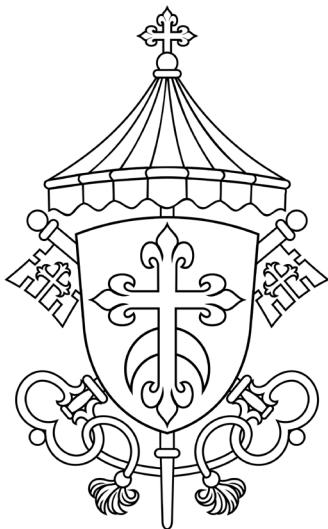


ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL



Tenebræ

The Office of Readings

HOLY SATURDAY

4 April 2026
10.00am

THE OFFICE OF TENEBRÆ

The service of Tenebræ (meaning ‘approaching darkness’) dates back to the seventh century. While not part of major ceremonies of the Triduum (Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday), the service became widespread and popular, partly on account of its dramatic nature.

When celebrated liturgically, Tenebræ takes part in three nocturns. Each nocturn includes readings from Scriptures – usually the Lamentations of the Prophet Jeremiah – and the recitation of Psalms, or other ancient texts powerfully expressing a sense of desolation and impending darkness.

At the beginning of Tenebræ, at least seven candles are alight, to be extinguished one by one after each nocturn. By the end of the service, all the candles, save one central candle – representing Christ – are extinguished.

At the conclusion of the service, the remaining candle is removed from view and a loud noise (‘strepitus’) is heard, sometimes accompanied by confused shouting, to mark the betrayal of Christ and the quenching of his light. In most churches, the choir would bang breviaries upon the bench tops: in the Sistine Chapel, the Cardinals added to the clamour by stamping their feet.

The service concludes when the Christ candle is returned, one light against all the darkness. The choir and congregation depart in silence.

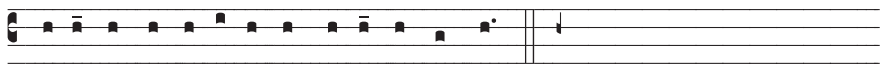
**TO MAINTAIN A SPIRIT OF REVERENCE AND SOLEMNITY,
PLEASE TURN OFF AND REFRAIN FROM USING ALL MOBILE TELEPHONES
AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.**

ORDER OF TENEBRÆ

The choir and clergy process to the Sanctuary in silence.

INTRODUCTION TO THE OFFICE

The Celebrant sings

D 

EUS, in ad-*iu*-tó-ri-um meum in-tén-de.

O God, come to my aid.

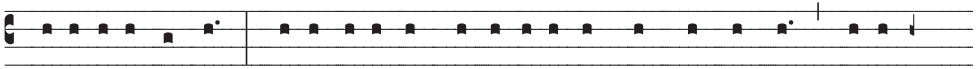
All sing



ꝰ Dómine, ad ad-iuvándum me fes-tí-na. Glóri-a Patri et Fí-li-o et

O Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and

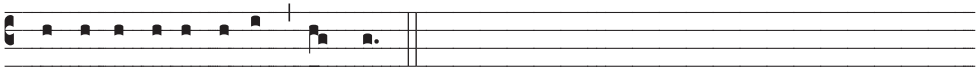


Spirí-tu-i Sancto. Sicut erat in princí-pi-o et nunc et semper et in

to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning,

is now, and ever shall be,



sæ-cu-la sæcu-lórum. A-men.

world without end.

All remain standing.

The choir sings

THE OFFICE HYMN

Christe, cælorum Domine,
mundi salvator maxime,
qui crucis omnes munere
mortis solvisti legibus,

*O Christ, the Lord of heaven
Great Saviour of the world,
by dying on the Cross you freed us
from the bonds of death,*

Te nunc orantes poscimus,
tua conserves munera,
quæ sacra per mysteria
cunctis donasti gentibus.

*We come before you praying
may you preserve those gifts
which through the sacred mysteries
you give to all mankind.*

Tu agnus mitis, innocens,
oblatus terræ victima,
sanctorum vestes omnium
tuo lavasti sanguine.

*The Lamb so meek and innocent
was sacrificed for us,
you cleansed the robes of all the saints
in your most precious blood.*

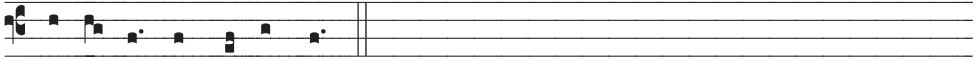
Quos redemisti pretio
tui sacrati corporis,
cælo resurgens advehis
ubi te laudant perpetim.

