

MEDITATION ON THE CROSS

by Edgar A. Cook



CHRISTIANPUBLISHERS

Copyright Notice

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Christian Publishers. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Christian Publishers. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Christian Publishers.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Christian Publishers.***

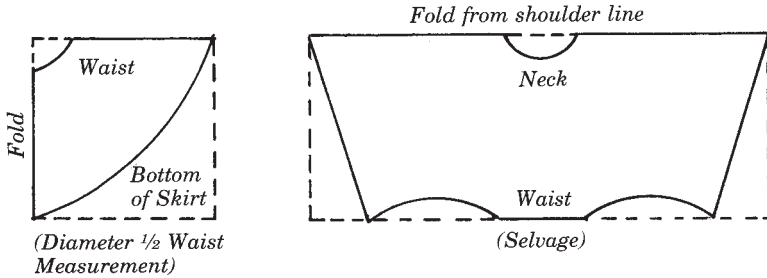
COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Christian Publishers.

**MEDITATION ON
THE CROSS**

By Edgar A. Cook

PRODUCTION NOTES

Costume Suggestions: The costumes recommended are symbolic representations. The men usually wear black pants and black socks. (Ivy League, Levi, etc.) For a top the men wear long-sleeved black knit dance shirts with turtle necks. All the men are in black except the man who represents Christ. He wears the same as above, except it is entirely white. The women all wear flowing white (lavender for Lent) dance gowns (as illustrated below) with colored stoles inverted at the neck and flowing down the back. These costumes can be made from unbleached muslin, sateen, or poplin. Unbleached muslin is very satisfactory.



Materials Required for Office of Tenebrae Presentation:

12 long beeswax candles with bobeche or drop protectors (at least 15-inch candles).

1 huge Christ candle on altar table. Should be at least six inches in diameter and several feet tall to stand for Christ as Light of the World and also to represent a Paschal Candle of Resurrection.

Music: "Were You There": Negro spiritual to be used for the dance drama in this service. The solo setting recommended is the one by H.T. Burleigh, published by Recordi. Octavos of this version are available in all voice ranges. They can be purchased at music stores or by writing to Lyon & Healy Inc., 243 S. Wabash Ave. Chicago IL, 60604.

SUGGESTED ORDER OF SERVICE

The Prelude

The Call to Worship or Christian Greetings

The Hymn or Folk Rock Song

The Versicles for the Day

The Chorale or Solo

Unison Prayers (Litany of Confession, Invocation of Holy Spirit)

The Dance-Drama of the Crucifixion (In place of a sermon)

The Offertory

The Prayer of Self-Dedication

The Modern Office of Tenebrae

The Solo Meditation ("When I Survey the Wondrous Cross")

The Darkness

The Relighting of the Christ Candle

The Salutation and Lord's Prayer

The Discipline of Silence

(No Postlude)

Suggestions for a Good Friday Liturgy

The Dance-Drama of Crucifixion and the Office of Tenebrae should be celebrated in a setting of liturgy where the entire congregation has gathered. It should be celebrated on the Holy Day of Good Friday following the accepted order of the local congregation. It is suggested that no formal sermon be preached with the service since the dance-drama is virtually a nonverbal sermon in symbolic movement. Some churches may elect to use folk music for the entire service instead of regular hymns because the Negro spiritual "Were You There" forms the musical basis of the dance-drama. If folk or contemporary music is desired the following are recommended:

"Crucify That Man" — Written by Geoffrey Ainger. Arranged by Paul Abels. Taken from *Songs from Notting Hill*. It appears as No. 4 in the *Hymns for Now* published by the Walther League's Workers Quarterly, Vol. 39, No. 1, July 1967. Chicago, Illinois.

"Good Friday" or "Hanging on a Tree He Was" — By Mary Edwards. Originally published in *Songs from the Square*. It now appears as No. 12 in the *Hymns for Now*.

