

TENEBRAE

WELCOME

TENEBRAE' means 'Darkness'.

It refers to a service of meditation on the events surrounding the Last Supper, the betrayal and the death of Jesus Christ, where candles are gradually extinguished.

The candles symbolise Jesus' journey of betrayal, disappointment, isolation, and finally the darkness of the crucifixion. But the ninth candle, which symbolises Jesus, remains lit throughout the service because the light of Jesus can never be put out.

After the readings, the ninth candle is taken outside the worship space still lit, all the lights in the church are then turned out so that we are in total darkness and total silence. After a moment, the minister will claps twice, the ancient sign for the dawning of Easter, and the candle is brought back and placed on the communion table.

A few lights would be turned on to indicate the Resurrection to come, and everyone then leaves in silence. The church is shut up and the doors closed tightly like the tomb.

The Tenebrae is a deeply symbolic service with layers of meaning.

Thank you to all our readers tonight.

INTRODUCTION

We gather tonight to recall the story of the night Jesus was betrayed. We will reflect upon our own faithfulness to God's love and grace. This will challenge us – we need to be open to this challenge.

We gather at the table where bread was broken and wine was poured. We will listen to the laughter and

fellowship of that table, the whispered questions, the proud declarations of faithfulness hiding the reality of betrayal. This will challenge us – we need to be open to this challenge.

We gather in the garden to pray, our hearts willing ourselves to stay awake but with the guilty realisation that we simply are not strong enough to keep the vigil. This will challenge us – we need to be open to this challenge.

We gather at the courtyard fire as the heartbreaking betrayal unfolds before us, and we recollect our own betrayals unfolding in our own lives. What are we learning through these challenges?

And we gather as a Roman soldier making a declaration of belief, but perhaps too late. We remember in sadness the times, as Jesus followers ourselves, when we have felt unable to make this declaration publicly, or perhaps too late.

Followers of Jesus, allow yourselves to be stirred by the Spirit; allow your hearts to be moved by the words; open yourselves to the challenge of our sacred story. What is it teaching us tonight?

SING: THE HEAVENS SHALL DECLARE BY GEOFF BULLOCK, TIS746

PRAYER

Let's pray:
Let the darkness of night surround us,
Let the light and warmth gather us
And let God's people say Amen
Amen

Let the tools be stored away,
Let the work be over and done

And let God's people say Amen
Amen

Let the winds blow wild around us,
But let hearts be glad and minds be calm
And let God's people say Amen
Amen
(Iona Abbey Worship Book)

Extinguish candle

Silence

MEDITATIONS WITH JULIAN OF NORWICH

I saw that God was everything that is good and encouraging.
God is our clothing
That wraps, clasp and encloses us
So as never to leave us.

God showed me in my palm
A little thing round as a ball
About the size of a hazelnut.

I looked at it with the eye of my understanding
And asked myself:
'What is this thing?'
And I was answered: 'It is everything that is created.'

I wondered how it could survive since it seemed so little
it could suddenly disintegrate into nothing.

The answer came: 'It endures and ever will endure,
Because God loves it.'

And so everything has being because of God's love.

Extinguish candle

Silence

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

(From Eggs and Ashes, Iona)
They gathered in an upper room to share a meal.
And the names of the apostles were these:
Simon, called Peter,

His brother Andrew;
James
And his brother John – the sons of Zebedee;
Philip
And Bartholomew;
Thomas
And Matthew the tax collector;
James the son of Alphaeus,
Thaddaeus;
Simon the patriot;
And Judas Iscariot.

Seeing that we are surrounded with such a great cloud of witnesses to faith – those who ran their races before us and have entered into their rests – we join with them now to praise your name.

For the apostles,
And for all those who have kept the light of the gospel burning down the centuries,
We give thanks.

For those who went before us and passed the light on to us,
Especially those whom we remember now,
We give thanks.

Extinguish candle

Silence

LUKE 22:14-27

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. ¹⁵He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' ¹⁷Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; ¹⁸for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' ¹⁹Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' ²⁰And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. ²¹But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. ²²For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is

betrayed!’²³Then they began to ask one another which one of them it could be who would do this. 24 A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest.²⁵But he said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors.²⁶But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves.²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

Extinguish candle

Silence

LUKE 22:39-46

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him.⁴⁰When he reached the place, he said to them, ‘Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.’⁴¹Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed,⁴²‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.’ [[⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength.⁴⁴In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]]⁴⁵When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief,⁴⁶and he said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.’

Extinguish candle

Silence

A PRAYER BY DAVID COLEMAN

God of dirty hands and tired feet,
Taking people as they come,
Kneeling and healing,
Touching where others turn away,
Forgive us when we want to be too clean.
Forgive us when we despise life
For the messy business that it is.

If we are too proud
To own up to our brokenness,

If we keep hidden
What needs refreshment,
How can you care for us?