*You have redeemed them at the price
of your most sacred body
O rise once more, lead them to heaven
to praise you evermore.*

Quorum nos addas numero,
te deprecamur, Domine,
qui Patri nos ex omnibus
fecisti regnum populis. Amen.

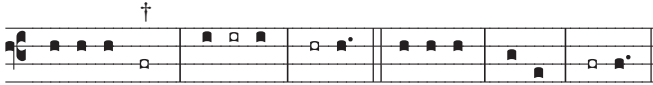
*We pray you, Lord, that we may be
united with them there;
from all the nations you make us
one kingdom for our God. Amen.*

All sit.



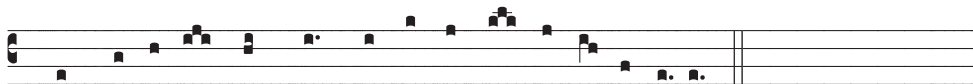
My bo-dy shall rest in hope.

PSALM 15 (16)



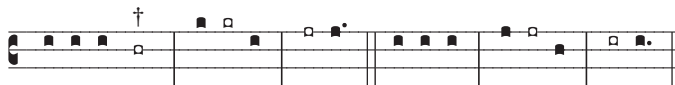
- Cantor* 1 Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you. †
I say to the Lord: | ‘You are my | God. *
My happiness lies in | you a- | lone.’
- Choir* 2 He has put into my heart a | marvellous | love *
for the faithful ones who dwell | in his | land.
- All* 3 **Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows,** †
Never will I offer their | offerings of | blood. *
Never will I take their name up- | on my | lips.
- 4 O Lord, it is you who are my | portion and | cup; *
it is you yourself who | are my | prize.
- 5 **The lot marked out for me is | my de- | light: ***
welcome indeed the heritage that | falls to | me!
- 6 I will bless the Lord who | gives me | counsel, *
who even at night di- | rects my | heart.
- 7 **I keep the Lord ever | in my | sight: ***
since he is at my right hand, I | shall stand | firm.
- 8 And so my heart rejoices, my | soul is | glad; *
even my body shall | rest in | safety.
- 9 **For you will not leave my soul a- | mong the | dead, ***
nor let your beloved | know de- | cay.
- 10 You will show me the path of life, †
the fulness of | joy in your | presence, *
at your right hand happi- | ness for | ever.
- 11 **Glory be to the Father and | to the | Son *
and to the | Holy | Spirit,**
- 12 as it was in the beginning, is now, and | ever | shall be, *
world without | end. A- | men.

All repeat the Antiphon.

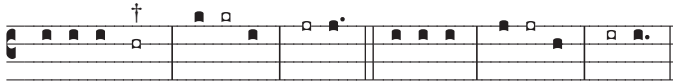


Grow higher, an-cient doors and let the King of glo-ry enter.

PSALM 23 (24)



- Cantor* 1 The Lord's is the earth | and its | fulness, *
the world and | all its | peoples.
- Choir* 2 It is he who set it | on the | seas; *
on the waters he | made it | firm.
- All* 3 **Who shall climb the mountain | of the | Lord? ***
Who shall stand in his | holy | place?
- 4 The man with clean hands and pure heart, †
who desires not | worthless | things, *
who has not sworn so as to de- | ceive his | neighbour.
- 5 **He shall receive blessings | from the | Lord *
and reward from the | God who | saves him.**
- 6 Such are the | men who | seek him, *
seek the face of the | God of | Jacob.
- 7 **O gates, lift high your heads; †
grow higher | ancient | doors. ***
Let him enter, the | King of | Glory!
- 8 Who is the King of Glory? †
The Lord, the | mighty, the | valiant, *
the Lord, the | valiant in | war.
- 9 **O gates, lift high your heads; †
grow higher, | ancient | doors. ***
Let him enter, the | King of | Glory.



10 Who is he, the King of Glory? †
 He, the | Lord of | armies, *
 he is the | King of | Glory.

11 **Glory be to the Father and | to the | Son *
 and to the | Holy | Spirit,**

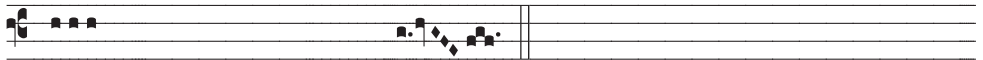
12 as it was in the beginning, is now, and | ever | shall be, *
 world without | end. A- | men.