"Bitter Was the Night" — Folk song about Peter's denial with words and music by Sydney Carter. It appears in *Now Songs* compiled by Malcolm Stewart and published by Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1967.

"Lord of the Dance" — Words by Sydney Carter. Tune arranged and adapted by Sydney Carter from the Shaker Tune, "Gift to be Simple." Originally published by Galliard Ltd. in England, 1967. Now published in America by Galaxy Music Corp., NY, 1969, p. 13. This also appears as No. 6 in the *Hymns for Now*.

"They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love" — Words and Music by Father Peter Sholtes. Published in *Hymns for Young Christians* by F.E.L. Church Publications Ltd., Chicago, 1967. It also appears as No. 24 in *Hymns for Now*.

"They Crucified My Lord" — ("And He Never Said a Mumblin Word"). This Negro spiritual is effective in this service, although its similarity to the spiritual, "Were You There," might suggest not using it since "Were You There" is the main music for the dance-drama.

If the congregation prefers to use regular hymns for this liturgy, the following hymns are suggested:

"Alone Thou Goest Forth, O Lord" by Peter Abelard. Translated by F. Bland Tucker. Sung to the tune *Bangor* by William Tans'ur.

Hymn No. 159 in The Pilgrim Hymnal

Hymn No. 68 in The Episcopal Hymnal

Hymn No. 427 in The Methodist Hymnal

"In the Cross of Christ I Glory" by John Bowring. Sung to the tune *Rathburn* by Ithamar Conkey.

Hymn No. 157 in The Pilgrim Hymnal

Hymn No. 154 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

Hymn No. 336 in The Episcopal Hymnal

Hymn No. 416 in The Methodist Hymnal

"O Sacred Head Now Wounded" Latin: 13th century, German by Paul Gerhardt. Translated by James W. Alexander. Sung to tune *Passion Chorale* by Leo Hassler.

Hymn No. 170 in The Pilgrim Hymnal

Hymn No. 15 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

Hymn No. 75 in The Episcopal Hymnal

Hymn No. 418 in The Methodist Hymnal

"There Is a Green Hill Far Away" by Cecil F. Alexander. Sung to the tune *Meditation* by John Gower.

Hymn No. 172 in The Pilgrim Hymnal

Hymn No. 157 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

Hymn No. 65 in The Episcopal Hymnal

Hymn No. 414 in The Methodist Hymnal

"Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended" by Johann Hermann. Translated by Robert Bridges. Sung to the tune *Herzliebster Jesu* by Johann Cruger.

Hymn No. 163 in The Pilgrim Hymnal

Hymn No. 158 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

Hymn No. 71 in The Episcopal Hymnal

Hymn No. 412 in The Methodist Hymnal

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" by Isaac Watts. Sung to the tune *Hamburg* by Lowell Mason.

Hymn No. 177 in The Pilgrim Hymnal

Hymn No. 152 in The Presbyterian Hymnal

Hymn No. 337 in The Episcopal Hymnal

Hymn No. 435 in The Methodist Hymnal

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Dance-Drama of the Crucifixion
The Modern Office of Tenebrae

The Dance-Drama of the Crucifixion

A Sermon in Symbolic Movement

Dancers Required: Seven men and three women:

2 men — “Human Cross”

4 men — Soldiers

1 man — Jesus

3 women — Three Marys

Costumes: The pattern for a woman’s dance robe is diagramed in production notes. It should be of lavender color for the season of Lent. The men can wear solid black dance tights and tops or black dance tops with regular black Levi pants. The one man to portray Jesus should be in solid white — pants or tights, and tops. There are no props; everything is suggested by pantomime and dance.

