A Service of Tenebrae

Wednesday in Holy Week

St Paul’s Church in Englewood
an Episcopal Parish in the Diocese of Newark
and the Anglican Communion
Tenebrae

The service of Tenebrae, which means “shadows” or “darkness” in Latin, is taken from a special form of Evening Prayer used on the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of Holy Week. It is an extended meditation on the cross of Christ. Using scripture passages, music, and light, the story of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion is retold in dramatic fashion.

We experience a small portion of Christ’s pain and suffering as we observe the various services throughout Holy Week. During this service, candles are gradually extinguished and the lights dimmed until only a single candle, considered a symbol of Christ, remains. Toward the end of the service, the ‘Christ candle’ is hidden, illustrating the apparent victory of the forces of evil over good. At the very end, a loud noise is made, recalling the earthquake at the time of Jesus’ death (Matthew 27) and his resurrection (Matthew 28:2). The hidden candle is then restored to its place, symbolizing the triumph of Christ over death. By this single light, we all depart in silence.

During the service, the congregation is invited to sing the psalms with the Choir.

Please stand as the ministers enter.

First Nocturn

Psalm 69  Salvum me fac

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  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?
5  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 co / vered 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 fal / len upon me.

Please remain standing for silent prayer. A candle is then extinguished.

Leader Deliver me, O God, from the hand of the wicked:
People From the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

Please sit. The Choir then sings the Lesson

LESSON I Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet, 1:1-5

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!

Please stand

RESPONSORY I In monte Oliveti Giovanni Croce

Choir In monte Oliveti oravit ad Patrem:
   “Pater, si fieri potest, transeat a mecalix iste.
On Mount Olivet He prayed to the Father:
“Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me.
The spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak: Your will be done.”

Please sit. The Choir then sings the Lesson

Lesson II Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet, 1:6-9

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!

Please stand

Responsory II Tristis est anima mea

Leader My soul is very sorrowful, even to the point of death;
People 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.
Leader Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
People You will flee, and I will go to be offered up for you.

Please sit. The Choir then sings the Lesson
Lesson III  

Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet, 1:10-14

YODH. 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!

Please stand

Responsory III  

Ecce vidimus eum

Leader  

Lo, we have seen him without beauty or majesty,

People  

With no looks to attract our eyes. He bore our sins and grieved for us, he was wounded by our transgressions, and with his stripes we are healed.

Leader  

Sure he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrow:

People  

And with his stripes we are healed.
SECOND NOCTURN

PSALM 22  Deus, Deus meus

Tone II

1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? *
   and are so far from my cry
   and from the words of / my distress?

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but you do not answer; *
   by night as well, but I / find no rest.

3 Yet you are the Holy One, *
   enthroned upon the / praises of Israel.

4 Our forefathers put their trust in you; *
   they trusted, and you delivered them.

5 They cried out to you and were delivered; *
   they trusted in you and were not / put to shame.

6 But as for me, I am a worm and no man, *
   scorned by all and despised / by the people.

7 All who see me laugh me to scorn; *
   they curl their lips and wag their / heads, saying,

8 “He trusted in the Lord; let him deliver him; *
   let him rescue him, if he delights in him.”

Please remain standing for silent prayer. A candle is then extinguished.

Leader  They divide my garments among them:
People  They cast lots for my clothing.

Please sit as the appointed Reader goes to the Lectern

LESSON IV  A Reading from the Treatise of Saint Augustine on the Psalms
(Psalm 55: 1, 2, 10c)

Reader  “Hear my prayer, O God; do not hide yourself from my petition.
Listen to me and answer me. I mourn in my trial and am troubled.”
These are the words of one disquieted, in trouble and anxiety. He
prays under much suffering, desiring to be delivered from evil. Let
us now see under what evil he lies; and when he begins to speak, let...
us place ourselves beside him, that, by sharing his tribulation, we may also join in his “I mourn in my trial,” he says, “and am troubled.” When does he mourn? When is he troubled? He says, “In my trial.” He has in mind the wicked who cause him suffering, and he calls this suffering his “trial.” Do not think that the evil are in the world for no purpose, and that God makes no good use of them. Every wicked person lives either that he may be corrected, or that through him the righteous may be tried and tested.

