



TENEBRAE: THE SERVICE OF SHADOWS

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 evening.

Tenebrae is a prolonged meditation on Christ’s suffering. Readings trace the story of Christ’s passion, music portrays his pathos, and the power of silence and darkness suggests the drama of this momentous day.

As lights are extinguished, we ponder the depth of Christ’s suffering and death; we remember the cataclysmic nature of his sacrifice, and through the return of the small but persistent flame of the Christ candle at the conclusion of the service, we anticipate the joy of ultimate victory.

The Approach to God

Prelude

Leader: God is light, in whom there is no darkness at all.

People: **Jesus Christ is the light of the world.**

Leader: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

People: **Amen**

Leader: Blessed be the name of the Lord our God,

People: **who redeems us for our failings and death.**

Leader: For us and for our salvation, Christ became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

People: **Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

Solo: Oh my boy, my Jesus – Confession Stone – Tessa Short

Prayer for Illumination

All Almighty God, as we hear your word tonight, look with mercy on this your family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was content to be betrayed and given up into the hands of sinners and to suffer death upon the cross; who is alive and glorified with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

The Shadow of Betrayal: Matthew 26:20-25

When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve; and while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.' And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?' He answered, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.' Judas, who betrayed him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' He replied, 'You have said so.'

Response: Ah, Holy Jesus CP 196 (Vs 1 & 2)

A candle is extinguished.

The Shadow of the Agony of Spirit and Arrest: Matthew 26:36-50

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.'

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.' Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.' While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.' At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

Response: Lachrimae Amantis "*Tears of the Lover*" by Geoffrey Hill

What is there in my heart that you should sue so fiercely for its love?
What kind of care brings you as though a stranger to my door
through the long night and in the icy dew

seeking the heart that will not harbour you, that keeps itself religiously secure?
At this dark solstice filled with frost and fire your passion's ancient wounds must bleed
anew.

So many nights the angel of my house has fed such urgent comfort through a dream,
whispered "your lord is coming, he is close"

that I have drowsed half-faithful for a time bathed in pure tones of promise and
remorse: "tomorrow I shall wake to welcome him."

A candle is extinguished.

The Shadow of Denial: Matthew 26:69-75

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant-girl came to him and said, 'You also were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it before all of them, saying, 'I do not know what you are talking about.' When he went out to the porch, another servant-girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, 'This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.' Again he denied it with an oath, 'I do not know the man.' After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you.' Then he began to curse, and he swore an oath, 'I do not know the man!' At that moment the cock crowed. Then Peter remembered what Jesus had said: 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' And he went out and wept bitterly.

Response: *The Look* and *The Meaning of the Look* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The Look

The Savior looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
No gesture of reproach! The heavens serene,
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way! the forsaken Lord
Looked only on the traitor. None record
What that look was, none guess: for those who have seen
Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang ken,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment –
'I never knew this man' – did quail and fall, call.
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy
As knowing straight THAT GOD – turned free
And went out speechless from the face
of all, And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

The Meaning of the Look

I think that look of Christ might seem to say –
‘Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break my heart upon
For all God’s charge to his high angels may
Guard my foot better?³ Did I yesterday Wash thy feet, my beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny me ’neath the morning sun?
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
The cock crows coldly. – GO, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy final need is dreariest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here;
My voice to God and angels shall attest,
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear.”

Go to Dark Gethsemane CP 190 (vs 1 & 3)

A candle is extinguished.

The Shadow of Accusation: Matthew 27:11-14, 20-29

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus said, ‘You say so.’ But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer. Then Pilate said to him, ‘Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?’ But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed. The governor again said to them, ‘Which of the two do you want me to release for you?’ And they said, ‘Barabbas.’ Pilate said to them, ‘Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ All of them said, ‘Let him be crucified!’ Then he asked, ‘Why, what evil has he done?’ But they shouted all the more, ‘Let him be crucified!’

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'

Response: O Sacred Head, Now Wounded CP 198 (vs 1 & 4)

A candle is extinguished.

The Shadow of Crucifixion and Humiliation: Matthew 27:31-43

After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.' In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking him, saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.'

He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, “I am God’s Son.”’

Response: Lament From Five Liturgical Meditations - piano and violin

A candle is extinguished.

The Shadow of Death: Matthew 27:45-54

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘This man is calling for Elijah.’ At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.’ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’

Response: *Mary Magdalene and The Other Mary; A Song For All Maries* by Christina Rossetti

Our Master lies asleep and is at rest:
His Heart has ceased to bleed, His Eye to weep:
The sun ashamed has dropt down in the west:
Our Master lies asleep.
Now we are they who weep, and trembling keep
Vigil, with wrung heart in a sighing breast,
While slow time creeps, and slow the shadows creep.

Renew Thy youth, as eagle from the nest; O Master, who hast sown, arise to reap: –
No cock-crow yet, no flush on eastern crest:
Our Master lies asleep.

Hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross CP386 (verses 1-3)

Dismissal

Leader: May Jesus Christ who for our sakes became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you.

People: **Amen.**