

**We call the day before Good Friday, "Maundy Thursday" and follow the Tenebrae liturgy.**

(See an example of the Tenebrae liturgy at the end of this discussion.

Why do we call the day before Good Friday, Maundy Thursday and what is the Tenebrae liturgy?

The answer is in the old Latin translation of the Bible, called the Vulgate". There John 13:34 reads: *Mandatum novum do vobis ... which means "a new commandment (mandatum) I give you ... "* "Maundy" is derived from *mandatum*, Latin for "commandment." And the text goes on to say, "a new commandment I give to you *that you must love one another.*"

In John we read about the upper room discussions Jesus had with his disciples on the night when he instituted the Holy Supper and was arrested. At the heart of this talk Jesus gave his disciples is this *new commandment (mandatum novum)*, which instructs the followers of Jesus to love one another, and Christ adds, "***By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.***" (John 13:35). It reminds us that Jesus also said on this dark, agonizing night: (John 15: 12 - 14) "***My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command.***"

The central message of Maundy Thursday, according to Jesus, is his love for us and our love for one another.

**During the services on Maundy Thursday:**

Reflect and meditate on the words associated with Gethsemane, the cross, the burial and immense suffering of Jesus: words of grace, love, hope, agony, suffering, finality, and rest. Remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the atonement of our sins.

Recognize the gravity of our sin that caused him the agony.

Repent and turn to God for forgiveness.

Realize the greatness of the Holy Trinity, the one and only God who saves.

Respond to the Word of the Lord in reverent worship, prayer, and obedience.

**On Maundy Thursday we share in the Tenebrae liturgy.** The word 'tenebrae' is Latin for shadows. The purpose of the Tenebrae liturgy is to **recreate the excruciating emotional aspects of the passion of Christ.** It is not a happy service, because the occasion it reflects on is not a cheerful one. The deeply felt love for Jesus that holds on to his sacrifice for our sake is not entertaining. Yet it brings us to stand in awe, to remember with reverence, to love passionately and to be grateful beyond the possibility of the expression of words and actions.

On Maundy Thursday you are asked to stand in the shadows within the darkness of Christ's suffering. You are asked to keep watch with the Lord.

The gradual extinguishing of the lights and candles, while the Scriptures testify to the darkest night in history, is symbolic of the advancing darkness that came over Jesus as a result of the flight, the denial and betrayal of his disciples, the bitter hate of his enemies and the shadows of the cross.

The moments of total darkness recalls the time when he was in the tomb.

And the relighting of the central candle is a prophecy of Easter, so soon to dawn.

The purpose of the Tenebrae liturgy on Maundy Thursday, is recreating the abandonment and agony of the events, and it is left unfinished, because the story isn't over until Sunday - Resurrection Day. At Tenebrae we do not hear a "happy ending story" but it speaks of love and divine commitment to us, God's people.

And because the outcome is not on Thursday, or Good Friday - the final word, the amazing light, comes on Sunday.

At the Tenebrae service we learn amongst other things that:  
There can be no joy of atonement, without the death of the Sacrificial Lamb.  
There can be no joy of life, without the dreadful death of the Saviour.  
There can be no joy of Paradise, without the Redeemer's forsakenness by God.  
There is no forgiveness without the bitter pain of repentance.  
There is no salvation, without God acting to redeem us by giving his Son.  
There is no joy of thanksgiving, without reverent worship and prayer

Example of the Tenebrae liturgy.

**Tenebrae Liturgical Prayers and Readings.**  
**On Maundy Thursday night, the eve before Good Friday.**

**Introduction:**

You are asked to meditate on the fact that it was on the Thursday evening before Good Friday that Jesus and his disciples were together for the last time, when he and they stood in the shadow of the cross, when he washed their feet and instituted the Holy Supper.

Tenebrae is the Latin word for darkness. The gradual extinguishing of the lights at the end of the service is symbolic of the advancing darkness that came over Jesus during the night of his arrest, with the flight of the disciples, the bitter hate of his enemies, the looming shadow of the cross. The moments of total darkness recalls the time when he was in the tomb.