*Please stand*

**Responsorium IV**  *Tamquam ad latronem*

**Leader** Have you come out as against a robber,

**People** With swords and clubs to capture me?

Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me; but now, behold, you scourge me, and lead me away to be crucified.

**Leader** When they had laid hands on Jesus and were holding him, he said:

**People** Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me; but now, behold, you scourge me, and lead me away to be crucified.

*Please sit*

**Lesson V** A Reading from the Treatise of Saint Augustine on the Psalms, continued

**Reader** Would that those who now test us were converted and tried with us; yet though they continue to try us, let us not hate them, for we do not know whether any of them will persist to the end in their evil ways. And most of the time, when you think you are hating your enemy, you are hating your brother without knowing it. Only the devil and his angels are shown to us in the Holy Scriptures as doomed to eternal fire. It is only their amendment that is hopeless, and against them we wage a hidden battle. For this battle the Apostle arms us, saying, “We are not contending against flesh and blood,” that is, not against human beings whom we see, “but against the principalities, against the powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.” So that you may not think that demons are the rulers of heaven and earth, he says, “of the darkness of this world.” He says, “of the world,” meaning the
lovers of the world—of the “world,” meaning the ungodly and wicked—the “world” of which the Gospel says, “And the world knew him not.”

Please stand

Responsory V  Tenebrae factae sunt  Mode VII

Choir  Tenebrae factae sunt dum crucifixissent Jesum ei:
Et circa horam nonam exclamavit Jesum voce magna:
Deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti?
Et inclinato capite emitit spiritum.
Exclamans Jesus voce magna, ait:
Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum.

Darkness was everywhere when they crucified Jesus:
And about the ninth hour Jesus exclaimed with a loud voice:
“My God, why have you abandoned me?”
And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
Crying out with a loud voice, Jesus said:
“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

Please sit

Lesson VI  A Reading from the Treatise of Saint Augustine on the Psalms, continued

Reader  “For I have seen unrighteousness and strife in the city.” See the glory of the cross itself. On the brow of kings that cross is now placed, the cross which enemies once mocked. Its power is shown in the result. He has conquered the world, not by steel, but by wood. The wood of the cross seemed a fitting object of scorn to his enemies, and standing before that wood they wagged their heads, saying, “If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” He stretched out his hands to an unbelieving and rebellious people. If one is just who lives by faith, one who does not have faith is unrighteous. Therefore when he says “unrighteousness,” understand that it is unbelief. The Lord then saw unrighteousness and strife in the city, and stretched out his hands to an unbelieving and rebellious people. And yet, looking upon them, he said,
“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

Please stand

RESPONSORY VI  Ecce quomodo moritur

Leader    See how the righteous one perishes,
People    And no one takes it to heart. The righteous are taken away, and no one understands. From the face of evil the righteous one is taken away, and his memory shall be in peace.
Leader    Like a sheep before its shearers is mute, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away,
People    And his memory shall be in peace.

THIRD NOCTURN

Psalm 54 Deus, in nomine

Tone II

1  Save me, O God, by your Name; *
   in your might, defend my cause.

2  Hear my prayer, O God; *
   give ear to the words of my mouth.

3  For the arrogant have risen up against me,
   and the ruthless have sought my life; *
   those who have no regard for God.

4  Behold, God is my helper; *
   it is the Lord who sustains my life.

5  Render evil to those who spy on me; *
   in your faithful ness, destroy them.

6  I will offer you a freewill sacrifice *
   and praise your Name, O Lord, for it is good.

Please remain standing for silent prayer. A candle is then extinguished.

Leader    He has made me dwell in darkness:
People    Like the dead of long ago.

Please sit as the appointed Reader goes to the Lectern
Lesson VII

Reader  We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people.

Please stand

Responsory VII  Eram quasi agnus

Leader  I was like a trusting lamb led to the slaughter.

People  I did not know it was against me that they devised schemes, saying, Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living.

Leader  All my enemies whispered together against me, and devised evil against me, saying:

People  Let us destroy the tree with its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living.

