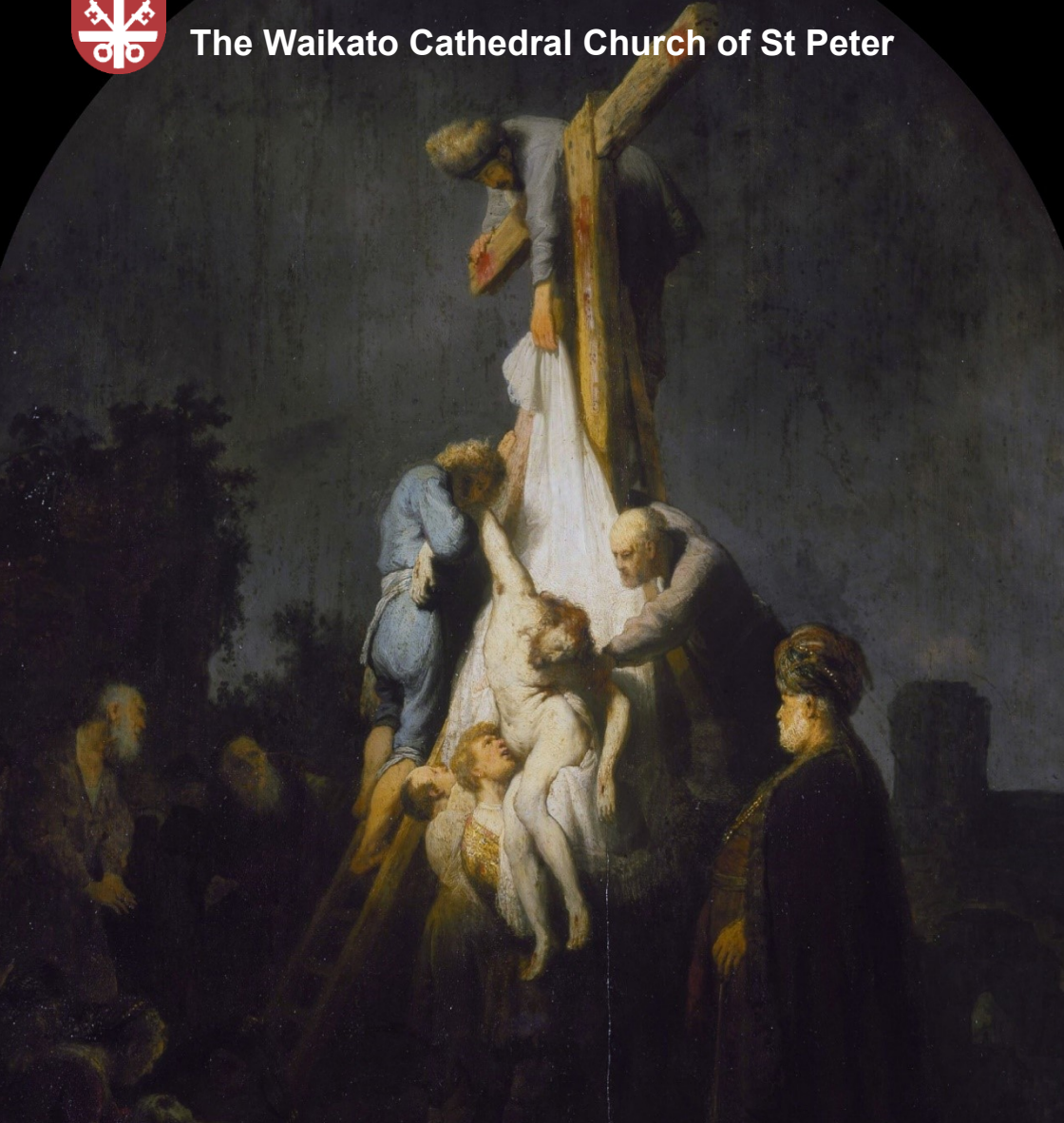




Te Whare Karakia Matua o Pita Tapu Ki Waikato
The Waikato Cathedral Church of St Peter



Descent from the Cross (c. 1632-1633)
Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn, 1606-1669

Tenebrae, Good Friday, 29 March 2024, 8.00pm
Lead by: The Very Reverend Julian Perkins

The long silence

A man had a dream that it was the end of time. Billions and billions of people were assembled on a great plain before the throne of God, waiting to be judged. Some were fearful but others were angry. A woman said, 'How can God judge us? What does He know about suffering? We endured terror, beatings, torture, death.' Then she pulled up her sleeve to show a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp on her arm. Then an African man lowered his collar to show an ugly rope burn around his neck. 'What about this?' he asked. "Executed for no crime but the colour of my skin".

Next a small child covered in bruises and disfigured by prolonged abuse said, 'The constant cruelty, and neglect I endured from those who should have loved me was beyond, beyond ... 'and her voice trailed off to be taken up by others who told similar stories.

All who raised their voices had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering he had permitted during their lives on earth. "Clearly He does not care" they said. "He lives a life of privilege in heaven where all is sweetness and light, where there is no weeping, no fear, no hunger, no hatred. He is completely out of touch with the lot of the dispossessed and broken of the world."