Music: Negro spiritual, “Were You There” — suggested Burleigh solo setting because of its fitting accompaniment. Note: If you are using the Burleigh setting, you must repeat the first part of the solo twice and the last part twice as follows:

Were you there when they crucified my Lord

Were you there when they crucified my Lord

O . . . sometimes it causes me to tremble,

tremble, tremble

Were you there when they crucified my Lord

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree

O . . . sometimes it causes me to tremble,

tremble, tremble

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb

O . . . sometimes it causes me to tremble,

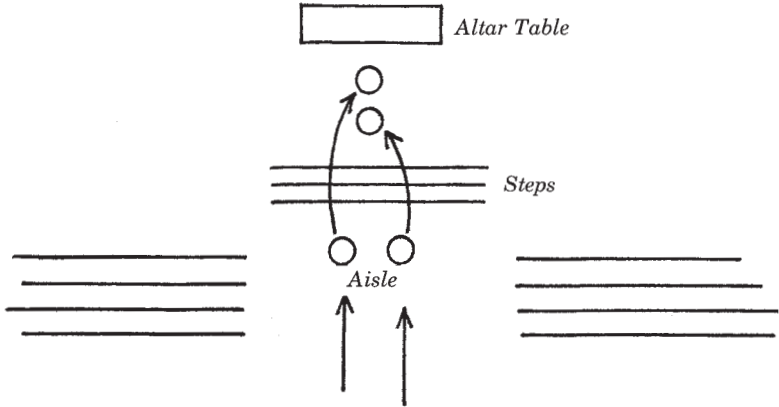
tremble, tremble

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb

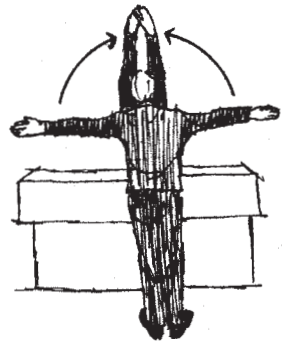
8
9 This dance drama of the crucifixion is to be portrayed almost
10 as a “slow-motion” film. The movements should be carefully
11 synchronized to the music of the Negro spiritual as a pantomime of
12 the words sung. The dancers should strive to move in a mood of deep
13 reverence. Their faces should reveal inner experiencing of the sorrow
14 and joy implicit in this remembered event. Slow, sustained movement
15 is the most impressive and expressive means for this dance drama,
16 even though it often proves difficult for young dancers to master.
17 During the introduction and opening phrases of this spiritual, the
18 dancers form a procession to the altar or Lord’s table. Depending
19 upon the length of your church’s central aisle, you will need to
20 carefully time this procession so that all the persons are in the chancel
21 position by the words, “Oh . . . sometimes” in the music.

FIRST VERSE

On the introduction to the solo, "Were You There", the two men who will be the "HUMAN CROSS" move first down the central aisle to a position right in front of the altar or Lord's table.

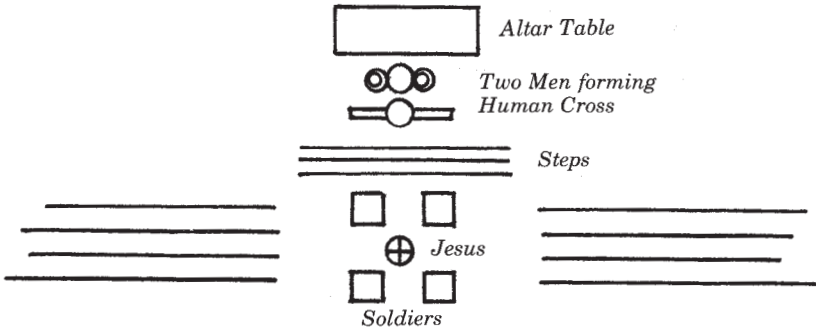


As soon as they arrive in position with one man standing immediately behind the other man, they begin to raise their arms together moving them in a great arc as if pointing to the right and left. The man in front stops when his arms are extended horizontal with the floor, with his palms flat, the palm side facing the altar. The man in the rear continues to raise his arms when the first man stops until they are pointing straight to the ceiling. The thumbs can be slightly linked and the arms should press against ears on each side of the head. (These two men have now formed a "Human Cross.")