Please sit

Lesson VIII  A reading from Hebrews, continued

Reader  And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. So also, Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, this day have I begotten you;” as he says also in another place, “You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.” In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.
Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and, being made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Please stand

RESPONSORY VIII Velum templi

Leader The veil of the temple was torn in two,
People And the earth shook, and the thief from the cross cried out, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.
Leader The rocks were split, the tombs were opened, and may bodies of the saints who slept were raised;
People And the earth shook, and the thief from the cross cried out, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Please sit

LESSON IX A reading from Hebrews, continued

Reader But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that are to come, then, through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.

Please stand

RESPONSORY IX Sepulto Domino

Leader When the Lord was buried, they sealed the tomb,
People Rolling a great stone to the door of the tomb; and they stationed soldiers to guard him.
Leader The chief priests gathered before Pilate, and petitioned him,
People And they stationed soldiers to guard him.

Lauds

Psalm 63 Deus, in nomine

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.

Please remain standing for silent prayer. A candle is then extinguished.

Psalm 143 Domine, exaudi

1 Lord, hear my prayer,
   and in your faithfulness heed my supplications; *
   answer me / in your righteousness.
2 Enter not into judgment with your servant, *
   for in your sight shall no one living be justified.
3 For my enemy has sought my life;
   he has crushed me to the ground; *
he has made me live in dark places like / those who are long dead.

4 My spirit faints within me; *
   my heart within / me is desolate.

5 I remember the time past;
   I muse upon all your deeds; *
   I consider the / works of your hands.

6 I spread out my hands to you; *
   my soul gasps to you / like a thirsty land.

Please remain standing for silent prayer. A candle is then extinguished.

Psalm 150  Laudate Dominum  Tone VIII

1 Praise God in his holy temple; *
   praise him in the firma / ment of his power.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts; *
   praise him for his excellent greatness.

3 Praise him with the blast of the ram’s-horn; *
   praise / him with lyre and harp.

4 Praise him with timbrel and dance; *
   praise / him with strings and pipe.

5 Praise him with resounding cymbals; *
   praise him with loud- / clanging cymbals.

6 Let everything that has breath *
   - / - praise the Lord.

Please remain standing for silent prayer. A candle is then extinguished.

Leader  My flesh shall also rest in hope:

People  For you will not let your holy One see corruption.

Please kneel or sit. During the singing of the Benedictus, all other lights in the church—except for the ‘Christ candle’—are extinguished
**ALL**  Blessed be the Lord, the God of / Israel; *
   he has come to his peo / ple and set them free.
2  He has raised up for us a mighty savior, *
   born of the house of his / servant David.
3  Through his holy prophets he promised of old,
   that he would save us from our enemies, *
   from the hands of / those who hate us.
4  He promised to show mercy to our fathers *
   and to remember his / holy covenant.
5  This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, *
   to set us free from the hands / of our enemies,
6  Free to worship him without fear, *
   holy and righteous in his sight all the / days of our life.
7  You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, *
   for you will go before the Lord / to prepare his way,
8  To give his people knowledge of salvation *
   by the for / giveness of their sins.
9  In the tender compassion of our God *
   the dawn from on high shall / break upon us,
10  To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death* 
   and to guide our feet in / to the way of peace.
   Glory to the Father and to the Son, *
   and to the / Holy Spirit:
   As it was in the beginning, is now, *
   and will be for / ever. Amen.

*After the Benedictus, please continue to kneel or sit. The ‘Christ candle’ is taken from the stand and hidden behind the Altar.*
Christus factus est

Tonus Peregrinus

ALL Christ 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. Psalm 51 is then spoken quietly by all.

Psalm 51 Miserere mei, Deus

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.
4 Against you only have I sinned *
   and done what is evil in your sight.
5 And so you are justified when you speak *
   and upright in your judgment
6 Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
   a sinner from my mother’s womb.
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,
      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.
19 Be favorable and gracious to Zion, *
    and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.
20 They you will be pleased with the appointed sacrifices,
    with burnt-offerings and oblations;*
    then shall they offer young bullocks upon your altar.

The Officiant then says this collect without chant, and without the usual conclusion

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; but a loud noise is made, 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.

Cover art: The Man of Sorrow, Albrecht Dürer

St Paul’s Church in Englewood
in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark