A Tenebrae Service for Good Friday
April 10, 2020
On Good Friday the church remembers the crucifixion of her Lord. Her remembrance, while solemn, is not a message of gloom, but a service of adoration of the Son of God, who as the Lamb of God, offered up his life to reconcile us to God. Good Friday is part of the larger celebration of the mystery of salvation called the Triduum or Three Holy Days. The Triduum begins Holy Thursday and culminates in the Easter Proclamation of the Easter Vigil. The connected nature of the services of the Triduum should be savored. Good Friday Tenebrae is not a liturgical funeral for Jesus, but an austere service of reflection, adoration of the Lamb, intercession, and quiet meditation. Christians gather to celebrate the sacrifice of the cross.

Tenebrae means darkness. Originally, the Tenebrae prayer service was developed in medieval monasticism as the monks’ daily office or prayer service for use during Holy Week. The original Tenebrae followed a series of readings, liturgical texts, and Psalms to reflect on our Lord’s crucifixion and our sin which Jesus took to the cross for us.

As the middle service of the Three Holy Days, Good Friday Tenebrae was prepared for by the solemn stripping of the altar at the close of the Maundy Thursday liturgy. The altar is the most prominent symbol of Christ in the church, and the bare altar powerfully recalls Christ’s abandonment before and in his passion.

Tonight’s service borrows from the Tenebrae tradition, replacing the lessons and psalms with hymns and seven candles to mark the hours of darkness while meditating on Jesus’ seven words from the cross. An unhurried silence for meditation follows the hymn verse and prayer after each meditation. The silence is broken by Christ’s next words from the cross. Six of the seven candles are extinguished one-by-one as we watch Jesus take on our sin and crush Satan for us. The lights of the sanctuary are dimmed as each candle is extinguished.

The Seventh Candle is never extinguished. When Jesus died, his spirit continued to live with the Father. The light of the last candle points with hope to the third day. It is removed in darkness for a substantial time for silent prayer and meditation. The service is closed with a “great noise”, in Latin, strepitus. This recalls the earthquake at Jesus’ death and foreshadows the rending of Christ’s tomb in triumph at Easter. The last Tenebrae candle is brought back into the sanctuary. It anticipates the lighting of the Paschal Candle that is used in the Easter Vigil liturgy.

Tonight we gather for worship on Zoom. The Service will be spoken. We will mute all participants, but please join the Cantor in speaking the Congregation parts.
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HYMN

Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain | 106:1-3

Come to Cal’ry’s holy mountain, Sinners, ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain Flows to you, to me, to all,
In a full, perpetual tide, Opened when our Savior died.

Come in poverty and meanness, Come defiled, without, within;
From infection and uncleanness, From the leprosy of sin,
Wash your robes and make them white; You shall walk with God in light.

Come in sorrow and contrition, Wounded, paralyzed, and blind;
Here the guilty, free remission, Here the troubled, peace may find.
Health this fountain will restore; He that drinks shall thirst no more.

TRINITARIAN INVOCATION

M: Recalling that we were baptized into Christ Jesus and into his death,
C: that we too may be raised from the dead to live a new life,
M: In the name of the Father and of the Son ✝ and of the Holy Spirit.
C: Amen.

CONFESSION OF SINS AND ABSOLUTION

M: Let us confess our sins before our Holy, Just and Merciful God.
For if anyone says that he has not sinned he is lying to himself,
and does not know the truth.
If we confess our sin, God is faithful and will forgive us and cleanse us.
Therefore, kneel or remain seated and join me in a sincere confession.

KNEEL OR REMAIN SEATED

All: Almighty and merciful God, I have much to confess to you
and I need the renewing power of your forgiveness.
I confess to the sins of laziness, pride, apathy, self-indulgence, lust, greed, compromise with
evil, and degrading others.
For the sake of the suffering and death of my Savior,
I seek your forgiveness
for the sins of the past and the sins of the present;
for the sins which I have done to please myself
and the sins which I have done to please others;
for the sins which I know and the sins which I know not;
for the sins which I have so labored to hide from others
that I have hidden them from my own awareness.

O Lord, I confess with shame and without excuse. I am sorry for them all
and I seek your forgiveness.
Forgive me, not because I deserve it,
but because Jesus, your Son, died for me and for all people.
Have mercy, O Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

M: Hearing this confession of your heart, I announce to you the good news of Good Friday. At His
command and with His authority I declare all your sins are forgiven, in the name and for the sake of
our ✝ Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.
PRAYER OF THE DAY

M: Let us pray.