1 **Were you there when they crucified my Lord**
 2 **Were you there when they crucified my Lord**

3
 4 **During the first two lines of "Were You There," the four**
 5 **men who represent SOLDIERS (in black) and CHRIST (in**
 6 **white) now progress toward the chancel area.**

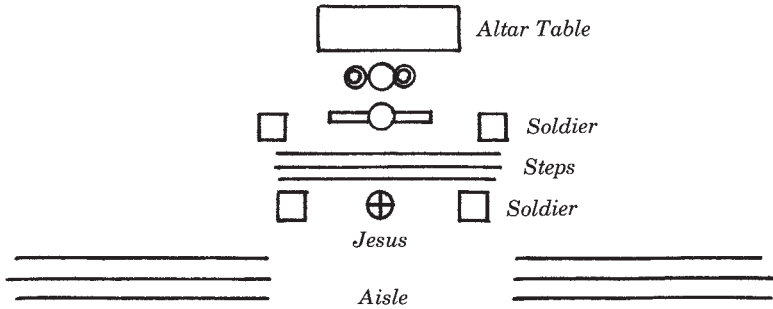


19 **The four SOLDIERS walk in military stiffness, while**
 20 **JESUS pantomimes carrying a**
 21 **heavy cross, bent over from the**
 22 **load, and moving hesitantly**
 23 **with grief.**



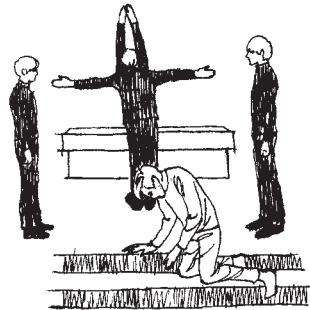
25 **When the first two SOLDIERS**
 26 **arrive at chancel steps, they**
 27 **should move to each side**
 28 **slightly, turning in to face each**
 29 **other in proper official mood.**
 30 **JESUS arrives at the bottom of**
 31 **the chancel steps and the other**
 32 **two SOLDIERS are on either side of him slightly to the right**
 33 **and left so as not to obscure his pantomime action.**

34 *(See illustration on next page.)*



Oh . . . sometimes it causes me to tremble,
tremble, tremble

On the “Oh . . .”, JESUS lifts his arms to gesture toward the cross and look toward the skies, as if to say, “My time has come.” As the singer continues with the words, “It causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble”, JESUS sinks slowly to his knees with his face averted from the cross in deep sorrow of spirit. If it can be accomplished gracefully in slow motion, it is effective to have Jesus move even to a prostrate position on the floor before the cross, but this is not effective if the vision line in the church obscures the meaning of this action.

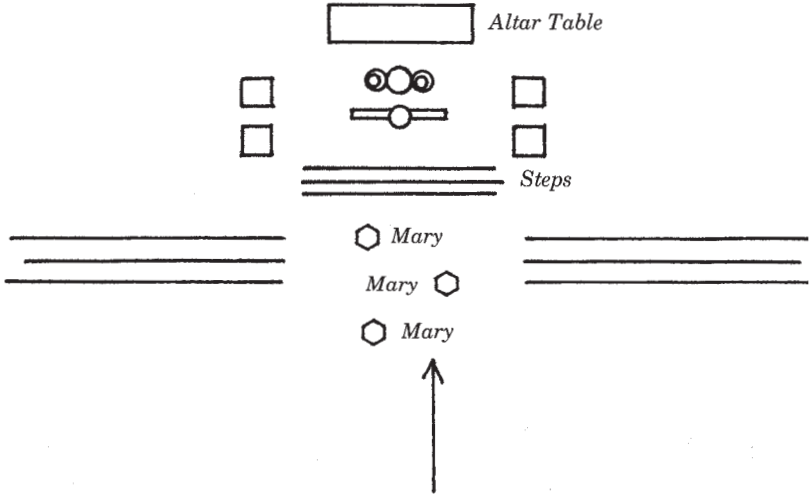


On the closing line: “Were you there when they crucified my Lord”, JESUS slowly moves to a kneeling-up position and looks steadily at the cross in submission.

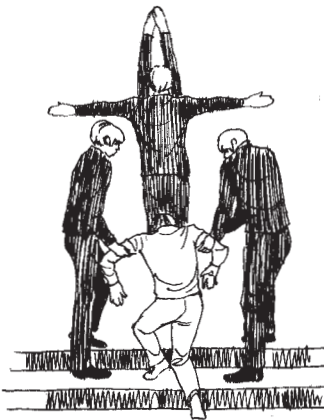
SECOND VERSE

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree
Were you there when they nailed him to the tree

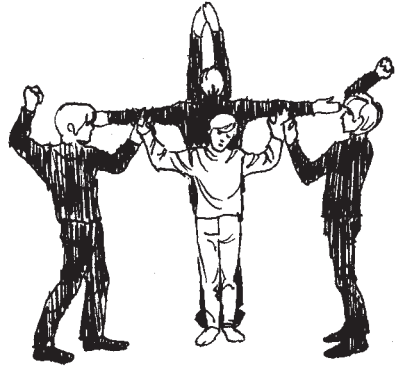
On the first lines of this second verse, the Three MARYS come slowly down the central aisle toward the altar table.



As they move forward, the two SOLDIERS who were the last in and are close to JESUS, move toward him and raise him up turning him slowly to hand him into the hands of the other two SOLDIERS.



1 On the second repeat line,
 2 these other two SOLDIERS
 3 raise JESUS' hands to out-
 4 stretched "Human Cross" and
 5 ceremonially pantomime
 6 three great hammer blows
 7 which nail him to the tree.
 8 During these hammer blows,
 9 the first two SOLDIERS have
 10 been moving slightly out from
 11 the center to make for better
 12 vision line for this central
 13 action (all in almost slow
 14 motion camera style).



15
 16 Oh . . . sometimes it causes me to tremble,
 17 tremble, tremble
 18



19 When the singer has reached these
 20 lines of the second verse, the Three
 21 MARYS who have come down the
 22 central aisle, now raise their hands
 23 in a pointing gesture of horror,
 24 pointing first toward the cross and
 25 then to the skies. When they do
 26 this, the two SOLDIERS who
 27 nailed Jesus to the tree move
 28 slightly apart from center, to
 29 dramatize the central action.
 30 When the singer reaches the
 31 words, "tremble, tremble,
 32 tremble", each MARY individually

33 shakes her hands sideways in a nervous gesture implying an
 34 awesome trembling of soul, and anguish of spirit.

35 As they move their hands in a trembling gesture, they also

1 sink individually to their knees with faces averted from this
 2 spectacle, body slumped downwards in despair. Sometimes
 3 the gestures of "trembling" are more effective if each MARY
 4 moves slightly forward before she trembles and sinks to her
 5 knees.

6 Were you there when they nailed him to the tree

7 During this last line of the second verse, the Three MARYS
 8 slowly bring their heads and shoulders upright again, in "slow
 9 motion" as if meditating on this tragedy they see.

10 11 THIRD VERSE

12
13 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb

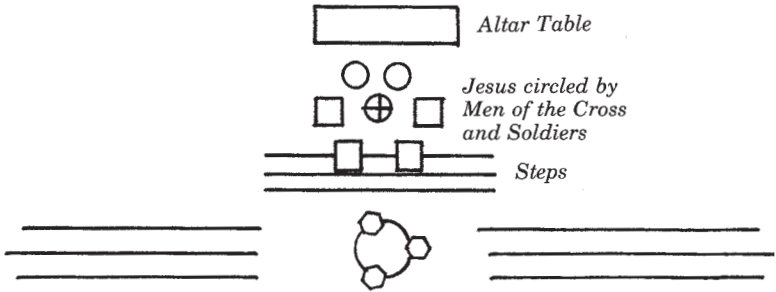
14 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb

15 All of these movements now following are a dove-tailing
 16 sequence as the SOLDIERS take Jesus down from the cross
 17 and lay him in the tomb. The two SOLDIERS who nailed
 18 JESUS to the tree move to him and take his hands off the
 19 crossbars of the cross and lower them to his sides. The two
 20 MEN who have formed the cross with their upraised and
 21 outstretched hands lower them slowly in reverse of when they
 22 raised the cross, the inner man next to the altar table lowering
 23 his, and the other man joining him as they let their hands fall
 24 to their sides.

