

Good Friday Service of the Three Nails

This is based on a service that was originally devised by The Rev. Carol Roth for Waverly Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, PA. You may insert your own news stories, as Rev. Roth did, and as we have done here.

We are providing the full readings here for the purposes of quicker planning, but it is recommended that neither the scripture nor the news accounts be published in the bulletin so that people experience the language orally.

Because some of these readings plumb the depths, a pastor needs to be available to talk afterwards.

Gather Beforehand:

*Nails to hand to congregants upon their entry into the service
People to hand out the nails and bulletins
Seven tapers and a Christ candle, all lit before the service begins
People to extinguish the candles
Someone to dim lights as each candle is extinguished
A few people to start the responses during the Solemn Reproaches
Choir
Soloist who can wail the spiritual a capella
Someone to do a reading and discussion of the Passion narrative with elementary-age children. This person needs to welcome and be able to handle any questions that arise in an informal, conversational way.
Nursery worker(s) for toddlers and infants*

Announcements:

*Warning and children's arrangements.
Some of the readings may bring things out of the darkness of our past which you will be invited to offer to God. If you'd like to talk with someone afterwards, {NAME} will be available after the service {WHERE}
Darkness at the end of the service. Respond with **Lord, have mercy** when you hear the words "a cross for your Savior at the end."
Depart in silence and come join us for the rest of the story at {times, places} of other Holy Week services.*

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As people enter the sanctuary, they are handed a nail. You could hand them each three nails, if desired. The following explanation appears in the bulletin:

This service juxtaposes scriptural accounts of Jesus' crucifixion with news accounts of suffering that is occurring yet today. In the silence between readings, contemplate the ways in which sin is still torturing humanity.

Warning: *some of this material is disturbing and not appropriate for younger children. Parents and guardians are advised to take elementary-aged and younger children to {WHERE} where the older children will be reading the Passion narrative and discussing it together with {NAME}.*

Jesus' crucifixion was not uncommon. Crosses lined the roads on the outskirts of Roman cities as deterrents meant to keep a conquered people in check. Hundreds were crucified each day. As crucifixions go, Jesus' was merciful in that he hung on the cross only three hours. His body was not left there to be picked clean by birds or eaten by stray dogs who resided in the hunger of hope beneath the crosses. Yet in his suffering, Jesus took the worst of human sin. He bore our sin in his body on the cross (I Peter 2:24), and the results of our sin are splayed out in his crimson torture against a bruised sky.

As you entered the sanctuary tonight, you received a nail [or three nails], a symbol not only of our own brokenness as victims and perpetrators of sin, but also of our need for the healing power of God's redemptive love offered through the cross. Later in the service, we will take up an offering of these nails. Offer up your sin, your brokenness, so that, crucified with Christ, it might be transformed in the power of resurrection new life.

PRELUDE Partita on "O Sacred Head" Gordon Young

CALL TO WORSHIP See Phil. 2:8

Blessed be the name of the Lord our God,
who redeems us from sin and death.
For us and for our salvation,
Christ became obedient unto death,
even death on a cross.
Blessed be the name of the Lord.¹

HYMN In the Cross of Christ I Glory PH 84

A LITANY FOR GOOD FRIDAY

Our Savior now enters the valley of the shadow of death
where evil waits in savage glee.

**Lord, hold your child in your arms,
even as his arms, stretched wide on a cross, embrace us.**

Our Savior submits now to the worst
that all the powers of earth and hell can array against him.

**Lord, hold your child in your arms
even as his arms, stretched wide on a cross, embrace us.**

Our Savior suffers by human wiles twisted in torture,
yet intercedes on behalf of the good of all.

**Lord, hold your child in your arms
even as his arms, stretched wide on a cross, embrace us.**

Though we stand at a distance, we pray with our Lord.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

We pray for all in the world who know the trauma of death's ever-stalking presence
and destruction's delight in feeding upon our fear.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

We pray for all who scoff at this cross

because they have been wounded by it or because they do not understand.

