



CHESTER  
CATHEDRAL

# **Tenebrae**

**Good Friday**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2026**  
**8.00pm**

**With the Chester Cathedral Choir**

# WELCOME

We welcome you to Chester Cathedral!  
It is a place where the mission of the church to proclaim God's love is central, and your welcome presence here for worship helps to strengthen this vital act of witness.

We're a paperless Cathedral and are working environmentally to save paper. The service can be downloaded to your device using the QR code at the back of the nave, or by visiting [Services - Chester Cathedral](#). Hymns, readings and responses will be presented on the screens.

## Music

The Reproaches	<i>John Sanders 1933-2003</i>
<i>Motets</i>	
Crucifixus	<i>Antonio Lotti 1667-1740</i>
Lamentations	<i>Osbert Parsley c.1510-85</i>
Christus factus est	<i>Anton Bruckner 1824-96</i>
Ex ore innocentium	<i>John Ireland 1879-1962</i>
Salvator mundi	<i>John Blow 1649-1708</i>

This evening's service is sung by the Cathedral Choir, directed by Philip Rushforth, Organist and Master of the Choristers.

Throughout the service, where indicated, please only stand if you feel able to do so.

## **COLLECTION**

The Cathedral costs around £6000 a day to keep open. We invite you to generously give to ensure our future:

A retiring collection will be taken after the service; donations can otherwise be left with cash or using the

**Contactless Donation Plates.**

A sidesperson can help you with this.

**Via the Cathedral Website**

[www.chestercathedral.com/donate](http://www.chestercathedral.com/donate)

We need your help to make sure that services like this one can continue and that we can keep the doors open for everyone. Thank you for your generous contributions.

# Tenebrae

*Tenebrae, meaning 'The Darkness', originated in the Middle Ages. Originally recited at night in a candle-lit sanctuary, the service accompanied the last days of Holy Week. It is characterised by a passage of light to darkness through the extinguishing of candlelight – traditionally, of fifteen candles - and by chanting of texts from the book of Lamentations. Through its Scripture and song, Tenebrae offers a prolonged meditation and commemoration of Christ's suffering: a darker prelude to the light of Easter. Our service is based around readings from Lamentations and the Seven Last Words of Jesus from the Cross.*

*The final candle is left burning alone in the darkness – symbolic of the anticipation of the resurrection of Christ.*

*Please stand to sing the hymn, as the clergy  
and choir enter the Quire.*

## Hymn

There is a green hill far away,  
without a city wall,  
where the dear Lord was crucified  
who died to save us all.

We may not know, we cannot tell  
what pains he had to bear,  
but we believe it was for us  
he hung and suffered there.

He died that we might be forgiven,  
he died to make us good;  
that we might go at last to heaven,  
saved by his precious blood.

There was no other good enough  
to pay the price of sin;  
he only could unlock the gate  
of heaven, and let us in.

O dearly, dearly has he loved,  
and we must love him too,  
and trust in his redeeming blood,  
and try his works to do.

*C.F. Alexander 1818-95*

*HORSLEY*

*William Horsley 1774-1858*

# Introduction

*Please be seated. Words of informal welcome and introduction are said, concluding with*

Bless the Lord, who forgives all our sins.  
**His mercy endures for ever.**

Standing at the foot of the cross,  
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour  
has taught us

**Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

This is the judgement,  
that the light has come into the world  
**and we loved darkness  
rather than light.**

God is light,  
in whom there is no darkness at all.  
**God sent his Son into the world,  
not to condemn the world,  
but that the world through him  
might be saved.**

All who do evil hate the light,  
and do not come to the light.  
**But all who do what is true  
come to the light.**

Come, let us worship in spirit and in truth.

*Some lights are extinguished.*

Faithful God,  
look upon your people,  
for whose sake our Saviour Jesus Christ  
freely accepted betrayal, rejection  
and death upon the Cross;  
who now in glory pleads for us,  
for ever and ever.  
**Amen.**

## **Bible readings**

Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by?  
Look and see if there is any sorrow like  
my sorrow,  
which was brought upon me,

which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.

From on high he sent fire;

it went deep into my bones;

he spread a net for my feet;

he turned me back;

he has left me stunned, faint all day long.

My transgressions were bound into a yoke;

by his hand they were fastened together;

they weigh on my neck, sapping my strength;

the Lord handed me over

to those whom I cannot withstand.

