

# TENEBRAE



## Introduction to Tenebrae

From the Latin word for “darkness,” Tenebrae is the term given to the liturgical office of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday as they were observed prior to the reform of Holy Week by Pope Pius XII in 1955. Dominicans have continued to pray Tenebrae each year as a particular tradition of the Order.

The practice of Tenebrae has roots as early as the 7<sup>th</sup> century, when those celebrating the Office would do so in almost complete darkness; the only light coming from a large candelabra called a hearse.

In the contemporary rite, the Office contains five psalms and one canticle. After each psalm or canticle, a set of candles is extinguished, representing the fleeing of the Apostles, until there is only one left, the so-called Christ candle.

The psalms are separated by three lessons taken from the Book of Lamentations, a collection of poems which grieve the Babylonian destruction in 587 B.C. of the temple in Jerusalem, and the ruin of the people of Israel. By describing the horrible situation which they now endure, the poems exhort the Israelites to mourn for having turned away from God to worship foreign, pagan gods. The great “Prayer of Jeremiah,” which ends Tenebrae on Saturday, is a plea to God to relent in punishment and rescue the people, despite what they have done.

Today we can make these psalms and lamentations our own. As we pray them, we can seek pardon for our sins, as well as the sins of the whole world. We can reflect on any of the ways in which we as human beings have turned away from being “the image and likeness of God.”

**Holy Saturday**  
**Office of Readings**

**Hymn**

Sing my tongue, the glorious battle,  
Sing the last, the dread affray;  
O'er the Cross, the Victor's trophy,  
Sound the high triumphal lay,  
How, the pains of death enduring,  
Earth's Redeemer won the day.

When at length the appointed fullness,  
Of the sacred time was come,  
He was sent, the world's Creator,  
From the Father's heavenly home,  
And was found in human fashion,  
Offspring of the Virgin's womb.

Now the thirty years are ended  
Which on earth he willed to see,  
Willingly he meets his Passion,  
Born to set his people free,  
On the Cross the Lamb is lifted,  
There the Sacrifice to be.

There the nails and spear he suffers,  
Vinegar and gall and reed;  
From his sacred body pierced  
Blood and water both proceed:  
Precious fold, which all creation  
From the stain of sin hath freed.

Faithful Cross, above all other,  
One and only noble Tree,  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None is fruit thy peer may be;  
Sweet the wood, and sweet the iron,  
And thy load, most sweet is he.

Bend, O lofty Tree, thy branches,  
Thy too rigid sinews bend;  
And awhile the stubborn hardness,  
Which thy birth bestowed, suspend;  
And the limbs of heav'n's high Monarch  
Gently on thine arms extend.

Thou alone was counted worthy  
This world's Ransom to sustain,  
That a shipwrecked race for ever  
Might a port of refuge gain,  
With the sacred Blood anointed  
Of the Lamb for sinners slain.

87.87.87



Ant. 1 **In** peace,  
I will lie down and sleep.

Psalm 4

I

When I call, answer me, O God of justice;  
from anguish you released me, have mercy and hear me!

O men, how long will your hearts be closed,  
will you love what is futile and seek what is false?

It is the Lord who grants favors to those whom he loves;  
the Lord hears me whenever I call him.

Fear him; do not sin: ponder on your bed  
and be still  
make justice your sacrifice, and trust in the Lord.

“What can bring us happiness?” many say.  
Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord.

You have put into my heart a greater joy  
than they have from abundance of corn and new  
wine.

I will lie down in peace and sleep comes at once  
for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.

[No “Glory to the Father ...”]

Ant. 2 **My** body  
shall rest in hope.

Psalm 16

II

Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you./  
I say to the Lord: “You are my God.  
My happiness lies in you alone.”

He has put into my heart a marvelous love  
for the faithful ones who dwell in his land.

Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows./  
Never will I offer their offerings of blood.  
Never will I take their name upon my lips.

O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;  
it is you yourself who are my prize.

