



## **Tenebrae: A Service of Shadows**

**Intro:** The service of Tenebrae, meaning “darkness” or “shadows,” has been practiced by the church since medieval times. Once a service for the monastic community, Tenebrae later became an important part of the worship of the common folk during Holy Week.

Tenebrae is a prolonged meditation on Christ’s suffering. Readings trace the story of Christ’s passion, music portrays his pathos, and the power of silence and darkness suggests the drama of this momentous day. As lights are extinguished, we ponder the depth of Christ’s suffering and death and through the return of the small but persistent flame of the Christ candle at the conclusion of the service; we anticipate the joy of ultimate victory.

### **Persons needed:**

- Enough people for all the readings, can be less than the 8 reading sections (people can read multiple sections)
- Designate someone among the readers to be the person to remove and return the Christ candle (center candle)
- Worship leader or someone to lead in the liturgical reading elements

### **Things Needed:**

- 1 Large candle or candle of different color: This will serve as the Christ candle
- 8 regular sized candles
- 1 lighter
- Table

### **Set Up:**

- Set a table with 9 lit candles on it with the center Christ candle (either a bigger candle or larger one) arranged in the center with four regular candles to the left and right of it.
- Communion elements if you want to include in service
- Start on time! Make sure people are not arriving in the middle of the service as this is very much a service that depends on ambience!



## **TENEBRAE ORDER OF SERVICE:**

### **Worship:** (Suggested Songs/Hymns)

When I Survey the Wonderful Cross (v1-3)  
How Deep the Father's love (v1-2)  
In Christ Alone (v1-2)  
Scandal of Grace

### **Communion:** if possible

### **Hymn:** Nothing But The Blood

### **The Approach to God:** (Greeting – liturgical reading)

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

**People: Amen**

Worship Leader: Blessed be the name of the Lord our God,

**People: who redeems us from sin and death.**

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

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

**The Service of Shadows (8 readings)** After each reading the reader should blow out one candle. DO NOT BLOW OUT THE CENTER CHRIST CANDLE for the entirety of the service.

- 1. The Shadow of Betrayal** - Reading Matthew 26:20-25
- 2. The Shadow of the Agony of Spirit and Arrest** - Reading Matthew 26:36-50
- 3. The Shadow of Denial** - Reading Matthew 26:69-75
- 4. The Shadow of Accusation** - Reading Matthew 27:11-14, 20-30
- 5. The Shadow of Crucifixion and Humiliation** - Reading Matthew 27:31-43
- 6. Psalm 22** - Psalm 22:1-21
- 7. The Shadow of Death** - Reading Matthew 27:45-51, 54
- 8. The Shadow of Burial** - Reading Matthew 27:57-60



**Song Response 1:** Hymn: *Were You There?*

**\*\*The Christ Candle is Removed\*\*** - (wait until Song Response is over), be sure to remove the center Christ candle from the room altogether leaving the room in complete darkness. Remember, the flame is not extinguished but removed.

**\*\*Silent Meditation\*\*** (2 minutes)

**\*\*The Christ Candle Is Restored\*\*** - return the Christ candle to its place after the meditation time has ended.

**Song Response 2:** \*Hymn \* *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* (verse 3 only)

Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
that were a present far too small,  
love so amazing, so divine,  
demands my soul, my life, my all.

**\*\*Dismissal Reading\*\***

Worship Leader: May Jesus Christ who for our sakes became obedient unto death, even death on a cross, keep you and strengthen you.

**People: Amen.**

**The People Leave in Silence:** or end service in silence