

SERVICE OF DARKNESS

Good Friday

April 10, 2020

7:00 P. M.

WELCOME

EXPLANATION OF THE SERVICE

For many congregations the *Tenebrae* service, usually held on Good Friday, is one of the most moving and meaningful worship services of the year. Christ's suffering is commemorated through Scripture and song. Candles are extinguished one by one as the congregation listens to the account of Christ's suffering and death.

The service of *Tenebrae*, meaning "darkness" or "shadows," has been observed since the fourth century. Traditionally the services were a prolonged meditation on Christ's suffering.

The *Tenebrae* service always has a somber tone, reflected in the darkness, in the accounts of Christ's suffering, in the music, and in the silence of the people as they leave the sanctuary.

This night is a night of sadness. We leave soberly, and yet we do so with anticipation because of Jesus words:

Mark 8:31, "He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again."

We invite you to return Easter Sunday to celebrate their fulfillment.

PREPARATION SCRIPTURE

"There were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness, so he will sprinkle many nations." (Isaiah 52:14-15a)

PRELUDE

OPENING

GREETING LITURGY

Leader: The Lord be with you

People: And also with you

Leader: The Light has come into the world

People: But the world loved darkness rather than light

Leader: Come, let us worship the Lord, who was obedient unto death, even death on a cross

*Hymn: 248, "Ah Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended"

*Invocation

Meditation: "Gethsemane"

THE SHADOWS

The Shadow of Betrayal

John 13:1-30

The Shadow of Agony

Matthew 26:36-46

Hymn: 247, "O Sacred Head Now Wounded"

The Shadow of Arrest and Denial *John 13:36-38, 18:1-18, 25-27*

The Shadow of Accusation

John 18:28-40

The Shadow of Crucifixion

John 19:1-27

Hymn: 257, "Stricken, Smitten, And Afflicted"

The Shadow of Death

John 19:28-37

The Shadow of Burial

John 19:38-42

Hymn: 260, "Were You There When They Crucified My Lord" (1-4)

Darkness

Silent Meditation

The congregation leaves in silence.

FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE TENEBRAE SERVICE

The service of Tenebrae, meaning “darkness” or “shadows,” is not a new development in church liturgy. It has been observed since medieval times. Originally Tenebrae was held in the monasteries on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday of Holy Week. It was part of the matins and lauds (daily Scripture-reading and prayer services) which began at two o’clock in the morning. Later, to allow town folk to participate in these services, the monasteries scheduled the Tenebrae during the afternoon or evening before each of these holy days.

Traditionally the services were a prolonged meditation on Christ’s suffering. Thursday’s Tenebrae centered on the Last Supper and the betrayal; Friday’s on Christ’s judgment, crucifixion, and death; and Saturday’s on his burial and the hope of his resurrection. During these services fifteen candles (fourteen dark-colored and one white) were arranged on a triangular candelabra. Fourteen psalms were read during the matins and lauds, each followed by a choir response. After each reading one candle was extinguished until only the white candle, often called the Christ candle, remained burning. The Christ candle was removed (“hidden”), then later brought back to symbolize the anticipated resurrection of Christ. The services were concluded with the noise of a “clapper,” said to symbolize the forces of evil and darkness, or the earthquake at Christ’s death.

Tenebrae services today, usually held on one day instead of three, follow many of the ancient customs. The pastor and members of the congregation read a number of Scripture passages — either the traditional fourteen or fewer. Often these passages are not psalms but rather portions of the Passion story. But no matter which Scripture and music are selected, the pattern of extinguishing the candles (and the overhead lights) and restoring the Christ candle remains the same. Some churches accentuate the darkness by tolling the bells.

“There were many who were appalled at him, his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness, so he will sprinkle many nations. Who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of a dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him. He was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. It pleased the LORD to bruise him; He has put him to grief. He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.” (Selections from Isaiah 52 and 53)

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