The lot marked out for me is my delight:  
welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!

I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel,  
who even at night directs my heart.

I keep the Lord ever in my sight:  
since he is at my right hand, I shall stand firm.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;  
even my body shall rest in safety.

For you will not leave my soul among the dead,  
or let your beloved know decay.

You will show me the path of life,/   
the fullness of joy in your presence,  
at your right hand happiness for ever.

[No "Glory to the Father ..."]

Ant. 3 Lift high the ancient portals.  
The King of glory enters.

Psalm 24  
III

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,  
the world and all its peoples.

It is he who set it on the seas;  
on the waters he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?  
Who shall stand in his holy place?

The man with clean hands and pure heart/  
who desires not worthless things,  
who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbor.

He shall receive blessings from the Lord  
and rewards from the God who saves him.

Such are the men who seek him,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

O gates lift your heads;/  
grow higher, ancient doors.  
Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is the king of glory?/  
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant,  
the Lord, the valiant in war.

O gates, lift your heads;/  
grow higher, ancient doors.  
Let him enter, the king of glory!

Who is he, the king of glory?/  
He, the Lord of armies,  
he is the king of glory.

[No "Glory to the Father ..."]

V: Take up my cause and rescue me.  
R: Be true to your word, and give me life.

### Lesson I Lamentations 4:1-4

From the lamentation of the Prophet Jeremiah  
Aleph. How the gold has grown dim,  
how the pure gold is changed!  
The holy stones lie scattered  
at the head of every street.

Beth. The precious sons of Zion,  
worth their weight in fine gold,  
how they are reckoned as earthen pots,  
the work of a potter's hands!

Ghimel. Even the jackals give the breast  
and suckle their young,  
but the daughter of my people has become cruel,  
like the ostriches in the wilderness.

Daleth. The tongue of the nursling cleaves  
to the roof of its mouth for thirst;  
the children beg for food,  
but no one gives to them.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God.

### Responsory



When the Lord had been buried, the tomb was sealed.  
They rolled a stone to the door of the tomb/  
and they placed soldiers on guard.

Lest his disciples go and steal him away and  
tell the people,/   
"He has risen from the dead."  
And they placed soldiers on guard.

## Lesson II Lamentations 4:5-8

Heh. Those who feasted on dainties  
perish in the streets;  
those who were brought up in purple  
lie an ash heaps.

Vau. For the chastisement of the daughter of my  
people has been greater  
than the punishment of Sodom,  
which was overthrown in a moment,  
no hand being laid on it.

Zain. Her princes were purer than snow,  
whiter than milk;  
their bodies were more ruddy than coral,  
the beauty of their form was like sapphire.

Heth. Now their visage is blacker than soot,  
they are not recognized in the streets;  
their skin has shriveled upon their bones,  
it has become as dry as wood.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God.

### Responsory



Jerusalem, mourn,/   
rise up and take off your festal garb;  
put on sackcloth and ashes,/   
for in you the Savior of Israel was put to death.

Let tears stream down like a torrent day and night;/   
give your eyes no rest.   
For in you the Savior of Israel was put to death.

## Lesson III Lamentations 4:9-12

Teth. Happier were the victims of the sword  
than the victims of hunger,  
who pined away, stricken  
by want of the fruits of the fields.

Yodh. The hands of compassionate women  
have boiled their own children;  
they became their food  
in the destruction of the daughter of my  
people.

Kaph. The Lord gave full vent to his wrath,  
he poured out his hot anger;  
and he kindled a fire in Zion,  
which consumed its foundations.

Lamed. The kings of the earth did not believe,  
or any of the inhabitants of the world,  
that foe or enemy could enter  
the gates of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God.

### Responsory



My people, lament like a virgin,/   
shepherds, wail in sackcloth and a-shes.   
For the great and very bitter day   
of the Lord shall come.

Wail, you shepherds, and cry,/   
roll in the a-shes.   
For the great and very bitter day   
of the Lord shall come.

