

Wednesday – Tenebrae

We had planned a Tenebrae Service for Wednesday evening – a service where we would meditate in a more prolonged way on the sufferings of Christ. The actual meaning of Tenebrae is ‘darkness’ or ‘shadows’ and this service has been used in Churches since medieval times, especially in monastic settings.

The service follows the story of Christ’s passion and is filled with silence as darkness falls. Imagine the setting – a dimly lit church, with a light on the lectern, and in front of the chancel seven lit candles. After each reading a candle would be extinguished and a period of silence would follow before the next reading. There is time for reflection on the reading and a time for us to respond.

Sadly, this year, we cannot be together in one of our churches but we can still follow a Service of Tenebrae for ourselves. Set aside about 20 minutes or so when you won’t be interrupted. Evening time would be best as the service uses candle and darkness (shadows). Set out 7 candles or tea lights in a safe place and if you are able, turn down the lights in the room or have just a side light on.

Read each of the readings, reflect on the words or phrases I’ve put for each of them, and when you are ready blow one candle out.

The Shadow of Betrayal

Reading Matthew 26:20-25

“Yes it is you”

The Shadow of the Agony of Spirit and Arrest

Reading Matthew 26:36-50

“Do what you came for”

The Shadow of Denial

Reading Matthew 26:69-75

“you will disown me three times”

The Shadow of Accusation

Reading Matthew 27:11-14, 20-29

mockingly “Hail king of the Jews”

The Shadow of Crucifixion and Humiliation

Reading Matthew 27:31-43

“He cannot save himself”

The Shadow of Death

Reading Matthew 27:45-54

“Surely he was the Son of God”

The Shadow of Burial

Reading Matthew 27:57-60

“Joseph took the body and laid it in the tomb and went away”

At the end of your service, spend some time in prayer, reflect on your responses and when you are ready leave your bible by the candles and leave the space.

May this ‘service’ be a real blessing to you.