

Tenebrae

Short version

Instructions

All family members gather around a table. This can be a dining table or a coffee table in a living space. Choose one, two, or, three people to be readers and assign the readings to those individuals. It is good to include children when possible. Set out three candles on a table and light each. You will blow out one candle at the conclusion of the first two readings.

During these liturgical practices we should prepare ourselves to be receptive to the story and any details which 'jump out' to us. Let your imagination draw images of the scenes and picture what you hear. This is a very effective form of prayer. You may, if you are comfortable, add in some discussion after each reading. Just be sure to keep the conversation on topic so as not to derail the prayer time.

Introduction

Leader:

'Tenebrae' means darkness or shadows.

As we come to the end of Lent,
we begin a journey into darkness to a place of deep shadows.

Today we accompany Jesus in his last hours.

We witness the cruelties and the suffering he endures.

We listen to the words of condemnation and ridicule.

In all this he is innocent.

He is the faithful servant of God,

doing his Father's work;

bringing the gospel of love, peace and hope.

And so, in this liturgy, we are invited to walk solemnly and attentively with Jesus.

Better to know.

Better to understand.

Better to be his friend, his disciple, his witness.

Be still and know that God is here.

Leader: In the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen

Reading 1:

Matthew 26:14-25

Leader: "A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew."

One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over.

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says, 'My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'" The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.

When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born." Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, you have said so."

Leader: "The Word of the Lord"

All: "Thanks be to God. "

Stand for the prayer:

Leader:
Father in heaven,
on the night before he died,
your son shared the Passover meal with his friends,
giving them bread to nourish their spirits
and wine, poured out as his blood, for the forgiveness of their sins.
We pray that we may turn to him
for forgiveness.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Reading 2:

Matthew 26:36-45a

Leader: "A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew."

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.' He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. Then he said to them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.' And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible,

let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.’ Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, ‘So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ Again he went away for the second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.’ Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Leader: “The Word of the Lord”

All: “Thanks be to God. “

The second candle is extinguished.

Stand for the prayer:

Father in heaven,
we so often stand by,
as others are mocked or belittled,
as cruelty and injustice are allowed free reign,
afraid to speak,
afraid to act,
silent and guilty.
Forgive us.
Through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

Reading 3:

Matthew 26: 45b - 56

Leader: “A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.”

“Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.’ While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.’ At once he came up to Jesus and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed him. Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, do what you are here to do.’ Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?’ At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, ‘Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did

not arrest me. But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled.' Then all the disciples deserted him and fled."

Leader: "The Word of the Lord"

All: "Thanks be to God. "

Keep the third candle burning to symbolize the hope we have in Jesus who is fulfilling the promises God has made to redeem us through the forgiveness of our sin.