¹ *Book of Common Worship*, p. 281.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

We pray for ourselves, who choose to stand at a distance,
afraid to enter into the full mystery of your redemptive power.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

In this trembling hour of terror, O God, grant us faith:

**that we may continue to trust in your presence,
even when defeat and despair triumph.**

In this hour of dread, grant us hope:

**that, though our Lord is dead and buried,
his spirit of compassion may remain with us.**

Through your grace, help us to believe:

**that your faithfulness will triumph
even when our faith flees and darkness rules the day.**

This we ask through Christ, your Son, our brother and Lord.

Amen.

ANTHEM

Could You Not Watch With Me One Hour?

Mary Kay Beall

It was late in the evening when Jesus knelt to pray.
He was troubled and anxious and he asked his friends to stay.
What he needed was comfort, but instead, we hear him say,
“Could you not watch with me one hour?”

One hour! Only one hour! Could you not watch with me one hour?
Could you not watch? One hour! Only one brief hour!
Could you not watch with me one hour?

As the night gathered round him, he wrestled all alone.
In the silence he trembled and approached his Father’s throne.
Then he turned in the darkness, and we might have heard him groan,
“Could you not watch with me one hour?”

At the last, it was settled; he knew what had to be.
There was no turning back now from his dread destiny.
See the sweat on his brow as he whispers one last plea,
“Could you not watch with me one hour?”

OR

HYMN

Go to Dark Gethsemane (vs. 1-2)

PH 97

SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:39-54a

He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. When he reached the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.” Then he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and prayed, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.” Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground. When he got up from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.”

While he was still speaking, suddenly a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him; but Jesus said to him, “Judas, is

it with a kiss that you are betraying the Son of Man?” When those who were around him saw what was coming, they asked, “Lord, should we strike with the sword?” Then one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him. Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple police, and the elders who had come for him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as if I were a bandit? When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!”

Then they seized [Jesus] and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house.

NAIL OF BETRAYAL *The Sexual Abuse by Women of Children and Teenagers*

Adapted from the transcript of UK TV Program airing October 6, 1997, on *Panorama* - BBC1
Accessed at <http://www.menweb.org/panofull.htm>

Chris Roberts was removed from his home because of physical abuse by his father. What the authorities didn't even consider at the time was that his mother might be sexually abusing him.

Chris’ earliest memories were from when he was two and a half or three years old when he was beaten and sexually abused by both his mother and father. His mother would keep Chris and his three brothers home from school and playschool to use for her sexual perversions while the father was at work.

At this point in time the mother had lost a set of twins. Chris was told that he was to blame for the twins’ death. His feelings of guilt helped ensure he would submit to yet more abuse.

“There's no way you can describe how awful it was,” Chris said. “You couldn't put it into words. Imagine your worst nightmare come true; it probably doesn't even come close to it.”

OR

Young Slumdog Actor Gets Beating From Father

Adapted from Will McCahill, posted Feb 27, 2009, *Newser*
<http://www.newser.com/story/52019/young-slumdog-actor-gets-beating-from-father.html>

Angered that his son wouldn't play to a crowd welcoming 10-year-old *Slumdog Millionaire* actor Azharuddin Mohammed back to Mumbai, the boy's father administered a public beating. The child star arrived home following the film's Oscar triumph, and had the day off school. When he wouldn't appear for onlookers outside his slum dwelling, father Ismail, 45, launched a 30-second flurry of kicks and slaps.

“It was like a scene out of *Slumdog Millionaire*,” one witness said of the incident. The mother tried to intervene, but the father didn't stop until the little boy escaped and cowered in a corner. “I was so confused and stressed by my son's homecoming, “the father said by way of apology. “I love my boy, and I am very happy to have him home.”

The reading ends with the reader going straight into the Kyrrie:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The first candle is extinguished

SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:54b-65

Now Peter was following at a distance. When [those who had seized Jesus] had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Now the men who were holding Jesus began to mock him and beat him; they also blindfolded him and kept asking him, "Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?" They kept heaping many other insults on him.

THE NAIL OF RACISM

*Men Get 9 Years in Prison for Pa. Hate-Crime Death**Sify News, February 24, 2011*

Accessed at <http://www.sify.com/news/men-get-9-years-in-prison-for-pa-hate-crime-death-news-international-lcxwOQbbidc.html?sifyoutbrainnewsrecco=obinsite>

A group of high school football players in the small town of Shenandoah, PA, attacked 25-year-old Luis Ramirez because he was Hispanic and they didn't want "his kind" in their town.