*Lamentations 1: 12-14*

Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'

*Luke 23:34*

## **The Reproaches**

*The choir sings*

O my people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

I led you out of Egypt, from slavery to freedom, but you led your Saviour to the cross.

Holy is God! Holy and strong!  
Holy immortal One, have mercy on us.

For forty years I led you safely through the  
desert. I fed you with manna from heaven,  
and brought you to a land of plenty: but  
you led your Saviour to the cross.

Holy is God! Holy and strong!  
Holy immortal One, have mercy on us.

What more could I have done for you? I  
planted you as my fairest vine, but you  
yielded only bitterness.

When I was thirsty you gave me vinegar to  
drink, and you pierced your Saviour's side  
with a lance.

Holy is God! Holy and strong!  
Holy immortal One, have mercy on us.

I opened the sea before you, but you  
opened my side with a spear.  
I led you on your way in a plair of cloud,  
but you led me to Pilate's court.

O my people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

I bore you up with manna in the desert,  
but you struck me down and scourged me.  
I gave you saving water from the rock,  
but you gave me gall and vinegar to drink.

O my people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

I gave you a royal sceptre, but you gave me  
a crown of thorns.

I raised you to the height of majesty, but  
you have raised me up high on a cross.

O my people, what have I done to you?  
How have I offended you? Answer me!

*John Sanders 1933-2003*

## **Collect**

Lord Jesus, you were condemned to death  
for political expediency:

be with those who are imprisoned  
for the convenience of the powerful.

You were the victim of unbridled injustice:  
change the minds and motivations

of oppressors and exploiters  
to your way of peace.

To you, Jesus,

innocent though condemned,

be honour and glory

with the Father and the Holy Spirit,

now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The first candle is extinguished. Silence is kept.*

## Bible readings

For these things I weep;  
my eyes flow with tears;  
for a comforter is far from me,  
one to revive my courage;  
my children are desolate,  
for the enemy has prevailed.  
Zion stretches out her hands,  
but there is no one to comfort her;  
the Lord has commanded against Jacob  
that his neighbours should become his  
foes;  
Jerusalem has become a filthy thing among  
them.  
The Lord is in the right,  
for I have rebelled against his word;  
but hear, all you peoples,  
and behold my suffering;  
my young women and young men  
have gone into captivity.

*Lamentations 1:16-18*

Jesus replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you  
will be with me in Paradise.'

*Luke 23:43*

# Hymn

*Please stand to sing together*

Ah, holy Jesu, how hast thou offended,  
that we to judge thee hath in hate pretended?  
By foes derided, by thine own rejected,  
O most afflicted.

Who was the guilty?

Who brought this upon thee?

Alas, my treason, Jesu, hath undone thee.  
'Twas I, Lord Jesu, I it was denied thee:  
I crucified thee.

Lo, the good Shepherd for the sheep is offered;  
the slave hath sinned, and the Son hath suffered;  
for our atonement, while he nothing heedeth,  
God intercedeth.

For me, kind Jesu, was thy incarnation,  
thy mortal sorrow, and thy life's oblation;  
thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion,  
for my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesu, since I cannot pay thee,  
I do adore thee, and will ever pray thee,  
think on thy pity and thy love unswerving,  
not my deserving.

*J. Heerman 1585-1647*

*HERZLIEBSTER JESU*

*trans. Robert Bridges 1844-1930*

*J. Crüger 1598-1662*

# Collect

Lord Jesus, even in your deepest agony  
you listened to the crucified thief:

hear us as we unburden to you  
our deepest fears.

You spoke words of love  
in your hour of death:

help us to speak words of life  
to a dying world.

To you, Jesus,

who offer hope to the hopeless,  
be honour and glory

with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The second candle is extinguished. Silence is kept.*

## Bible readings

The elders of daughter Zion

sit on the ground in silence;

they have thrown dust on their heads  
and put on sackcloth;

the young girls of Jerusalem

have bowed their heads to the ground.

My eyes are spent with weeping;

my stomach churns;

my bile is poured out on the ground  
because of the destruction of my people,  
because infants and babes faint  
in the streets of the city.  
They cry to their mothers,  
'Where is bread and wine?'  
as they faint like the wounded  
in the streets of the city,  
as their life is poured out  
on their mothers' bosom.

*Lamentations 2:10-12*

When Jesus saw his mother and the  
disciple whom he loved standing beside  
her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here  
is your son.' Then he said to the disciple,  
'Here is your mother.' And from that hour  
the disciple took her into his own home.

