



Tenebrae

March 31, 2021 6:00pm

The name Tenebrae (Latin for “darkness” or “shadows”) has for centuries been applied to the ancient monastic night and early morning offices of the last three days of Holy Week, which in medieval times came to be celebrated on the preceding evenings. In order that the proper liturgies of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday may find their place as the principal services of those days, however, current liturgical practice has made provision for Tenebrae on Wednesday evening. By drawing upon material from each of the three offices, this service provides an extended meditation upon, and a prelude to, the suffering and death of our Lord. Apart from the chanting of the Lamentations (in which each verse is introduced by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet), the most conspicuous feature of the service is the gradual extinguishing of candles and other lights in the church, symbolizing the scattering of the disciples and other followers of Jesus during his Passion, until only a single candle, considered a symbol of our Lord, remains. Toward the end of the service this candle is hidden, portraying the apparent victory of the forces of evil, and the church is completely dark. At the very end, a loud noise is made, symbolizing the earthquake at the moment of Christ’s death on the cross (Matt. 27:51), the hidden candle is restored to its place, and by its light all depart in silence.

The ministers enter the church in silence and proceed to their places. The Office then begins immediately with the Antiphon on the first Psalm. The people remain seated.

Antiphon 1: Zeal for your house has eaten me up; the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

Psalm 69: 1-8, 22

Cantor, John Parkhurst

Save me, O God, for the waters have risen up to my neck. *

I am sinking in deep mire, and there is no firm ground for my feet.

I have come into deep waters, *

and the torrent washes over me.

I have grown weary with my crying; my throat is inflamed; *

my eyes have failed from looking for my God.

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? O God, you know my foolishness, *

and my faults are not hidden from you.

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.

Surely, for your sake I have suffered reproach, *

and shame has covered my face.

I have become a stranger to my own kindred, *

an alien to my mother's children.

They gave me gall to eat, *

And when I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink.

Antiphon 2: Let them draw back and be disgraced who take pleasure in my misfortune.

Psalm 70**Cantor, John Parkhurst**

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me; *

O Lord, make haste to help me.

Let those who seek my life be ashamed and altogether dismayed; *

let those who take pleasure in my misfortune draw back and be disgraced.

Let those who say to me "Aha!" and gloat over me turn back, *

because they are ashamed.

Let all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you; *

let those who love your salvation say for ever, "Great is the Lord!"

But as for me, I am poor and needy; *

come to me speedily, O God.

You are my helper and my deliverer; *

O Lord, do not tarry.

Antiphon 3: Arise, O God, maintain my cause.

Psalm 74:1-10**Cantor, John Parkhurst**

O God, why have you utterly cast us off? *

why is your wrath so hot against the sheep of your pasture?

Remember your congregation that you purchased long ago, *

the tribe you redeemed to be your inheritance, and Mount Zion where you dwell.

Turn your steps toward the endless ruins; *

the enemy has laid waste everything in your sanctuary.

Your adversaries roared in your holy place; *

they set up their banners as tokens of victory.

They were like men coming up with axes to a grove of trees; *

they broke down all your carved work with hatchets and hammers.

They set fire to your holy place; *

they defiled the dwelling-place of your Name and razed it to the ground.

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

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

There are no signs for us to see; there is no prophet left; *

there is not one among us who knows how long.

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

will the enemy blaspheme your Name for ever?
Why do you draw back your hand? *
why is your right hand hidden in your bosom?

The People stand. All remain standing for silent prayer.

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

Deacon: From the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

The People sit.

Lesson 1

Cantor, Cathy Daly

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!

The people remain seated.

Responsory 1

Deacon: 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.

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

Deacon: The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Lesson 2

Cantor, Cathy Daly

Wav. 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. Uncleaness 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!

The people remain seated.

Responsory 2

Deacon: 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.

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

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

Lesson 3

Cantor, Cathy Daly

Yodb. 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!

The people remain seated.

Responsory 3

Deacon: 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.

Officiant: Surely, he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Deacon: And by his scourging we are healed.

Antiphon 4: God did not spare his own Son; but delivered him up for us all.

Psalm 63:1-8

Cantor, Rebecca Carvalho

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.
Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, *
that I might behold your power and your glory.
For your loving-kindness is better than life itself; *
my lips shall give you praise.
So will I bless you as long as I live *
and lift up my hands in your Name.
My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness, *
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips.
When I remember you upon my bed, *
and meditate on you in the night watches.
For you have been my helper, *
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.
My soul clings to you; *
your right hand holds me fast.

Antiphon 5: He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and he opened not his mouth.

Psalm 90:1- 12

Cantor, Rebecca Carvalho

Lord, you have been our refuge *
from one generation to another.
Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born, *
from age to age you are God.
You turn us back to the dust and say, *
“Go back, O child of earth.”
For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past *
and like a watch in the night.

You sweep us away like a dream; *
we fade away suddenly like the grass.

In the morning it is green and flourishes; *
 in the evening it is dried up and withered.
For we consume away in your displeasure;
 we are afraid because of your wrathful indignation.
Our iniquities you have set before you, *
 and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
When you are angry, all our days are gone;
 we bring our years to an end like a sigh.
The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength even eighty;
 yet the sum of them is but labor and sorrow, for they pass away quickly and we
are gone.
Who regards the power of your wrath?
 who rightly fears your indignation?
So teach us to number our days
 that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

Antiphon 6: From the gates of hell, O Lord, deliver my soul.

The Song of Hezekiah, Isaiah 38:10-20

Cantor, Rob Lehman

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 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. My weary eyes look up to you; Lord, be my refuge in my affliction.” The grave does not thank you nor death give you praise; nor do those at the brink of the grave hang on your promises. 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.

Antiphon 7: O Death, I will be your death; O Grave, I will be your destruction.

Psalm 150**Cantor, Craig Engstrom**

Praise God in his holy temple; *
 praise him in the firmament of his power.
Praise him for his mighty acts; *
 praise him for his excellent greatness.
Praise him with the blast of the ram's-horn; *
 praise him with lyre and harp.

Praise him with timbrel and dance; *
 praise him with strings and pipe.
Praise him with resounding cymbals; *
 praise him with loud-clanging cymbals.
Let everything that has breath *
 praise the Lord.

The People stand. All remain standing for silent prayer.

Officiant: My flesh also shall rest in hope.

Deacon: You will not let your holy One see corruption.

The People sit.

Antiphon 8: Now the women sitting at the tomb made lamentations, weeping for the Lord.

The Song of Zechariah: Luke 1:68-79**Cantor, Jonathan Stark**

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.

During the repetition of this Antiphon, the remaining candle, representing Our Lord, is taken from the stand and hidden.

All kneel.

Officiant: 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

Officiant: Have mercy on me, O God, according to your loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

Deacon: Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.

Officiant and Deacon read, alternating whole verses.

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

Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. *
and so you are justified when you speak and upright in your judgment.

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

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

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

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

Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.
Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.
Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness, O God of my salvation.
Open my lips, O Lord, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.
The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.
Be favorable and gracious to Zion, *
and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
Then you will be pleased with the appointed sacrifices, with burnt-offerings and
oblations; *
then shall they offer young bullocks upon your altar.

Officiant: 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; after an extended silence there is a loud noise, and the Christ candle is
brought from its hiding place and replaced on the stand.*

By its light the ministers and people depart in silence.