Witnesses gave conflicting accounts of the late-night brawl that pitted Ramirez against four drunken teenagers during a random encounter on the street. Apparently, the teens hurled a racial slur at Ramirez and told him to go back to Mexico. Then they assaulted him. They beat him until he was unconscious, then repeatedly kicked him when he was down. A kick to the head killed Ramirez.

While the boys did not intend to murder Ramirez, the prosecutor at the subsequent trial conceded, they decided that the Hispanic's ethnicity made him "somehow worthy of being beaten like a dog in the streets."

The reading ends with the reader going straight into the Kyrie:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The second candle is extinguished.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 22:66-23:7

When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, gathered together, and they brought [Jesus] to their council. They said, "If you are the Messiah, tell us." He replied, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I question you, you will not answer. But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." All of them asked, "Are you, then, the Son of God?" He said to them,

"You say that I am." Then they said, "What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips!" Then the assembly rose as a body and brought Jesus before Pilate. They began to accuse him, saying, "We found this man perverting our nation, forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king." Then Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" He answered, "You say so." Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no basis for an accusation against this man." But they were insistent and said, "He stirs up the people by teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee where he began even to this place." When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him off to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.

THE NAIL OF POLITICAL SUPPRESSION *Journalists Attacked, Detained in Cairo*

From *Voice of America*, February 3, 2011,
Accessed at [http://www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/
Journalists-Attacked-Detained-in-Cairo-115222294.html](http://www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Journalists-Attacked-Detained-in-Cairo-115222294.html)

Journalists covering the protests in Egypt have been detained by security forces and attacked by supporters of President Hosni Mubarak in the capital, Cairo.

Reporters say they have been targeted by angry supporters of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who view the news media as sympathetic to anti-government demonstrators.

Voice of America's Luis Ramirez says mobs twice tried to attack the VOA team in Cairo. "People were very angry and were waving their fists at us and were cursing at us," he said. "One person who was there, a bystander, said that they were going to kill us." Egyptian state television news anchors and commentators have vilified foreign media, labeling them "traitors" and "spies."

Mobs have attacked reporters from CNN, Al Jazeera and other international news media, throwing rocks at their hotel windows, blocking their cars and breaking their equipment. Journalists staying at the Ramses Hilton hotel next to Tahrir Square, the epicenter of the protests, say they have moved to other locations for fear of being attacked.

Mohamed Abdel Dayem of the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists says these attacks are part of a government campaign. "This by no stretch of the imagination can be the act of individuals," he said. "It is well organized; it is systematic and it is persistent."

The reading ends with the reader going straight into the Kyrie:

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

The third candle is extinguished.

SILENT MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE

Luke 23:8-12

When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had been wanting to see him for a long time, because he had heard about him and was hoping to see him perform some sign. He questioned him at some length, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. Even Herod with his soldiers treated

him with contempt and mocked him; then [Herod] put an elegant robe on him, and sent him back to Pilate. That same day Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.

THE NAIL OF MOCKERY *Boy Found Hanging on Bathroom Hook*

Adapted from various Louisville, KY, TV and newspaper reports, accessed March 25, 2011

See <http://www.wlky.com/r/27319471/detail.html>

An eight-year-old boy is in critical condition after being found hanging by the back of his shirt from a coat hook in a bathroom stall in his elementary school. After the boy did not come out of the restroom with the other students or respond to the teacher standing in the doorway calling his name, a security guard was called to check on him. That was when the boy was found unconscious, hanging on the hook with his feet three feet off the ground. The boy's Sudanese father, unable to speak English, took a translator to the school, demanding to know what happened. It remains a mystery as to how the boy ended up on the hook. "I don't see how an 8-year-old boy could pick himself up and hang himself like that," one parent told reporters, noting that bullying had been a problem in the school. Officials won't confirm that the boy was a victim of bullying, only that the boy was injured.

The reading ends with the reader going straight into the Kyrie:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The fourth candle is extinguished.