25 On the second line, the two MEN
 26 who formed the "Human Cross",
 27 slowly turn around behind the
 28 figure of JESUS; the two
 29 SOLDIERS who have just taken
 30 Jesus' hands off the cross, lower
 31 him slowly to his knees, and the
 32 other two SOLDIERS come
 33 forward slowly to form a tight
 34 circle of bodies which wall
 35 JESUS into the center.



1 During this last line, "... laid him in the tomb", the Three
 2 MARYS slowly arise from their kneeling position and move
 3 toward a circular grouping, slightly back in the central aisle.
 4



15 Oh ... sometimes, it causes me to tremble,
 16 tremble, tremble



During this line, the Three MARYS form a circle with their heads hidden on each others arms, moving in a slow circle to the music, and stopping once with heads back in anguish, and then forward again in a slow funeral-like circular movement with heads sobbing softly into each others' shoulders.

29 Were you there when they laid him in the tomb
 30

31 On this last line, the Three MARYS slowly lower them-
 32 selves to the floor in the last position and form a circle of
 33 sorrowing women, bent inward toward the center of their
 34 circle.
 35

FOURTH VERSE

Were you there when he rose up from the grave



On this first line, "Were you there when he rose up from the grave", the MEN who have formed a tight circle of black around the kneeling figure of JESUS in the tomb, move slowly apart, like the opening of heavy cathedral doors, to form a black line of men as a backdrop to JESUS who has moved from a kneeling, slumped-over position, to a kneeling, upright, head-up position.

Were you there when he rose up from the grave

On the repeat of this line, JESUS slowly moves to a standing position, and at the same time, the Three MARYS raise their heads and recognize the resurrection, moving also to a standing position facing JESUS.

Oh . . . sometimes it causes me to praise him,
praise him, praise him

On "Oh", JESUS raises his hands in gesture toward the

MARYS much like the gesture of Thorvalsen's "Statue of Christ." At this same time, the women raise their hands and faces in a gesture of utter joy, with their arms making a sweeping circle from the waist around, outwardly to the skies, and then downward to the sides.



Then on the remainder of this line, while **JESUS** holds his position, the **MARYS** individually run forward and kneel in adoration with arms up, gesturing toward **JESUS**. They should not end up in a straight line, but in staggered positions.

Were you there when he rose up from the grave
On this closing line, the Three **MARYS** remain in position, but the **SOLDIERS** move slightly backward, and several kneel in adoration.

CLOSING

The climax of this dance drama is this tableau of adoration. After a few moments of frozen action, the tableau

1 begins to dissolve away. This effect can be achieved by JESUS
2 slowly letting his hands and arms lower to a resting position
3 beside his body. Following this movement, the other
4 DANCERS similarly relax their postures. Slowly all rise and
5 in reverse order to the opening, they return back down the
6 aisle in absolute silence. Their faces are uplifted in quiet peace
7 and joy. It would almost seem that they are being drawn away
8 by some unseen force.

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34

35

The Modern Office of Tenebrae

EXPLANATION

The ideal of a Christian life was that of constant communion with God, manifested by frequent prayer and devotion. A person who did not pray every day would not have been considered a Christian by the early church. The custom of Jewish daily devotion continued among the early Christians. They would pray either privately, or as families in the early morning. They also would pray when they gathered together for the midday meal. They would pray again at the end of the day, when the sun disappeared, the shadows fell, and the household lamps were lit, and later just before falling asleep.