All repeat the ANTIPHON



Grow higher, an-cient doors and let the King of glo-ry enter.

All sing the Response to the Versicle:



∇ Uphold my cause and defend me.

℞ **By your promise give me life.**

BE careful: the promise of reaching the place of rest he had for them still holds good, and none of you must think that he has come too late for it. We received the Good News exactly as they did; but hearing the message did them no good because they did not share the faith of those who listened. We, however, who have faith, shall reach a place of rest, as in the text: And so, in anger, I swore that not one would reach the place of rest I had for them. God's work was undoubtedly all finished at the beginning of the world; as one text says, referring to the seventh day: After all his work God rested on the seventh day. The text we are considering says: They shall not reach the place of rest I had for them. It is established, then, that there would be some people who would reach it, and since those who first heard the Good News failed to reach it through their disobedience, God fixed another day when, much later, he said 'today' through David in the text already quoted: If only you would listen to him today; do not harden your hearts. If Joshua had led them into this place of rest, God would not later on have spoken so much of another day. There must still be, therefore, a place of rest reserved for God's people, the seventh-day rest, since to reach the place of rest is to rest after your work, as God did after his. We must therefore do everything we can to reach this place of rest, or some of you might copy this example of disobedience and be lost. The word of God is something alive and active: it cuts like any double-edged sword but more finely: it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from the marrow; it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts. No created thing can hide from him; everything is uncovered and open to the eyes of the one to whom we must give account of ourselves.

The choir sings

THE FIRST RESPONSORY

SEPULTO Domino, signaverunt monumentum, volventes lapidem ad ostium monumenti, ponentes milites, qui custodirent illum. Accedentes principes sacerdotum ad Pilatum, petierunt illum.

They buried the Lord, made the tomb secure and rolled a stone across the entrance, and they placed soldiers there to guard the body. The chief priests went to Pilate and asked for a guard.

Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611)

INCIPIT Oratio Ieremiae Prophetae. Recordare, Domine, quid acciderit nobis: Intuere et respice opprobrium nostrum. Haereditas nostra versa est ad alienos, domus nostrae ad extraneos. Pupilli facti sumus absque patre, matres nostrae quasi viduae. Aquam nostram pecunia bibimus; ligna nostra pretio comparavimus. Cervicibus nostris minabamur, lassis non dabatur requies. Aegypto dedimus manum, et Assyriis, ut saturaremur pane. Patres nostri peccaverunt, et non sunt: et nos iniquitates eorum portavimus. Servi dominati sunt nostri, non fuit qui redimeret de manu eorum. In animabus nostris afferebamus panem nobis, a facie gladii in deserto. Pellis nostra, quasi clibanus exusta est a facie tempestatum famis. Mulieres in Sion humiliaverunt, et virgines in civitatibus Iuda. Ierusalem, Ierusalem, convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

Here begins the prayer of the Prophet Jeremiah. Lord, remember what has happened to us; look on us and see our degradation. Our inheritance has passed to aliens, our homes to barbarians. We are orphans, we are fatherless; our mothers are like widows. We drink from our water – at a price; we have to pay for what is our own firewood. The yoke is on our necks; we are persecuted; we are worked to death; there is no relief for us. We hold out our hands to Egypt, or to Assyria, just to get enough bread. Our fathers have sinned; they are no more, and we ourselves bear the weight of their crimes. Slaves rule us; no one rescues us from them. At peril of our lives we earn our bread, by risking the sword of the desert. Our skin is as hot as the oven, such is the fever of famine. They have humbled the women of Sion, the virgins in the towns of Judah. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, be converted to the Lord, your God.

The choir sings

THE SECOND RESPONSORY

OVOS omnes, qui transitis per viam, attendite, et videte si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus. Attendite universi populi, et videte dolorem meum. Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

O all you people who pass by, behold and see whether there is any sorrow like my sorrow. Behold all you people, and see my sorrow, if there is any sorrow like my sorrow.