You can care – and this is how:

Extinguish candle

Silence

THE HUMBLE HEART BY THE IONA COMMUNITY

In John 13, we read of Jesus, in humility, washing the feet of his disciples. It was a sign to his followers of a particular inner quality that was required of them if they were later to carry with integrity the Good News of the Gospel to others. When we think today of the way the nations are relating to each other, we do not think of humility. Yet there is this ‘other way’ in human relationships and Jesus illustrates that for us and for all time. Humility is not lack of conviction. It is that dimension of the heart which allows us to accept and understand something of the other person without always imposing our own agenda.

God of every race and tongue,
May the peoples of our world learn again
To be humble enough to listen to one another
Instead of rushing to easy judgements.
To be humble enough to admit error.
To have the gift of humility
Which enables the other to flourish as well as
others.
Amen

Extinguish candle

Silence

HERE’S A MAN BY KATHY GALLOWAY

Here’s a man
Born to a mother who broke rules and said ‘yes’,
Parented by a man who was not his father,
Knowing his ancient lineage
Yet calling people to be born again into a new
community.

Here's a man
Tramping the dusty roads of his country,
Drawing inspiration from the land,
Loving its fruitfulness,
Sailing its waters,
Stilling its storms.

Here's a man,
Throwing up a steady job to follow his calling,
Keeping bad company, often sleeping rough,
Touching people who were considered untouchable,
Raising up those who were overlooked.

Here's a man,
Refusing to be less than free,
Refusing to be less than utterly committed,
Refusing to bow down and serve the empires of the world;
In tenderness, justice and joy,
In forgiving and healing,
He lived the promise of a new relationship with God.

He was called by many names.
He called himself 'the Son of Man'.

Extinguish candle

Silence

SING: O THE LOVE OF MY LORD IS THE ESSENCE

MARK 15:15-25 AND 33-38

Pilate gave the crowd what it wanted, set Barabbas free and turned Jesus over for whipping and crucifixion.

¹⁶⁻²⁰ The soldiers took Jesus into the palace (called Praetorium) and called together the entire brigade. They dressed him up in purple and put a crown plaited from a thornbush on his head. Then they began their mockery: "Bravo, King of the Jews!" They banged on his head with a club, spit on him, and knelt down in mock worship. After they had had their fun, they took off the purple cape and put his own clothes back on him. Then they marched out to nail him to the cross.

²¹ There was a man walking by, coming from work, Simon from Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. They made him carry Jesus' cross.

²²⁻²⁴ The soldiers brought Jesus to Golgotha, meaning "Skull Hill." They offered him a mild painkiller (wine mixed with myrrh), but he wouldn't take it. And they nailed him to the cross. They divided up his clothes and threw dice to see who would get them.

²⁵⁻³⁰ They nailed him up at nine o'clock in the morning. The charge against him—the king of the Jews—was printed on a poster. Along with him, they crucified two criminals, one to his right, the other to his left. People passing along the road jeered, shaking their heads in mock lament: "You bragged that you could tear down the Temple and then rebuild it in three days—so show us your stuff! Save yourself! If you're really God's Son, come down from that cross!"

³³⁻³⁴ At noon the sky became extremely dark. The darkness lasted three hours. At three o'clock, Jesus groaned out of the depths, crying loudly, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

³⁵⁻³⁶ Some of the bystanders who heard him said, "Listen, he's calling for Elijah." Someone ran off, soaked a sponge in sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down."

³⁷⁻³⁹ But Jesus, with a loud cry, gave his last breath. At that moment the Temple curtain ripped right down the middle. When the Roman captain standing guard in front of him saw that he had quit breathing, he said, "This has to be the Son of God!"

And there was darkness over the whole land.

Silence

The last candle is taken out, still burning, and all the lights are turned off

A PRAYER BY RODDY HAMILTON

We believe
the time is now
to go into the world and face the darkness

We believe
the moment is right
to face the powers of the world with the love of

heaven

We believe
the place is here
to endure the suffering love calls us to

We believe
the path is before us
to side with truth in a deafened world

We believe
the hour is come
to conspire with Christ and move against injustice

We believe
the gospel is this
love is betrayed but death shall not have the final
word.

We invite you to pray the Lord's Prayer in the
language of your heart.

Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
And forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours
Now and for ever. Amen.

Silence

After the silence the leader signals the return of the
candle with a double hand clap.

The central candle is returned and placed in
position.

Leader:
The tomb is shut.
The night descends.

After a moment or two, a few lights are turned on,
and all leave for home in silence.

SONG WORDS

The heavens shall declare by Geoff Bullock

The heavens shall declare the glory of His name
All creation bows at the coming of the King
Every eye shall see, every heart will know
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord
See the coming of the King, holy is the Lord

Oh, the love of my Lord is the essence by Estelle White

Oh, the love of my Lord is the essence
of all that I love here on earth.
All the beauty I see he has given to me
and his giving is gentle as silence.

Every day, every hour, every moment
have been blessed by the strength of his love.
At the turn of each tide he is there at my side,
and his touch is as gentle as silence.

There've been times when I've turned from his
presence,
and I've walked other paths, other ways.
But I've called on his name in the dark of my shame,
and his mercy was gentle as silence.