*John 19:26-27*

## **Motet**

*The choir sings*

Crucifixus etiam pro nobis: sub Pontio  
Pilato passus et sepultus est.

*Christ was crucified for us and our salvation.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate. How long the*

*bitter pains he bore, he gave up his spirit and  
was laid to rest.*

*The Nicene Creed*

*Antonio Lotti 1667-1740*

*English version by John Rutter b.1945*

## **Collect**

Lord Jesus, your mother  
and your dearest friend  
stayed with you to the bitter end,  
yet even while racked with pain  
you ministered to them:  
be with all broken families today  
and care for those  
who long for companionship.  
You cared for your loved ones  
even in your death-throes:  
give us love for one another  
that is stronger  
even than the fear of death.  
To you, Jesus, loving in the face of death,  
be honour and glory  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The third candle is extinguished. Silence is  
kept.*

## Bible readings

What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter Jerusalem?

To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter Zion?

For vast as the sea is your ruin;  
who can heal you?

Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions;  
they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes,  
but have seen oracles for you that are false and misleading.

All who pass along the way clap their hands at you;  
they hiss and wag their heads at daughter Jerusalem;

‘Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty,  
the joy of all the earth?’

All your enemies open their mouths against you;

they hiss, they gnash their teeth,  
they cry: ‘We have devoured her!’

Ah, this is the day we longed for;  
at last we have seen it!’

*Lamentations 2:13-16*

And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'

*Matthew 27:46*

## **Motet**

*The choir sings*

Cui comparabo te? Vel cui assimilabo te, filia Jerusalem: cui exequabo te et consolabor te, virgo filia Sion? Magna est enim velut mare contrition tua: quis medebitur tui?

Nun.

Prophetae tui viderunt tibi falsa et stulta nec aperiebant iniquitatem tuam, ut te ad penitentiam provocarent: viderunt autem tibi assumptiones falsas, et ejectiones.

Samech.

Plausuerunt super te manibus omnes transeuntes per viam: sibilaverunt, et moverunt capita sua super filiam Jerusalem. Jerusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum.

*What can I say for you, to what compare you,  
O daughter Jerusalem?*

*To what can I liken you, that I may comfort*

*you, O virgin daughter Zion?  
For vast as the sea is your ruin;  
who can heal you?  
Your prophets have seen for you  
false and deceptive visions;  
they have not exposed your iniquity  
to restore your fortunes,  
but have seen oracles for you  
that are false and misleading.  
All who pass along the way  
clap their hands at you;  
they hiss and wag their heads  
at daughter Jerusalem.  
O Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God.*

*Lamentations 2:13-15a*

*Osbert Parsley 1511-85*

## **Collect**

Lord Jesus, you lead us,  
through dark and desolate places,  
for you have entered the abyss  
and known the depths of abandonment.  
Put hope in our steps  
and light on our path,  
that we may have words  
to counsel the despairing  
and strength to support the faint hearted;

to you, Jesus,  
who suffered and bore our grief,  
be honour and glory  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The fourth candle is extinguished. Silence is kept.*

## **Bible readings**

The Lord has done what he purposed,  
he has carried out his threat;  
as he ordained long ago,  
he has demolished without pity;  
he has made the enemy rejoice over you,  
and exalted the might of your foes.

Cry aloud to the Lord!

O wall of daughter Zion!

Let tears stream down like a torrent  
day and night!

Give yourself no rest,  
your eyes no respite!

Arise, cry out in the night,  
at the beginning of the watches!

Pour out your heart like water  
before the presence of the Lord!

Lift your hands to him

for the lives of your children,  
who faint for hunger  
at the head of every street.

*Lamentations 2:17-19*

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.'

*John 19:28*

## **Motet**

*The choir sings*

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

*Christ became obedient unto death, even  
death upon the cross. Wherefore God hath  
chosen him to be exalted; his name is of the  
Father, which is higher than all other.*

*Gradual for Maundy Thursday*

*Phil 2:8-9*

*Anton Bruckner 1824-96*

*Trans. John Rutter b.1945*

## Collect

Lord Jesus, you faced the torment  
of barbaric punishment  
and mocking tongue:

be with those who cry out  
in physical agony  
and emotional distress.

You endured unbearable abuse:  
be with those who face torture  
and mockery in our world today.

