**Tenebrae Guide**

**What is Tenebrae?**
Tenebrae is a prayer service held during Holy Week, today most commonly on Spy Wednesday. Tenebrae takes its name from the Latin word for darkness as it is characterized by the gradual extinguishing of candles.

**What happens at a Tenebrae service?**
Tenebrae is a very simple service that consists of alternating readings from Scripture (often with an accompanying hymn) with periods of silence. Throughout the service candles are extinguished so that the light in the church gradually diminishes until it finishes in near darkness. As Tenebrae is typically observed right before (or during) Holy Thursday and Good Friday, this increasing darkness symbolizes the approaching darkness of Christ's death and communicates grim and hopelessness of a world without God. At the end of the service, in near or total darkness, a *strepitus* or loud noise is made in startlingly contrast to the quiet nature of the service up until this point. The *strepitus* is meant to call to mind either the earthquake that occurred at Jesus’ death or the sound of His tomb closing. Worshippers then leave in silence and are called to reflect on His death for the next few days, until they can celebrate His Resurrection on Easter.

**Why should we participate in Tenebrae?**
Tenebrae is one of more somber services in Christianity. It acknowledges not just the darkness and sorrow that accompanied Jesus’ death but also the darkness and sorrow present in our world today. Having, a service that focuses on this offers a chance to contemplate how bleak the world would be without Christ, an important reminder during the holiest week of the year. It offers a stark contrast to the light and joy experienced in Easter celebrations and having the contrast in mind can make both more meaningful.
Tenebrae Reflection

Family Last Name: ________________________________

First Names of Adult Participants: _______________ _______________

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First Names of Youth Participants: ________________________

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What is your overall impression of Tenebrae?

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What was one thing that stood out for you at Tenebrae? Why?

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Did Tenebrae help you to connect with God and/or our parish community?
If yes, how? If not, why not?

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What is one thing about Tenebrae that you would like to share with others?

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