My people, lament like a virgin,/   
shepherds, wail in sackcloth and a-shes.   
For the great and very bitter day   
of the Lord shall come.

## The Prayer of Jeremiah *Lamentations 5*

The Prayer of the Prophet Jeremiah.  
Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us;  
    behold, and see our disgrace!  
Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,  
    our homes to aliens.  
We have become orphans, fatherless;  
    our mothers are like widows.  
We must pay for the water we drink,  
    the wood we get must be bought.  
With a yoke on our necks we are hard driven;  
    we are weary, we are given no rest.  
We have given the hand to Egypt,  
    and to Assyria, to get bread enough.  
Our fathers sinned, and are no more;  
    and we bear their iniquities.  
Slaves rule over us;  
    there is none to deliver us from their hand.  
We get our bread at the peril of our lives,  
    because of the sword in the wilderness.  
Our skin is hot as an oven  
    with the burning heat of famine.  
Women are ravished in Zion,  
    virgins in the towns of Judah.  
Princes are hung up by their hands;  
    no respect is shown to the elders.  
Young men are compelled to grind at the mill;  
    and boys stagger under loads of wood.  
The old men have quit the city gate,  
    the young men their music.  
The joy of our hearts has ceased;  
    our dancing has been turned to mourning.  
The crown has fallen from our head;  
    woe to us, for we have sinned!  
For this our heart has become sick,  
    for these things our eyes have grown dim,  
for Mount Zion which lies desolate;  
    jackals prowl over it.  
But thou, O Lord, dost reign forever;  
    thy throne endures to all generations.  
Why dost thou forget us for ever,  
    why dost thou so long forsake us?  
Restore us to thyself. O Lord, that we may be restored  
    Renew our days of old!  
Or hast thou utterly rejected us?  
    Art thou exceedingly angry with us?

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, return to the Lord your God.

## Responsory



Christ the Lamb of God, was sacrificed  
for the salvation of the world.

For his Maker,/   
with compassion when the first-made Adam fell,  
when he ate the fruit of sorrow whose reward  
    was death and hell,/   
noted then this tree, the ruin brought by  
    the first tree to dispel.

Thirty years of offering finished, his appointed  
    time fulfilled,  
born for this he greets his passion, this  
    indeed is freely willed.

Raised aloft for immolation, on the cross the  
    Lamb is killed.  
The ruin brought by the first tree to dispel.

Christ the Lamb of God, was sacrificed  
for the salvation of the world.

For his Maker,/   
with compassion when the first-made Adam fell,  
when he ate the fruit of sorrow whose reward  
    was death and hell,/   
noted then this tree, the ruin brought by  
    the first tree to dispel.

## Morning Prayer

*Morning Prayer begins immediately after the last  
responsory with the first psalm.*



Ant. 1 Though sinless, the Lord has been put to death.  
The world is in mourning as for an only son.

## Psalm 64

Hear my voice, O God, as I complain,  
guard my life from dread of the foe.

Hide me from the band of the wicked,  
from the throng of those who do evil.

They sharpen their tongues like swords;  
they aim bitter words like arrows

to shoot at the innocent from ambush,  
shooting suddenly and recklessly.

They scheme their evil course;  
they conspire to lay secret snares.

They say: "Who will see us?  
Who can search out our crimes?"

He will search who searches the mind  
and knows the depths of the heart.

God has shot them with his arrow  
and dealt them sudden wounds.

Their own tongue has brought them to ruin  
and all who see them mock.

Then will all men fear;/  
they will tell what God has done.  
They will understand God's deeds.

The just will rejoice in the Lord/  
and fly to him for refuge.  
All the upright hearts will glory.

[No "Glory to the Father ..."]



Ant. 2 From the jaws of hell,  
O Lord, rescue my soul.

Isaiah 38:10-14, 17-20

Once I said,  
"In the noontime of life I must depart!