SILENT MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE

Luke 23:13-25

Pilate then called together the chief priests, the leaders, and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was perverting the people; and here I have examined him in your presence and have not found this man guilty of any of your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us. Indeed, he has done nothing to deserve death. I will therefore have him flogged and release him." Then they all shouted out together, "Away with this fellow! Release Barabbas for us!" (This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection that had taken place in the city, and for murder.) Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again; but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no ground for the sentence of death; I will therefore have him flogged and then release him." But they kept urgently demanding with loud shouts that he should be crucified; and their voices prevailed. So Pilate gave his verdict that their demand should be granted. He released the man they asked for, the one who had been put in prison for insurrection and murder, and he handed Jesus over as they wished.

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 53

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For [the Servant] grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity. As one from whom others hide their faces he was despised. We held him of no account.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

. . . Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The reading ends with the reader going straight into the Kyrie:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

The fifth candle is extinguished.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, not to condemn the world. Christ prayed for us and for our salvation, asking that we be forgiven even as we were in the act of crucifying him. Therefore, with him, let us intercede on behalf of the suffering of the world. Let us pray.

Creator God, you made covenant with your people and made good on your promises even though it meant coming to us as one of us in frail human flesh, subject to the same vicissitudes of sin as are we all. Yet you did not give in to sin's rule, instead meeting it with your love and justice for all of creation in Jesus Christ the Lord.

O Lord, as your church we too often stand off in the distance, averting our eyes to the suffering of your world. Focused on our own pain in looking upon that of others, we run away; we hide. Turn our eyes to you, dear Lord, where still you hang on the crosses of human sin. Unite your church and rouse us to holy indignation that we may confront evil with your compassion and be your body reaching our arms wide to the world with your love.

With you, Almighty Savior, we pray

For creation groaning under the weight of sin . . . *{Prayers may be spoken in or offered in silence}*

May all creatures come to praise you in glory.

For those who are in positions of authority over others . . . *{Prayers may be spoken in or offered in silence}*

Grant them your wisdom and the courage to govern in accordance with your holy rule.

For those who are suffering in mind and body . . . *{Prayers may be spoken in or offered in silence}*

comfort them like a mother soothes a hurting child, and heal them as they rest in your everlasting love.

For those who mourn great loss . . . *{Prayers may be spoken in or offered in silence}*
grant them resurrection hope and communion with the saints.

for those who cannot trust you . . . *{Prayers may be spoken in or offered in silence}*
may your gospel of peace draw them home unto your faith.

For those preparing for baptism, profession of faith, or renewal in your Dominion . . .
{Prayers may be spoken in or offered in silence}

Open their eyes to your presence with them so that they can trust that when they pass through the waters, they will not overwhelm them but wash them in your eternal love.

Gather up all these prayers, our Intercessor and Advocate, and further those that are in accord with your holy will. When they are answered in ways beyond our comprehension, keep us tethered to you in our disappointment and dismay. May we continue in prayer for all those who cannot pray and for those who have no one praying for them. These things we ask in Jesus' name, praying as he 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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors;
lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE

Luke 23:26-31

As they led him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming from the country, and they laid the cross on him, and made him carry it behind Jesus. A great number of the people followed him, and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For the days are surely coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

THE NAIL OF VIOLENCE

Girlfriend Set on Fire

Adapted from Todd Wright and Janie Campbell, NBC Miami News, March 13, 2011

Accessed at <http://www.nbcmiami.com/news/local/Woman-Set-on-Fire-By-Boyfriend-Dies-117818418.html>

Margarita Blanco, 41, passed away at Jackson Memorial Hospital around noon Friday, Succumbing to the severe burns and injuries she suffered at the hands of her boyfriend, Jesus Alvarez. . . . Alvarez chased Blanco around the mobile home park in which they lived, repeatedly striking her as she ran. “He beat her wherever: there, here, inside my own house, in the street,” said Blanco’s mother, Julia Mendez. “He beat her in front of people. He didn’t care.” Blanco finally reached her home and went inside to escape, but Alvarez followed. Then, in front of her mother, he doused his girlfriend with a flammable liquid from a five-gallon container, lit her on fire, and fled.

