

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

The third pair of candles are extinguished.

Lesson 1

A Reading from the Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet. [1:1-14]

Aleph. How solitary lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations! She that was queen among the cities has now become a vassal.

Beth. She weeps bitterly in the night, tears run down her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all become her enemies.

Gimel. Judah has gone into the misery of exile and of hard servitude; she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place; all her pursuers overtook her in the midst of her anguish.

Daleth. The roads to Zion mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts; all her gates are desolate, her priests groan and sigh; her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

He. Her adversaries have become her masters, her enemies prosper; because the Lord has punished her for the multitude of her rebellions; her children are gone, driven away as captives by the enemy.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!

Responsory 1 *In monte Oliveti*

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.

V. Watch and pray, that you may not enter into temptation.

R. **The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.**

Lesson 2

Waw. And from Daughter Zion all her majesty has departed; her princes have become like stags that can find no pasture, and that run without strength before the hunter.

Zayin. Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and bitterness all the precious things that were hers from the days of old; when her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was none to help her; the adversary saw her, and mocked at her downfall.

Heth. Jerusalem has sinned greatly, therefore she has become a thing unclean; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; and now she sighs, and turns her face away.

Teth. Uncleanness clung to her skirts, she took no thought of her doom; therefore her fall is terrible, she has no comforter. "O Lord, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed."

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!

Responsory 2 *Tristis est animi mea*

My soul is very sorrowful, even to the point of death;

remain here, and watch with me.

Now you shall see the crowd who will surround me;

you will flee, and I will go to be offered up for you.

V. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man
is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

R. **You will flee, and I will go to be offered up for you.**

Lesson 3

Yodh. The adversary has stretched out his hand to seize all her precious things; she has seen the Gentiles invade her sanctuary, those whom you had forbidden to enter your congregation.

Kaph. All her people groan as they search for bread; they sell their own children for food to revive their strength. "Behold, O Lord, and consider, for I am now beneath contempt!"

Lamedh. Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted, on the day of his burning anger.

Mem. From on high he sent fire, into my bones it descended; he spread a net for my feet, and turned me back; he has left me desolate and faint all the day long.

Nun. My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by his hand they were fastened together; their yoke is upon my neck; he has caused my strength to fail. The Lord has delivered me into their hands, against whom I am not able to stand up.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!

Responsory 3 *Ecce vidimus eum*

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.

V. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows:

R. **And by his scourging we are healed.**

Lauds

Antiphon 4

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

Psalm 63:1-8 - 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.
pour out your hearts before him, for God is our refuge.
let his years extend over many generations.
Ephraim is my helmet and Judah my scepter.
not for any offense or fault of mine, O Lord.
liars go astray from their birth.
God will send forth his love and his faithfulness.

⁸ **My soul clings to you; ***
your right hand holds me fast.

The fourth pair of candles are extinguished

Antiphon 5

**They shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child;
for the Lord, who is without sin, is slain.**

*Psalm 143 – Responsively by half verse **

¹ Lord, hear my prayer,
and in your faithfulness heed my supplications; *
answer me in your righteousness.

² Enter not into judgment with your servant, *
for in your sight shall no one living be justified.

³ For my enemy has sought my life;
he has crushed me to the ground; *
**he has made me live in dark places like those who
are long dead.**

⁴ My spirit faints within me; *
my heart within me is desolate.

⁵ I remember the time past;
I muse upon all your deeds; *
I consider the works of your hands.

⁶ I spread out my hands to you; *
my soul gasps to you like a thirsty land.

⁷ O Lord, make haste to answer me; my spirit fails me; *
**do not hide your face from me
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.**

⁸ Let me hear of your loving-kindness in the morning,
for I put my trust in you; *
**show me the road that I must walk,
for I lift up my soul to you.**

⁹ Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord, *
for I flee to you for refuge.

¹⁰ Teach me to do what pleases you, for you are my God; *
let your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

¹¹ Revive me, O Lord, for your Name's sake; *
for your righteousness' sake, bring me out of trouble.

¹² Of your goodness, destroy my enemies
and bring all my foes to naught, *
for truly I am your servant.

The fifth pair of candles are extinguished

Antiphon 6

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

The Song of Hezekiah [Isaiah 38:10-20] – Responsively by whole verse

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 dwellers on earth.**

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 your promise.**

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 Savior; *

I will praise you with stringed instruments all the days of my life, in the house of the Lord.

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

The sixth pair of candles are extinguished

Antiphon 7

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

Psalm 150 – 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.

Ant. 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 seventh pair of candles are extinguished.

During the following Canticle, the candles at the Altar, and all other lights in the church (except the one remaining at the center of the candle stand), are extinguished.

Antiphon

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

Canticle 16: Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel - 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.

After the Canticle, during the repetition of the Antiphon, the remaining candle is taken from the stand and hidden beneath or behind the Altar, or in some other convenient place.

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

Christus factus est

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 silence is observed. The following Psalm is then said quietly.

Psalm 51- Said in Unison

¹ Have mercy on me, O God, according to your
loving-kindness; *

in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

²Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.

⁵And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.

⁶Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.

⁷For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.

⁸Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.

⁹Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

¹⁰Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.

¹¹Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹²Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.

¹³Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

¹⁴I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.

¹⁵Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.

¹⁶Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.

¹⁷Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.

¹⁸The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

¹⁹Be favorable and gracious to Zion, *
and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.

²⁰Then you will be pleased with the appointed sacrifices,
with burnt-offerings and oblations; *
then shall they offer young bullocks upon your altar.

The Presider says the Collect 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 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 remain in silence as the service ends.*