God Most Holy, look with mercy on this your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, be given over into the hands of the wicked, and suffer death upon the cross. Keep us always faithful to him, our only Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

C: Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted | 127:1, 2, 4

Stricken, smitten, and afflicted, See him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ, by man rejected: Yes, my soul, 'tis he, 'tis he.
'Tis the long-expected Prophet, David’s Son, yet David’s Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it: 'Tis the true and faithful Word.

Tell me, as you hear him groaning, Was there ever grief like his?
Friends through fear his cause disowning, Foes insulting his distress,
Many hands were raised to wound him, None would intervene to save,
But the deepest stroke that pierced him Was the stroke that Justice gave.

Here we have a firm foundation, Here the refuge of the lost;
Christ’s the rock of our salvation, His the name of which we boast.
Lamb of God, for sinners wounded, Sacrifice to cancel guilt—
None shall ever be confounded Who on him their hope have built.

THE HOURS OF DARKNESS - VITAL MEDICINE IN THESE DARK TIMES

The First Word - Luke 23:34

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

Meditation on this word of Christ

Jesus, in Your Dying Woes | 139:1

C: Jesus, in your dying woes, Even while your lifeblood flows,
   Craving pardon for your foes: Hear us, holy Jesus!

A Prayer

Silent prayer and meditation


“I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Meditation on this word of Christ

Jesus, in Your Dying Woes | 139:2

C: Jesus, pitying the sighs Of the thief who near you dies,
   Promising him paradise: Hear us, holy Jesus!

A Prayer

Silent prayer and meditation
The Third Word - John 19:26, 27

♦ “Dear Woman, here is your son, . . . Here is your mother.”
♦ Meditation on this word of Christ
♦ Jesus, in Your Dying Woes | 139:3
  C: Jesus, loving to the end Her whose heart your sorrows rend,
     And your dearest human friend: Hear us, holy Jesus!
♦ A Prayer
♦ Silent prayer and meditation

The Fourth Word - Matthew 27:46

♦ “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” - which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
♦ Meditation on this word of Christ
♦ Jesus, in Your Dying Woes | 139:4
  C: Jesus, plunged in depths unknown With our evil foe alone,
     While no light from heav’n is shown: Hear us, holy Jesus!
♦ A Prayer
♦ Silent prayer and meditation

The Fifth Word - John 19:28

♦ “I am thirsty.”
♦ Meditation on this word of Christ
♦ Jesus, in Your Dying Woes | 139:5
  C: Jesus, in your thirst and pain, While your wounds the lifeblood drain,
     Thus fulfilling Scripture’s plan: Hear us, holy Jesus!
♦ A Prayer
♦ Silent prayer and meditation

The Sixth Word - John 19:30

♦ “It is finished.”
♦ Meditation on this word of Christ
♦ Jesus, in Your Dying Woes | 139:6
  C: Jesus, all our ransom paid, All your Father’s will obeyed,
     By your suff’rings perfect made: Hear us, holy Jesus!
♦ A Prayer
♦ Silent prayer and meditation
The Seventh Word - Luke 23:46

♦ “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”
♦ Meditation on this word of Christ
♦ Jesus, in Your Dying Woes | 139:7
   C: Jesus, all your labor vast, All your woe and conflict past,
   Yielding up your soul at last: Hear us, holy Jesus.
♦ A Prayer
♦ Silent prayer and meditation

STAND

The End of THE PASSION HISTORY According to the Four Gospels - He Was Buried

❖ Spreading the Fair Linen

This linen cloth with five crosses, representing Jesus’ five wounds, symbolizes Jesus’ burial cloth. It is passed over the Baptismal Font reminding us that buried with Christ in baptism we passed over from death to life. Jesus passed through his burial linen, rising to life.

Since it was the Preparation Day, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses over the Sabbath (because that Sabbath was a particularly important day). They asked Pilate to have the men’s legs broken and the bodies taken away. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who was crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other man.

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear. Immediately blood and water came out. The one who saw it has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. Indeed, these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, “Not one of his bones will be broken.” Again another Scripture says, “They will look at the one they pierced.”

