

The lessons of the second Nocturn are taken from the writings of St. Augustine, and the lessons of the third Nocturn from the epistles of Paul the Apostle. These are chanted to the ordinary lesson tone and have been relatively neglected by composers, though there are a few settings by Manuel Cardoso and sets of responsories by Orland di Lasso and Mac-Antoine Charpentier.

Recent revisions

The celebration of Matins and Lauds of these days in the form referred to as Tenebrae in churches with a sufficient number of clergy was universal in the Roman Rite until the reform of the Holy Week ceremonies by Pope Pius XII in 1955. At that time, the East Vigil was restored as a night office, moving that Easter liturgy from Holy Saturday morning to the following night; the principal liturgies of Holy Thursday and Good Friday were likewise moved from morning to afternoon or evening, and thus Matins and Lauds were no longer allowed to be anticipated on the preceding evening, except for the Matins and Lauds of Holy Thursday in the case of cathedral churches in which the Mass of the Chrism was held on Holy Thursday morning. The 1960 Code of Rubrics, which is incorporated in the 1962 typical addition of the Roman Breviary, did not allow any anticipation of Lauds, though Matins can still be anticipated to the day before later than the hour of Vespers. Even at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, where the need to observe a timetable that did not disturb the established rights of other churches forced the timetable of Roman Catholic Holy Week services to remain unchanged, the Office of Tenebrae was abandoned in 1977. But the special rubrics of Tenebrae that once accompanied the celebration of Matins and Lauds, including the ceremony of extinguishing the candles on the hearse, are now sometimes applied to other celebrations, even if these do not consist of a nine-psalm Matins and a five-psalm Lauds.

Summorum Pontificum (2007) permits clerics bound to the recitation of the Divine Office to use the 1962 Roman Breviary, a permission availed of by several religious and secular institutes and societies of apostolic life; but the 1955 and 1960 changes exclude the anticipation of Matins and Lauds to the previous evening, whether celebrated with or without the Tenebrae ceremonies. However, some places hold something similar to the original Tenebrae celebration as an extra-liturgical, devotional service.

***(excerpted from://en.wikipedia.org)



The candle suddenly reappears; its light is as fair as ever.

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TENEBRÆ

Spy Wednesday Services



THE CANDLES ARE EXTINGUISHED ONE BY ONE
BUT JESUS OUR LIGHT IS NOT EXTINGUISHED.
THIS IS SIGNIFIED BY THE CANDLE WHICH IS
MOMENTARILY PLACED BEHIND THE ALTAR;
IT SYMBOLIZES OUR REDEEMER
SUFFERING AND DYING ON CALVARY...
THE NOISE BEGINS; THE EARTH SHOOK, THE ROCKS WERE
SPLIT, THE DEAD CAME FORTH FROM THEIR TOMBS...

Roman Catholic practice of Tenebrae

**Tenebrae* (Latin for 'shadows' or 'darkness') is a Christian religious service celebrated in the Western Church on the evening before or early morning of Maudy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, which are the last three days of Holy Week. The distinctive ceremony of *Tenebrae* is the gradual extinguishing of candles while a series of readings and psalms are chanted or recited. In the Roman Rite of the Roman Catholic Church the *Tenebrae* readings and psalms are those of Matins and Lauds.

*(excerpted from: //en.wikipedia.org)

***Tenebrae* services differ, in many things, from the Office of the rest of the year. All is sad and mournful, as though it were a funeral service; nothing could more emphatically express the grief that now weighs down the heart of our Holy Mother the Church. Throughout all the Office of Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, she forbids herself the use of those formulas of joy and hope wherewith, on all other days, she begins her praise of God. Nothing is left but what is essential to the form of the Divine Office: psalms, lessons and chants expressive of grief. The tone of the Office is most noticeably mournful; the lessons taken from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the omission of the *Gloria Patri*, of the *Te Deum*, and of blessings etc., so the darkness of these services seems to have been designedly chosen to mark the Church's desolation. The lessons from Jeremiah in the first Nocturn, those from the Commentaries of St. Augustine upon the Psalms in the second, and those from the Epistles of St. Paul in the third remain now as when we first hear all them in the eighth century.

The name "Tenebrae" has been given because this Office is celebrated in the hours of darkness, formerly in the evening or just after midnight, now the early morning hours. There is placed in the sanctuary, near the altar, a large triangular candlestick holding fifteen candles. At the end of each psalm or Canticle, one of these fifteen candles is extinguished, but the one which is placed at the top of the triangle is left lighted. During the singing of the *Benedictus* (the Canticle of Zacharias at the end of Lauds), six other candles on the altar are also put out. Then the master of ceremonies takes the lighted candle from the triangle and holds it upon the altar while the choir repeats the antiphon after the Canticle, after which he hides it behind the altar during the recitation of the *Christus* antiphon and final prayer.

As soon as this prayer is finished, a noise is made with the seats of the stalls in the choir, which continues until the candle is brought from behind the altar, and shows, by its light, that the Office of *Tenebrae* is over.

Let us now learn the meaning of these ceremonies. The glory of the Son of God was obscured and, so to say, eclipsed, by the ignominies He endured during His Passion. He, Light of the world, powerful in word and work, who but in a few days ago was proclaimed King by the citizens of Jerusalem, is now robbed of all his honors. He is, says Isaiah, the Man of sorrows, a leper (Isaiah 53:3, 4). He is, says the royal prophet, a worm of the earth, and no man (Psalm 21:7). He is, as He says of Himself, an object of shame even to His own disciples, for they are all scandalized in Him (Mark 14:27) and abandon Him; yea, even Peter protests that he never knew Him. This desertion on the part of His apostles and disciples is expressed by the candles being extinguished, one after the other, not only on the triangle, but on the altar itself. But Jesus, our Light, though despised and hidden, is not extinguished. This is signified by the candle which is momentarily placed on the altar; it symbolizes our Redeemer suffering and dying on Calvary. In order to express His burial, the candle is hidden behind the altar, its light disappears. A confused noise is heard in the house of God, where all is now darkness. This noise and gloom express the convulsions of nature when Jesus expired on the cross; the earth shook, the rocks were split, the dead came forth from their tombs. But the candle suddenly reappears; its light is as fair as ever. The noise is hushed, and homage is paid to the Conqueror of death.

** (excerpted from: sistersofcarmel.com)

Music

***The lessons of the first Nocturn at Matins are taken from the Book of Lamentations, as previously noted, and are sung to a specific Gregorian reciting tone. They have also been set to music by many composers, of whom the most famous Palestrina, Lassus, Tallis, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, François Couperin, Ernst Krenek (*Lamentatio Jeremiae prophetae, op. 93*) and Stravinsky (Threni). In addition, the responsories have been set by Lassus, Gesualdo, Victoria and Jan Dismas Zelenka.