The relighting of the central candle is a prophecy of Easter so soon to dawn.

We ask you to observe the rule of silence throughout the service. It ends with the relighting of the central candle, after which the congregation leaves the church in silence and go home still meditating the experience of Tenebrae...

**Call to Worship**

***Romans 8: 38 - 39***

I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Hymn/s

**Prayer of Adoration and Confession of sins.**

We worship you, we give thanks to you, o LORD. You are the one living and true God, who is Spirit, personal, infinite, and eternal, present in every place, the almighty Author and sovereign Lord of all; most blessed, most holy, and most free; perfect in wisdom, justice, truth and love; to us most merciful and gracious; unto whom only we must cleave, whom only we must worship and obey. To You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be glory forever.

You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. In Jesus, born of Mary, your Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. He lived as one of us, knowing joy and sorrow. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, opened blind eyes, and broke bread with outcasts and sinners.

Dying on the cross, your unique Son gave himself for the life of the world. Raised from the grave, he won for his people victory over death. We praise you that Christ now reigns with you and will come again to make all things new.

Forgive us our sins. Purify us and cleanse us, o Lord. Give us strength to serve you faithfully until we feast with you and all your people in the fullness of your glory and joy. Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in unity with the Holy Spirit, belong to you all glory and honour, eternal God, now and forevermore!  
Grant us, o Lord, peaceful fellowship with you and with each other.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*After a Scripture reading follows a short sermon or simply a devotion.*

#### **Prayer of Thanksgiving:**

*Let us pray:* Almighty and ever-living God, we thank you that in your great love you have brought us together tonight to experience the darkness of the night of your arrest, that we may with more commitment and thanksgiving praise and worship you for the eternal Light we gained when you laid down your life for your friends.  
Grant us the grace to live according to the Gospel Truth we have heard and experienced tonight.

When we remember that Thursday night when you washed the feet of your disciples, when you instituted your Holy Supper, when you were denied and betrayed, when there were drops of blood in your sweat as you anguished in waiting for the wrath of God as a result of our sins, when your emotions became dark and sad - as we remember the darkness of that night - speak to us through your Word and urge us to repent, because we have done this to you by our sins, impurity and disobedience.

Father and God of Light and truth - help us to accept your love for us; teach us how to believe when the world around us become dark; change our hearts that we will expect that the Light of the World is our Redeemer from darkness and our Saviour from the judgement of God.  
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
Amen.

*(Keep in mind that Easter Communion on Easter Sunday is the celebration where our Holy Week services peak in joy and the experience of our communion with the Living Lord.)*

#### **Extinguishing of the Tenebrae Candles:**

Suggested readings:

FIRST READER: Luke 22: 39 - 48

First reader extinguishes 1st candle.

SECOND READER: Luke 22: 54 - 62. 2<sup>nd</sup> candle extinguished.

***Music while contemplating the readings... (Betrayal)***

THIRD READER: Matt 27: 22 - 31 Reader extinguishes 3rd candle.

FOURTH READER: Lukas 23: 26 - 28. 4<sup>th</sup> candle extinguished.

FIFTH READER: Matt 27: 33 - 40 Reader extinguishes 5<sup>th</sup> candle

SIXTH READER: Luke 23: 39 - 43 & John 19: 25 - 27. Sixth candle extinguished.

***Music while contemplating the readings... (Sadness)***

SEVENTH READER: Luke 23: 44 - 54 Reader extinguishes 7<sup>th</sup> candle.

***Music while contemplating the readings... (Death)***

Minister: *With a loud cry, Jesus, breathed His last...*

The minister extinguishes the central candle.

Total darkness represents that Jesus was in the tomb

**SILENCE.**

*After about a minute, the minister relights the central candle with the words.*

**On the 3rd day, He rose again!**

*The minister leaves immediately and worshippers follow in silence.*

*This is an incomplete service, without benediction, only completed on Easter Sunday.*

*We leave the Church in silence - and go home reflecting on the experience of Tenebrae...*