To the gates of the nether world  
shall I be consigned  
for the rest of my years."

I said, "I shall see the Lord no more  
in the land of the living.

No longer shall I behold my fellow men  
among those who dwell in the world."

My dwelling, like a shepherd's tent,  
is struck down and borne away from me;

you have folded up my life, like a weaver  
who serves the last thread.

Day and night you give me over to torment;  
I cry out until the dawn.

Like a lion he breaks all my bones;  
day and night you give me over to torment.

Like a swallow I utter shrill cries;  
I moan like a dove.

My eyes grow weak, gazing heavenward:  
O Lord, I am in straits; be my surety!

You have preserved my life  
from the pit of destruction,

when you cast behind your back  
all my sins.

For it is not the nether world that gives you thanks,  
nor death that praises you;

neither do those who go down into the pit  
await your kindness.

The living, the living give you thanks,  
as I do today.

Fathers declare to their sons,  
O God, your faithfulness.

The Lord is our savior;  
we shall sing to stringed instruments

in the house of the Lord  
all the days of our life.

[No "Glory to the Father .."]



**Ant. 3** I was dead but now I live for ever,  
and I hold the keys of death and hell. (C & D)

### Psalm 150

Praise God is his holy place.  
praise him in his mighty heavens.  
Praise him for his powerful deeds,  
praise his surpassing greatness.

O praise him with sound of trumpet,  
praise him with lute and harp.  
Praise him with timbrel and dance,  
praise him with strings and pipes.

O praise him with resounding cymbals,  
praise him with clashing of cymbals.  
Let everything that lives and that breathes  
give praise to the Lord.

[No "Glory to the Father .."]

*There is no reading. All stand for the Benedictus.*

### Benedictus



**Ant.** Save us, O Savior of the world. On the cross  
you redeemed us by the shedding of your blood;  
We cry out for your help, O God.

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.

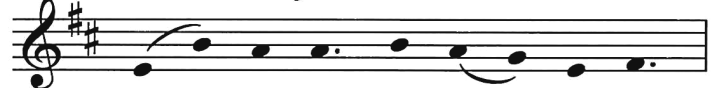
In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,

to shine on those who dwell in darkness  
and the shadow of death,  
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

[No "Glory to the Father ..."]

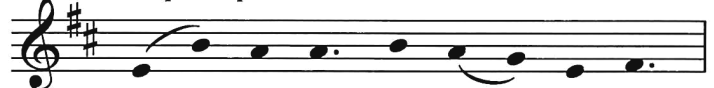
*After the Benedictus,*

*Two cantors in front:*



Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

*People respond:*



Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

*Front:*



Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

*All:*

Have mer - cy, Lord.\_\_\_\_\_

*People:*

Chri - ste e - le - i - son.

*People:*

Christ the Lord be came o - be di ent un to death.\_

*All:*

Have mer - cy, Lord.\_\_\_\_\_

*Front:*

You who came to su - fer for\_ us.\_

*People:*

Christ the Lord be came o - be di ent un to death.\_

*People:*

Chri - ste e - le - i - son.

*Front:*

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

*Front:*

You who with arms out stretched u pon the cross,

*People:*

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

have\_ drawn all\_ things to your - self.\_

*Front:*

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

*People:*

Chri - ste e - le - i - son.

*All:*

Have mer - cy, Lord.\_\_\_\_\_

*Front:*

You who said in pro - phe - cy:

*People:*

Christ the Lord be came o - be di ent un to death.\_

"O\_ death, I will\_ be\_ your\_ death."

*Front (Loudly):*

Ev - en death on a cross.



*At this point, all immediately kneel and pray silently for a short while. The Our Father is then recited out loud.*

### **Prayer**

Look kindly, we beg you, Lord, upon this your household, for which our Lord Jesus Christ did not hesitate to deliver himself into the hands of sinners and to endure the torment of the Cross.

*All depart in silence.*

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St. Dominic's Church, Benicia, CA. 2021