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. Joseph of Arimathaea, a prominent member of the council, was a good and righteous man. He had not agreed with their plan and action. He was looking forward to the kingdom of God. He boldly went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead. He summoned the centurion and asked him if Jesus had been dead for a long time. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he granted the body to Joseph. Joseph bought a linen cloth, came, and took Jesus’ body away. Nicodemus, who earlier had come to Jesus at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-two pounds.

They took Jesus’ body and bound it with linen strips along with the spices, in accord with Jewish burial customs.

There was a garden at the place where Jesus was crucified. And in the garden was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. So they laid Jesus there, because it was the Jewish Preparation Day, and the tomb was near. Joseph took the body and laid it in his own new tomb that he had cut in the rock. He rolled a large stone over the tomb’s entrance and left.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed after Joseph, and they observed the tomb and how Jesus’ body was laid there. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were watching where the body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

On the next day, which was the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered in the presence of Pilate and said, “Sir, we remembered what that deceiver said while he was still alive:
After three days I will rise again.’ So give a command that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise his disciples might steal his body and tell the people, ‘He is risen from the dead.’ And this last deception will be worse than the first.”

Pilate said to them, “You have a guard. Go, make it as secure as you know how.” So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and posting a guard.

❖ The Removal of the Last Candle - Symbolizing removal of Jesus’ body from the cross.

BE SEATED

HYMN

Rest, O Christ, From All Your Labor | cws 718:1-3

Rest, O Christ, from all your labor; Sleep within your borrowed tomb.
Foes have crucified and bound you Fast within death’s narrow room.
Pilate’s guards stand watching, waiting Where they rolled the sealing stone.
All unseen another watches: God will not forsake his own.

Peace at last from all your anguish, Wounds in hands and feet and side.
Enemies no longer mock you, Scourged, abandoned, crucified.
Faithful women gather spices, Weep for you whom sin has slain.
Though they mourn, the God who guards you Will not let your death be vain.

Help us keep this solemn Sabbath As we wait for Easter dawn.
Earth’s dark night of sin is passing; Death’s long reign will soon be gone.
Christ, in whom the new creation Rises brighter than the sun:
May we, as we watch for morning, Trust the vict’ry you have won.

THE STREPITUS - Symbol of the tomb being rent open

THE SEVENTH TENEBRAE CANDLE RETURNS - Its rays of hope call us to return on the Third Day.

Silent Prayer and Meditation
THE PASchal CANDLE

Not to be confused with a Christ Candle

Even in the hour when darkness reigned, it was light that ruled the day. For the powers of darkness could only have their way with Jesus because the Lord let them. Only then could Jesus be arrested, mistreated, falsely judged, sentenced to death and murdered. It was God’s way of entering the battle to crush the head of darkness with a decisive victory. The small Christ Candle (the 7th Tenebrae candle) stands on the altar to remind us that this sober service is not a hopeless death watch. It’s an occasion to solemnly watch and wait in anticipation of the Easter Acclamation.

The vivid imagery of this night continues tomorrow at the Easter Vigil when the small Christ Candle comes forth from the tomb as the large Paschal Candle. The Paschal Candle symbolizes our Lord and his glorious Easter triumph over the darkness of sin, death and the head of darkness, the devil. It is also reminiscent of the pillar of cloud and fire that led the Passover people of God to the promised land. The Paschal Lamb is our pillar that leads us forward on our pilgrimage to heaven, the pilgrimage that the Lenten readings focused on. The Paschal Candle is marked with a cross and five nails symbolic of the sweet sacrifice Jesus once and for all time offered for all our sin. It also bears the Δ and Ω, for Christ is the Beginning and the End, the eternal God. He reigns forever over all, even death.

The Paschal Candle further reminds us that the good news of Easter is central to the truth that Jesus is the Light of the World. This candle is lit throughout the Easter season and every time there is a Baptism or Christian Funeral. It is a visual connection between Baptism and Easter (Romans 6). The Paschal Candle remains in the sanctuary throughout the year to remind us of his light and our calling to be lights proclaiming his light to our neighbors and to the ends of the earth. Proclaiming the message is as simple as sharing the good news of Christ’s death and resurrection. Letting our light shine is telling the good news of the Easter accounts and living a life of joyful repentance in and by Christ’s resurrection power which is ours through Baptism. May the Paschal Candle help us focus on being Resurrection people following the Risen One all year long.