When the monastic communities came into existence, it became a custom for them to gather together regularly every day for certain hours of prayer and devotion. These came to be known as the "canonical hours" or the "Divine Office." These eight hours each day supplied a regular scheme for the singing of the psalms and the reading of the Scriptures. The eight hours were called: Nocturns (or Matins), Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, and Compline. Some developed out of the earlier family traditions of prayer and devotions at sunrise (Matins), at sunset (Vespers), the midday meal (Nones) and before sleeping (Compline). The others were patterned after scriptural suggestions or as work-breaks.

Now this name, "Office of Tenebrae" became attached to the practice in the monastic community of singing the Matins and Lauds of the last three days of Holy Week on the afternoon or evening of the preceding day. These psalms and readings for these three days came to be a special Holy Week service which was accompanied by a remarkable ceremony. A triangular stand of candles was placed near the altar, and one candle was extinguished at the end of each psalm, until only one was left lit. Then after all the lights were out, this one candle was hidden behind the altar table while they all sang Miserere (Lord, have mercy). Then after a period of silence, this remaining candle was brought out and left lit at the top of the

1 triangular stand.

2 It is obvious that this ancient ceremony of Tenebrae was a
3 combination of Scripture lessons and extinguishing of candles
4 symbolic of the flight of Jesus' disciples, the approach of the dark
5 hate of Jesus' enemies, and the darkness of the days of our Lord in
6 the tomb.

7 We suggest that the "Modern Office of Tenebrae" be used with
8 "The Dance-Drama of the Crucifixion" as a meaningful celebration
9 for the Good Friday service. Presented after the Dance-Drama and
10 the Offertory, this ceremony provides a deeply moving celebration of
11 Christ's crucifixion.

12
13 **Participants required:** 12 persons dressed in black to act as
14 Candle Bearers, and a Pastor or Lector.

15
16 *(After the Offertory, Doxology and dedication of offerings, the*
17 *CANDLE BEARERS progress into the church with their candles*
18 *burning. They arrange themselves into a cruciform, [cross form]*
19 *each holding his/her candle about the same height, facing the*
20 *congregation. The PASTOR or LECTOR reads a Scripture*
21 *passage, and after each reading, a CANDLE BEARER*
22 *extinguishes his light. After he has dramatically extinguished*
23 *his candle, he leaves the church, walking to the back. As the*
24 *candles are extinguished, the lights in the nave and chancel*
25 *should be lowered or dimmed more and more until there is*
26 *darkness except for the Christ candle on the altar table. If there*
27 *is no dimmer on the electricity, it is best to start with a dark*
28 *room or with only one light.)*

30 1. SHADOW OF BETRAYAL

31
32 **PASTOR:** *(Or LECTOR)* "When it was evening, he sat at table
33 with the twelve disciples, and as they were eating, he
34 said: 'Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.' And
35 they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him, one after

another, 'Is it I, Lord?'

He answered: 'He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me. The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.' Judas, who betrayed him said, 'Is it I, Lord?' And Jesus said to him: 'You have said so.' " [Matthew 26:20-25]

I remember this shadow of betrayal and I wonder — have I ever contemplated betraying my friend?
(First CANDLE BEARER extinguishes his candle and leaves church.)

2. SHADOW OF DESERTION

PASTOR: "Then Jesus said to them, 'You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter declared to him, 'Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away.' 'Truly I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times.' Peter said to him, 'Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you.' And so said all the disciples." [Matthew 26:31-35]

I remember this shadow of desertion, and I wonder — when there's trouble, do I run?
(Second CANDLE BEARER extinguishes his candle and leaves church.)

3. AGONY OF SOUL

PASTOR: "And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. And when he came to the place he said to them, 'Pray that you



CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

MEDITATION ON THE CROSS

by Edgar A. Cook.

*For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script,
please contact us at:*

CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS

P.O. Box 248 - Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406

Toll Free: 1-844-841-6387 - Fax (319) 368-8011

customerservice@christianpub.com