

THE OFFICE OF TENEBRAE

Epiphany Seattle ✠ March 27, 2024

The ministers enter the church in silence and proceed to their places. The Office then begins immediately with the Antiphon on the first Psalm. It is customary to sit for the Psalmody.

The First Nocturn

Psalm 69: 1-14

Antiphon: Zeal for your house has eaten me up; the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

Psalm 70

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

Psalm 74: 1-10

Antiphon: Arise, O God, maintain my cause.

Officiant: Deliver me, my God, from the hand of the wicked:

People: From the clutches of the evildoer and the oppressor.

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!

Responsory 1 (*sung by the choir*): In monte oliveti - Orlando de Lassus (1532-1594)

On the Mount of Olives he prayed to his Father:
"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.
The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
Let your will be done.
(*Sung in Latin*)

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. Uncleaness 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 (*sung by the choir*): Tristis est anima mea - Orlando de Lassus (1532-1594)

Sorrowful is my soul even unto death.
Stay here, and watch with me.
Now you shall see the mob that will surround me.
You shall take flight, and I shall go to be sacrificed for you.
(*Sung in Latin*)

Lesson 3

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!

Responsory 3 (*sung by the choir*): Tenebrae factae sunt - Marc Antoine Ingegneri (1535-1592)

Darkness fell when the Jews crucified Jesus:^{[[]]}
and about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice:
^{[[]]}My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

And he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
Jesus cried with a loud voice and said,
Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.
And he bowed his head and gave up this spirit.
(*Sung in Latin*)

Lauds

Psalm 63:1-8

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

Psalm 90: 1-12

Antiphon: He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and he opened not his mouth.

Psalm 150

Antiphon: O Death, I will be your death; O Grave, I will be your destruction.

Officiant: My flesh also shall rest in hope:

People: You will not let your holy One see corruption.

During the singing of the following Canticle, the candles at the Altar, and all other lights in the church (except the one remaining at the top of the triangular candlestick), are extinguished.

Antiphon

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

Canticle 16: Benedictus Dominus Deus Israel

After the Canticle, the remaining candle is taken from the stand and hidden beneath or behind the Altar, or in some other convenient place.

All kneel for the singing of the following anthem:

Anthem: Christus factus est - Giovanni Francesco Anerio (1567-1630)

Christ for us 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.
(Sung in Latin)

A brief silence is observed. Psalm 51 is then sung by the choir.

Psalm 51: Miserere mei, Deus - Gregorio Allegri (1582-1652)

The Presider says the following Collect without chant, and without the usual conclusion:

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 noise is made, during which the remaining candle is brought from its hiding place and replaced on the stand. By its light the ministers and people depart in silence.

Tenebrae is Latin for darkness. This service represents the darkness of sin and death and serves to call the faithful to embrace the light of Christ, who has conquered death.

The readings come from the *Book of Lamentations*, which foreshadows the Passion and death of Jesus in the songs of mourning for the destruction of Solomon's Temple, and candles are gradually extinguished after each reading.

The final candle, representing Christ, is not extinguished but is hidden behind the altar after the last of the Scripture readings. A final prayer is said in the darkness. At this time a loud noise called the *strepitus* is heard in the church, representing the earthquake when Jesus died and the confusion that came after. Others say that it symbolizes the rolling of the stone over Jesus' tomb.

The liturgy ends in silence and the last candle is brought back into view. This is the good news of our faith. However dark our world may get; the light of Christ conquers the darkness and leads us all to Eternal Life.

This light is then temporarily extinguished at the conclusion of the Maundy Thursday liturgy and is relit at the Great Vigil of Easter.