To you, Jesus,  
the King crowned with thorns,  
be honour and glory  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The fifth candle is extinguished. Silence is kept.*

## Bible readings

I am one who has seen affliction  
under the rod of God's wrath;  
he has driven and brought me  
into darkness without any light;  
against me alone he turns his hand,  
again and again, all day long.

He has made my flesh  
and my skin waste away,  
and broken my bones;  
he has besieged and enveloped me  
with bitterness and tribulation;  
he has made me sit in darkness  
like the dead of long ago.

He has walled me about so that I cannot  
escape;  
he has put heavy chains on me;  
though I call and cry for help,  
he shuts out my prayer;  
he has blocked my ways with hewn stones,  
he has made my paths crooked.

*Lamentations 3:1-9*

When Jesus had received the wine, he said,  
'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and  
gave up his spirit.

*John 19:30*



# Collect

Lord Jesus, you bled in pain  
as the nails were driven into your flesh:  
transform through the mystery  
of your love  
the pain of those who suffer.

To you, Jesus, our crucified Lord,  
be honour and glory  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The sixth candle is extinguished. Silence is kept.*

# Bible readings

My soul is bereft of peace;  
I have forgotten what happiness is;  
so I say, 'Gone is my glory, and all that I  
had hoped for from the Lord.'  
The thought of my affliction and my  
homelessness  
is wormwood and gall!  
My soul continually thinks of it  
and is bowed down within me.  
But this I call to mind,  
and therefore I have hope:

The steadfast love of the Lord never  
ceases,  
his mercies never come to an end;  
they are new every morning;  
great is your faithfulness.  
'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul,  
'therefore I will hope in him.'

*Lamentations 3:17-24*

Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said,  
'Father, into your hands I commend my  
spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last.

*Luke 23:46*

## **Motet**

*The choir sings*

Salvator mundi salva nos, qui per crucem  
et sanguinem redemisti nos. Auxiliare  
nobis, te deprecamur, Deus noster.

*Saviour of the world, save us, thou who by thy  
cross and blood hast redeemed us. Help us,  
we beseech thee, O Lord our God.*

*Antiphon for Holy Cross*

*John Blow 1649-1708*

## Collect

Lord Jesus, you died on the cross  
and entered the bleakest of circumstances:  
give courage to those  
who die at the hands of others.  
In death you entered  
into the darkest place of all:  
illumine our darkness  
with your glorious presence.  
To you, Jesus, your lifeless body  
hanging on the tree of shame,  
be honour and glory  
with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

*The seventh candle is extinguished. Silence is kept.*

## Conclusion

Gracious God,  
by your gift we come again  
to celebrate the days  
of the life-giving passion  
of Christ, your Only-Begotten Son.  
Throughout these most holy days,  
keep us mindful of this,  
his Passover mystery,

by which he has saved us and set us free.  
We ask this in his name  
who is one with you and the Holy Spirit,  
now and for ever.

**Amen.**

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits you have given us,  
for the pains and insults  
you have suffered for us.  
Merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,  
may we know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly  
and follow you more nearly,  
all our days.

**Amen.**

*One candle is left burning, symbolising the  
anticipation of the resurrection.*

## **Recessional Hymn**

*As they depart, the choir sings*

The royal banners forward go,  
the Cross shines forth in mystic glow,  
where he in flesh, our flesh who made,  
our sentence bore, our ransom paid.

Where deep for us the spear was dyed,  
life's torrent rushing from his side,  
to wash us in that precious flood,  
where mingled water flowed, and blood.

Fulfilled is all that David told  
in true prophetic song of old,  
the universal Lord is he,  
who reigns and triumphs from the tree.

O Tree of beauty, Tree of light,  
O Tree with royal purple dight,  
elect on whose triumphal breast  
those holy limbs should find their rest!

On whose dear arms, so widely flung,  
the weight of this world's ransom hung,  
the price of humankind to pay  
and spoil the spoiler of his prey.

O Cross, our one reliance, hail!  
so may thy power with us prevail  
to give new virtue to the saint,  
and pardon to the penitent.

To thee, eternal Three in One,  
let homage meet by all be done:  
whom by thy Cross thou dost restore,  
preserve and govern evermore. Amen.

*Venantius Fortunatus 530-609*  
*Trans. J.M. Neale 1818-66*

*VEXILLA REGIS*  
*Mode i*

*Please leave quietly when you are ready,  
mindful that others may wish to sit or pray in  
silence.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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