

## **Tenebrae Service. Martin Poole, Brighton, UK 2017**

### **Leader:**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **People: Amen**

Blessed be the name of the Lord our God,  
who redeems us from sin and death.

For us and for our salvation, Christ became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Your response is: Blessed be the name of the Lord

### **People: Blessed be the name of the Lord.**

Tonight we are remembering the death of Jesus.

This service is loosely based on the "Tenebrae" services that date back to early church history.

There are six "shadows" that represent six stages of the Good Friday events.

At each stage there will be an episode from the gospel narrative that describes one of the Good Friday events.

a time of silent prayer,

a symbolic action,

and then a reading of an Old Testament scripture that sheds some light on this,

At each stage, a candle will be extinguished, until all the light is gone.

This will be followed by the strepitus, the slamming closed of the Bible,

symbolic of the earthquake that shook the land when Jesus died.

We will then spend some time waiting with Jesus in the dark of the grave.

This is a sombre service, with time for reflection on the sufferings of Christ.

### **I. The Shadow of Denial**

**The chairs are arranged in a circle with a low table in the centre. The table is laid with cloth, plates, glasses etc. are set upon the table to evoke the feeling of being present at The Last Supper.**

#### **Mark 14:17-31**

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me.'

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, 'Surely you don't mean me?'

'It is one of the Twelve,' he replied, 'one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.'

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'

Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them. 'Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. And Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

Peter said to him, "Even though all become deserters, I will not." Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." But he said vehemently, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.

**Bread and wine is placed on the plate and poured into the glass**

#### **Reading: Ecclesiastes 4:1-3**

'...I looked and saw all of the oppression that was taking place under the sun:

I saw the tears of the oppressed-  
And they have no comforter;  
Power was on the side of their oppressors-  
And they have no comforter.  
And I declared that the dead,  
Who had already died,  
Are happier than the living,  
Who are still alive.  
But better than both  
Is he who has not yet been,  
Who has not seen the evil  
That is done under the sun.

The first candle is extinguished  
The table is cleared of everything but the cloth.

## 2. The Shadow of Anguish

A pot is placed on the table

### Luke 22:39-46

At the Mount of Olives Jesus said to the disciples, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation.' <sup>41</sup> He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, <sup>42</sup> 'Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.' <sup>43</sup> An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. <sup>44</sup> And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.<sup>[3]</sup>

<sup>45</sup> When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. <sup>46</sup> 'Why are you sleeping?' he asked them. 'Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.'

The pot is shattered with a hammer

### Psalm 31: 9-14

Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;  
My whole body grows weak with sadness.  
Pain has taken over my life.  
My years are spent in groaning.  
I have no strength because I'm hurting so much.  
My body is getting weaker and weaker.  
My neighbours make fun of me because I have so many enemies.  
My friends are afraid of me.  
Those who see me on the street run away from me.  
They have forgotten me. I might as well be dead.  
I have become like broken pottery.  
I hear the lies many people tell about me.  
There is terror all around me.  
Many have joined together against me. They plan to kill me.  
But I trust in you, Lord. I say, "You are my God."

The second candle is extinguished  
The table is cleared

## 3. The Shadow of Betrayal

A white shirt is placed on the table with a lipstick stain clearly on the collar

### **Mark 14:43-45**

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him.

We listen to the Kiss audio meditation from the computer

### **Psalm 41**

All of my enemies whisper to each other about me.

They want something terrible to happen to me.

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, has deserted me.

I even shared my bread with him.

The third candle is extinguished

The table is cleared

## **4. Shadow of Hypocrisy**

The table is laid with a bowl, a jug of water and a towel

### **Matthew 27:20-24 (11-14, 20-29 Accusation)**

The chief priests and the elders talked the crowd into asking for Barabbas and having Jesus put to death.

"Which of the two do you want me to set free?" asked the governor.

"Barabbas," they answered.

"Then what should I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked.

They all answered, "Crucify him!"

"Why? What wrong has he done?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted even louder, "Crucify him!"

Pilate saw that he wasn't getting anywhere. Instead, the crowd was starting to get angry. So he took water and washed his hands in front of them. "I am not guilty of this man's death," he said. "You must take the blame for that!"

The Jug of water is poured into the big bowl

Everyone is invited to wash their hands

### **Reading: Isaiah 53.1-5**

He grew up like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.

Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

The fourth candle is extinguished

The table is cleared

## **5. Shadow of Humiliation**

A crown of thorns is set on the table

A cross and nails is placed centrally.

## **Mark 15:16-32**

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him.

After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take. It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him.

The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

**Pause after each paragraph of the following while a nail is hammered into the cross.**

## **Isaiah 53:4-6**

**Hammer**

Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.

**Hammer**

But he 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.

**Hammer**

We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

## **Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:19-21**

'Man's fate is like that of the animals;  
the same fate awaits them both:

As one dies, so dies the other.

All have the same breath;

man has no advantage over the animal.

Everything is meaningless.

All go to the same place;

all come from dust, and to dust all return.

Who knows if the spirit of man rises upward

and if the spirit of the animal goes down into the earth?'

The fifth candle is extinguished

Bread and wine vinegar is placed on the table

## **6. Shadow of Crucifixion**

### **Mark 15:33-47**

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

The bread is broken and vinegar poured out  
Offer the bread to be dipped in the wine vinegar to taste.

### **Psalm 22:1-2**

My God, my God, why have you deserted me?  
Why do you seem to be so far away when I need you to save me?  
Why do you seem to be so far away that you can't hear my groans?  
My God, I cry out in the daytime. But you don't answer.  
I cry out at night. I can't keep quiet.

Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

*SILENCE*

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

The tablecloth is torn in two  
The sixth candle is extinguished

May Jesus Christ,  
who for our sake became obedient unto death,  
even death on a cross,  
keep you and strengthen you.  
And the blessing...