

Choral Tenebrae Service

Stemming from Latin, the word "Tenebrae" means darkness. So, Tenebrae is the perfect description of this Good Friday service which centers around the increasing darkness of the church as the candles on the candelabra are extinguished one at a time. The darkness not only provides an atmosphere of reflection on Christ's death, but also symbolizes the darkness that Jesus experienced as he hung on the cross.

The synoptic gospels record that darkness covered the land during Jesus' crucifixion (Mark 15:33, Matthew 27:45, and Luke 23:44). Some speculate the darkening sun was due to a solar eclipse, but scripture says that it was a supernatural sign of God's judgment on human sin as Jesus willingly took on himself the sins of the world. As Isaiah proclaimed, the Messiah "was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). When the candles are extinguished we are reminded of the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God.

However, one candle remains... it is the Christ Candle which stays lit in the darkness. Satan may have thought he had won, but the burning light of the Christ Candle reminds us that through Christ we have already won the victory. The powers of darkness may have boasted over Jesus' death, but Jesus had the final word. As the light of the world, the darkness could not overcome him (John 1:5). The image of the unextinguished Christ Candle as the Tenebrae service draws to a close points to the purpose of Jesus' mission which is our hope in the resurrection to come. Life seemed dark to the disciples on Friday, but the light of resurrection Sunday glows even brighter. Or, as Tony Campolo is heralded as saying, "It's Friday, but Sunday's a comin'!"



At the end of the Tenebrae service in some churches a loud crashing sound is heard, called the "strepitus". This audible shock is suggestive of the events that took place following Christ's death which included the tearing of the temple curtain, an earthquake, bodies rising from the grave, and the stone closing shut on Jesus' tomb. However, at the Chapel our Good Friday Tenebrae service will follow our longstanding tradition of the ritual called "The Stripping of the Church". To symbolize the despair of Jesus' death, all liturgical items will be stripped from the sanctuary and removed to further emphasize the hopelessness of the disciples and of a world now left without a Savior. All that will remain is the single light of Christ which then goes out of the sanctuary...out into the world but never extinguished...ready to return in celebration on Easter Sunday morning.

Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians observe Tenebrae services so our Chapel that welcomes everyone is the perfect venue for this holy event, and I encourage all of you to invite your family, friends, and neighbors to this spiritually earth shattering remembrance. A Tenebrae service may utilize the spoken word alone but this year our Director of Music, Kristen Thompson has chosen to enhance the spoken word with a choral production that will increase the drama and meaning of this service for each of us. We thank Kristen and the members of the choir for their hours of preparation and let us support their efforts by filling the sanctuary to overflowing.

It is almost impossible to truly appreciate the celebration of Resurrection Sunday unless you have journeyed through the depth of darkness of Good Friday. This year we have the perfect opportunity to do both. I do hope to see you all there...Noon on Good Friday and 9:00 on Easter Sunday.

Peace,
Pastor Paul

Lenten Cantata

12:00 noon

Good Friday Tenebrae Service

