

# Tenebrae

Wednesday of Holy Week  
Christ Episcopal Church

## **Welcome one and all**

*Our hope is that this service of psalms will be an extended meditation for you. We encourage you to read the psalms slowly together with the rest of the congregation, pausing ever so slightly at the asterisk. Some take a short breath. This creates a meditative rhythm. As always, the congregation's parts are bolded unless indicated otherwise.*

## **A description of the traditional service of Tenebrae:**

Tenebrae dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century, C.E. The service of *Tenebrae* (the Latin word for “darkness” or “shadows”) was 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 evenings.

Apart from the chant 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 until only a single candle, considered a symbol of our Lord, remains. Toward 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 all depart in silence.

In this book, provision is made for Tenebrae on Wednesday evening only, in order that the proper liturgies of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday may find their place as the principal services of those days. By drawing upon material from each of the former three offices of Tenebrae, this service provides an extended meditation upon, and a prelude to, the events in our Lord's life between the Last Supper and the Resurrection.

Excerpted from *The Book of Occasional Services of the Episcopal Church*



*After a brief introduction to the service, the altar party enters the church in silence and proceeds to their places. The Office begins with the Antiphon of the first Psalm.*

*It is customary to sit for the Psalmody.*

# Tenebrae

## Nocturn

### Antiphon

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

*All* **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 sackcloth 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.

*Antiphon together*

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

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

*Two candles are extinguished.*

## Antiphon 2

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

**Psalm 70** *in 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.**

*Antiphon together*

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

*Two candles are extinguished.*



## Antiphon 3

*Leader* Arise, O God, maintain my cause.

**Psalm 74** *said antiphonally, from side to side; beginning with those sitting in the pews on the left half of the church/lectern side who read the bolded verses. Those sitting on the right/pulpit side continue with the verses in italics.*

*Left*

- 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.**

*Right*

- 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.*

*Left*

- 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.**

*Right*

- 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.*

*Left*

- 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?**

*Right*

- 11 Yet you, O God are my Sovereign 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;*

*Left*

- 13 You crushed the heads of Leviathan \***  
    **and gave it to the people of the desert for food.**
- 14 You split open spring and torrent; \***  
    **you dried up ever-flowing rivers.**

*Right*

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.*

*Left*

**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.**

*Right*

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.*

*Left*

**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.**

*Antiphon together*

**Arise, O God, maintain my cause.**

*Two candles are extinguished*



V. Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked:  
**R. From the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.**

*All stand or take a reverent posture.*

*The appointed reader then goes to the lectern,  
at the reader's invitation, everyone else sits down.*

## **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!

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God!



## **Responsory 1** *In monte Oliveti*

On the mount of Olives Jesus prayed to God:

**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.

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

*Two candles are extinguished.*



## **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 anima 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 Chosen One is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

**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 nations 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 treasures for food to revive their strength. Look, O Lord, and see how worthless I have become.

*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, inflicted on the day of God's fierce anger.

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

*Nun.* My transgressions were bound into a yoke; by the Lord's hand they were fastened together; their yoke is upon my neck; sapping my strength. The Lord has handed me over to those I am not able to withstand.

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:  
**and by his scourging we are healed.**



## **Lauds**

**Antiphon** *leader*

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

**Psalm 63:1-8**      *responsively by whole verse*

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.

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

*Antiphon together*

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

*Two candles are extinguished.*



**The Song of Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:10-20)**      *responsively by half verse*

1 In my despair I said, "In the noonday of my life I must depart; \*  
**my unspent years are summoned to the portals of death."**

2 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.**

3 My house is pulled down and I am uncovered, \*  
**as when a shepherd strikes his tent.**

4 My life is rolled up like a bolt of cloth, \*  
**the threads cut off from the loom.**

5 Between sunrise and sunset my life is brought to an end; \*  
**I cower and hope for the dawn.**

- 6 Like a lion the Lord has crushed all my bones; \*  
like a swallow or thrush I utter plaintive cries;  
I mourn like a dove.
- 7 My weary eyes look up to you; \*  
Lord, be my refuge in my affliction."
- 8 Slow and halting are my steps all my days, \*  
because of the bitterness of my spirit.
- 9 O Lord, I recounted all these things to you and you rescued me; \*  
when entreated, you restored my life.
- 10 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.
- 11 The grave does not thank you nor death give you praise; \*  
nor do those at the brink of the grave hang on your promises.
- 12 It is the living, O Lord, \*  
the living who give you thanks as I do this day;
- 13 You, Lord, are my Savior; \*  
I will praise you with stringed instruments all the days of my life,  
in the house of the Lord.

*Two candles are extinguished.*



**Psalm 150** *in unison*

- 1 Praise God in the holy temple; \*  
Give praise in the firmament of God's power.
- 2 Praise God who is mighty indeed; \*  
Give praise for God's excellent greatness.
- 3 Praise God with the blast of the ram's-horn; \*  
Give praise with lyre and harp.
- 4 Praise God with timbrel and dance; \*  
Give praise with strings and pipe.

**5 Praise God with resounding cymbals; \*  
Give praise with loud-clanging cymbals.**

**6 Let everything that has breath \*  
praise the Lord.**



*All stand or take a reverent posture.*

**Antiphon** *leader*

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

**Canticle 16** *Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel* (Luke 1:68-79)  
*responsively by whole verse*

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; \*  
You have come to your people and set them free.

**You have raised up for us a mighty savior, \*  
born of the house of your servant David.**

Through your holy prophets you promised of old,  
that you would save us from our enemies, \*  
from the hands of all who hate us.

**You promised to show mercy to our forebearers \*  
and to remember your holy covenant.**

This was the oath you swore to our father Abraham, \*  
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,

**Free to worship you without fear, \*  
holy and righteous in your 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 the way,

**To give your 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.**

**Antiphon** *together*

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



*During the repetition of the Antiphon, the lights in the sanctuary are dimmed.*

*The Christ candle is removed and hidden from view.*

*We will observe a time of silent meditation together, kneeling or sitting.*

*The Lord's Prayer may be said silently.*

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

*After several minutes of silence, the officiant prays or chants quietly:*

**Psalm 51** (1-3; 7-18)

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

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

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

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

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

- 9 Make me hear of joy and gladness, \*  
that the body you have broken may rejoice.
- 10 Hide your face from my sins \*  
and blot out all my iniquities.
- 11 Create in me a clean heart, O God, \*  
and renew a right spirit within me.
- 12 Cast me not away from your presence \*  
and take not your holy Spirit from me.
- 13 Give me the joy of your saving help again \*  
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.
- 14 I shall teach your ways to the wicked, \*  
and sinners shall return to you.
- 15 Deliver me from death, O God, \*  
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness, O God of my salvation.
- 16 Open my lips, O Lord, \*  
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
- 17 Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice, \*  
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.
- 18 The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; \*  
a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

*After a period of silence, the Presider concludes:*

May Jesus Christ who for our sake became obedient unto death,  
even death on a cross, keep us and strengthen us this night and always. **Amen.**

*Nothing further is said; but a noise is made,  
and the Christ candle is restored.*

*By its light all depart in silence.*

## **Christ Episcopal Church**

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For information about the church and upcoming services,  
please visit our website

[www.ChristChurchKensington.org](http://www.ChristChurchKensington.org)