Tomás Luis de Victoria

WHAT is happening? Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence, and stillness, a great silence because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages. God has died in the flesh, and the underworld has trembled. Truly he goes to seek out our first parent like a lost sheep; he wishes to visit those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He goes to free the prisoner Adam and his fellow-prisoner Eve from their pains, he who is God, and Adam's son. The Lord goes in to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross. When Adam, the first created man, sees him, he strikes his breast in terror and calls out to all: 'My Lord be with you all.' And Christ in reply says to Adam: 'And with your spirit.' And grasping his hand he raises him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light. I am your God, who for your sake became your son, who for you and your descendants now speak and command with authority those in prison: Come forth, and those in darkness: Have light, and those who sleep: Rise. I command you: Awake, sleeper, I have not made you to be held a prisoner in the underworld. Arise from the dead; I am the life of the dead. Arise, O man, work of my hands, arise, you who were fashioned in my image. Rise, let us go hence for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person. For you, I your God became your son; for you, I the Master took on your form, that of slave; for you, I who am above the heavens came on earth and under the earth; for you, man, I became as a man without help, free among the dead for you, who left a garden, I was handed over to Jews from a garden and crucified in a garden. Look at the spittle on my face, which I received because of you, in order to restore you to that first divine inbreathing at creation. See the blows on my cheeks, which I accepted in order to refashion your distorted form to my own image. See the scourging of my back, which I accepted in order to disperse the load of your sins which was laid upon your back. See my hands nailed to the tree for a good purpose, for you, who stretched out your hand to the tree for an evil one. I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side, for you, who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side healed the pain of your side; my sleep will release you from your sleep in Hades; my sword has checked the sword which was turned against you. But arise, let us go hence. The enemy brought you out of the land of paradise; I will reinstate you, no longer in paradise, but on the throne of heaven. I denied you the tree of life, which was a figure, but now I myself am united to you, I who am life. I posted the cherubim to guard you as they would slaves; now I make the cherubim worship you as they would God. The cherubim throne has been prepared, the bearers are ready and waiting, the bridal chamber is in order, the food is provided, the everlasting houses and rooms are in readiness, the treasures of good things have been opened; the kingdom of heaven has been prepared before the ages.

The choir sings

THE THIRD RESPONSORY

RECESSIT pastor noster, fons aquæ vivæ, ad cuius transitum sol obscuratus est; nam et ille captus est, qui captivum tenebat primum hominem. Hodie portas mortis et seras pariter Salvator noster dirupit. Destruxit quidem claustra inferni et subvertit potentias diaboli.

Our shepherd, the source of living water, has departed. At his passing the sun was darkened, for he who held the first man captive is now taken captive himself. Today the Saviour has shattered the bars and burst the gates of death. He has torn down the barricades of hell and overthrown the power of Satan.

Tomás Luis de Victoria

All kneel.

The choir sings

THE MOTET

CHRISTUS factus est pro nobis obœdiens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis. Propter quod et Deus exaltavit illum, et dedit illi nomen, quod est super omne nomen.

Christ humbled himself for us and, in obedience, accepted death, even death on a cross. Therefore God raised him to the heights and gave him the name which is above all other names.

Felice Anerio (1560–1614)

All remain kneeling.

COLLECT

ALMIGHTY, ever-living God,
whose Only-Begotten Son descended to the realm of the dead,
and rose from there to glory,
grant that your faithful people,
who were buried with him in baptism,
may, by his resurrection, obtain eternal life.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

℟: **Amen.**

All stand.

CONCLUSION OF THE OFFICE

The Lord be with you.

℟: **And with your spirit.**

May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

℟: **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

℟: **Thanks be to God.**

All sing the Hymn, overleaf...

All sing

THE HYMN

Praise to the Ho - liest in__ the height, And in__ the depth be praise,
In all__ his words most won - der - ful, Most sure_ in all__ his ways.

**O loving wisdom of our God!
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight,
And to the rescue came.**

**O wisest love! that flesh and blood,
Which did in Adam fail
Should strive afresh against the foe,
Should strive and should prevail.**

**And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine,
God's presence and his very self,
And Essence all-divine.**

**O generous love! that he who smote
In Man for man the foe,
The double agony in man
For man should undergo;**

**And in the garden secretly,
And on the Cross on high,
Should teach his brethren, and inspire
To suffer and to die.**

**Praise to the Holiest in the height,
And in the depth be praise;
In all his words most wonderful,
Most sure in all his ways.**

The choir and clergy return to the Sacristy in silence.

HOLY WEEK CEREMONIES 2026

Holy Saturday — 4 April

7.00pm Easter Vigil *†

Easter Sunday — 5 April

7.00am Mass

9.00am Mass

10.30am Solemn Mass *†

5.00pm Solemn Vespers and Benediction *†

6.00pm Mass

*Services marked * are sung by the Cathedral Choir*

Services marked † are livestreamed on stmaryscathedral.org.au/live

Services underlined are celebrated by the Archbishop of Sydney

RECONCILIATION

Holy Saturday — 4 April

11.30am — 12.30pm 4.30pm — 5.30pm