They decided that God should be sentenced to live on earth — as a man. To experience first-hand what he permitted among people. But because he was God, they would set certain safeguards to be sure he could not use his divine powers to help himself.

"Let him be born a Jew" they said. "Let the legitimacy of his birth be doubted so that no one will know who his real father is. Give him a work so difficult that even his family will think he is out of his mind when he tries to do it. Let him be betrayed by his dearest friends. Let him be arrested on false charges, tried before a prejudiced jury, convicted by a cowardly judge.

At last, let Him see what it means to be terribly alone, completely abandoned by everyone. Let him be tortured and mocked. Then let Him die. Let Him die so that there can be no doubt He died. Let there be a host of witnesses to verify it.”

As each portion of the sentence was announced, loud murmurs of approval went up from the great crowd. However, at the end of sentencing, a long silence ensued. No one uttered a word. No one moved. For suddenly all knew. God had already served his sentence.

About the service of Tenebrae

The service of worship tonight is taken from an early Christian service called Tenebrae. The name Tenebrae is the Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows." Tonight we will experience only a small portion of Christ's pain and suffering the day of His crucifixion. One of the most conspicuous features of the service is the gradual extinguishing of candles until only a single candle, considered a symbol of our Lord, remains. As it gets darker and darker we can reflect on the great emotional and physical pain that was very real for Jesus that evening. Toward the end of the service, the Christ candle is hidden, typifying the apparent victory of the forces of evil over good. At the very end, a loud noise is made, symbolizing the earthquake at the time of his death (Matthew 27) and his resurrection (Matthew 28:2). At the moment of the earthquake, the temple veil was torn apart, making the Holy of Holies exposed to public view. This is understood to represent God's change toward us with direct access to him, no longer requiring the ceremonial acts of the priests for our forgiveness of sin. The hidden candle is then restored to its place, symbolizing the triumph of good over evil. By this single light we all depart this service in silence.



Welcome

(Side and altar lights are off. Church is dark. The lights are very dim and are turned off at the beginning of the first Gospel reading.)

Priest: The Lord be with you

People: And also with you.

Priest: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

People: His mercy endures forever.

Priest: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your Holy Name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Priest: And this is the judgment, that the light has come into this world, and we loved darkness rather than light.

People: God is light, in whom there is no darkness at all.

Priest: For God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

People: Every one that does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light. But all who do what is true, come to the light.

Priest: Come, let us worship in spirit and truth.

Silent Prayer

Priest: Most gracious God, look with mercy upon your family gathered here for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, given into sinful hands, and suffered death upon the cross. Strengthen our faith and forgive our betrayals as we enter the way of His passion; through Him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn *(Please stand to sing)*

— 1 —

My song is love unknown,
my Saviour's love to me,
love to the loveless shown
that they might lovely be.
O who am I
that for my sake
my Lord should take
frail flesh and die?

— 3 —

Sometimes they strew his way,
and his sweet praises sing,
resounding all the day
hosannas to their King.
Then "Crucify!"
is all their breath,
and for his death
they thirst and cry.

— 2 —

He came from his blest throne
salvation to bestow,
but all made strange, and none
the longed-for Christ would know.
But O my friend,
my friend indeed,
who at my need,
his life did spend.

— 4 —

They rise, and needs will have
my dear Lord made away;
a murderer they save,
the Prince of Life they slay.
Yet cheerful he
to suffering goes,
that he his foes
from thence might free.

— 5 —

Here might I stay and sing,
no story so divine:
never was love, dear King,
never was grief like thine.
This is my friend,
in whose sweet praise
I all my days
could gladly spend.

Samuel Crossman (c.1624-1684)

(All lights except the candles will be turned off)

- Reading: Matthew 26:30-46
- Choir Anthem: 'Will you not watch with me'
from the Crucifixion, John Stainer (1840-1901)
- Silence: *(during which the first candle is extinguished)*
- Reading: Matthew 26:47-56
- Silence: *(during which the second candle is extinguished)*
- Reading: Matthew 26:57-75
- Choir Anthem: The Reproaches, *John Sanders (1933-2003)*
- Silence: *(during which the third candle is extinguished)*
- Reading: Matthew 27:1-10
- Silence: *(during which the fourth candle is extinguished)*
- Reading: Matthew 27:11-26
- Choir Anthem: Crucifixus, *Antonio Lotti (ca. 1667-1740)*
He was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate: he suffered and was buried.
- Silence: *(during which the fifth candle is extinguished)*
- Reading: Matthew 27:27-44
- Silence: *(during which the sixth candle is extinguished)*
- Reading: Matthew 27:45-54

Choir Anthem: In manus tuas, *Thomas Tallis (1505-1585)*
Into your hands O Lord, I commend my spirit.
You have redeemed me, O God of truth.

Silence: *(during which the seventh candle is hidden)*

(Percussionist symbolizes the agony of Jesus' death and the earthquake)

Reading: Matthew 27:55-61

Silence:

Reading: Isaiah 53:4-9

Priest: May Jesus Christ,
who for our sake became obedient unto death,
even death on the cross,
keep you and strengthen you
this night and forever more.
Amen.

Silence: *(during which the seventh candle, symbolising the light of Christ, is revealed again)*

The ministers and people depart in silence.

If you wish, you may remain in contemplative silence and depart when you are ready to do so.