The reading ends with the reader going straight into the Kyrie:

Lord, have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

The sixth candle is extinguished.

SILENT MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE

Luke 23:32-43

Two others also, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!” The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

THE NAIL OF INJUSTICE

A Call for Justice

Adapted from <http://angola3news.blogspot.com>

Thirty-eight years ago, deep in rural Louisiana, three young black men were silenced for trying to expose continued segregation, systematic corruption, and horrific abuse in the biggest prison in the US, an 18,000 acre former slave plantation called Angola.

Peaceful, non-violent protest in the form of hunger and work strikes organized by inmates caught the attention of Louisiana’s elected leaders and local media in the early 1970s. They soon called for investigations into a host of unconstitutional and extraordinarily inhumane practices commonplace in what was then known as the “bloodiest prison in the South.” Eager to put an end to outside scrutiny, prison officials began punishing inmates they saw as troublemakers.

Herman Wallace, Albert Woodfox, and Robert King were charged with murders they did not commit and thrown into 6x9 foot solitary cells.

Robert was released in 2001, but Herman and Albert remain in solitary confinement, continuing to fight for their freedom. Despite a number of reforms achieved in the mid-70s, many officials repeatedly ignore both evidence of trial misconduct, and the innocence of the Angola 3.

The reading ends with the reader going straight into the Kyrie:

Lord, have mercy.
Christ have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

The seventh candle is extinguished.

HYMN

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

PH 101

SILENT MEDITATION

SCRIPTURE

Luke 23:44-49

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

The Christ candle is extinguished and the room is dark.

SOLEMN REPROACHES OF THE CROSS

BCW, p. 288-291

In order to keep the room as dark as possible, this liturgy should be read from the balcony in the back, if possible, or from some other similar place where a penlight to read by will not be noticed.

. . . but you have prepared a cross for your Savior.
Lord, have mercy.

SILENT MEDITATION

SOLO *(a capella in the darkness)*

Were You There?

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 22

(A match is struck in the darkness to light the Christ candle.)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
“Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”

Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.
On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast;
my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.
My hands and feet have shriveled;
I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.

(The house lights rise slowly, almost imperceptibly until the end of the psalm to the lowest light possible for the safety of the people to depart by. A pulpit light will enable the liturgist to finish the liturgy in the dim light.)

But you, O Lord, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog!
Save me from the mouth of the lion!
From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.

I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
You who fear the Lord, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the Lord.
May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord;
and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.
For dominion belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.
To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.
Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

OFFERING OF NAILS

It's not enough to glory in the shadow of the cross. The trauma of a crucified Messiah breaks into our world and requires a response, an indignant response in the face of death's destruction, with a defiant ministry to life. "Love so amazing, so divine, demands our life, our soul, our life, our all." With his prayer that we be forgiven, our Lord from the cross asks that we lay down our nails, our nails of sin, our indifference to others' suffering. So as we take our offering, you're invited to give up the nails of your sin that perpetuate this world's evil—nails of apathy or selfishness or mockery or fear you won't fit in, or deliberate ignorance in knowing how others suffer so we can maintain our lifestyle of pleasure. Whatever it is that keeps perpetuating the suffering of others, offer those nails of sin up to the Lord.

If instrumental music played, let it be softly enough for people to hear the clang of nails in an offering plate or basket.

CHARGE

"You are my witnesses," Christ tells his disciples. Go now into a world of suffering and testify of what you know: We do not follow a God who is above suffering, but One who enters into the depths of humanity in order to save us to the uttermost from the degradations of sin.

"Christ has no body now on earth but yours,
no hands but yours,
no feet but yours,
yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion
looks upon the earth,
yours are the feet by which He goes about doing good
yours the hands by which He blesses."²

DEPARTURE IN SILENCE

² From a prayer attributed to Teresa of Avila.

You may leave when you are ready. You are welcome to stay as long as you wish in prayer. Please maintain silence until outside the building.

The Christ candle remains despite the darkness to remind us that “the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 1:5).

The cross does not have the last word. Death does not have the last word. You are invited to continue Holy Week observances with us to see how the story turns out.

{List times and places of The Great Vigil and Easter services}