



Anthem: Though Night Is Dark

Words and Music by Alan Hovhaness
Opus 269 No. 1

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays. Each Sunday represents a "mini-Easter." For this reason, music on Sundays in Lent reflects the somber, reverent spirit of Lent but may be tempered with some anticipation of the Resurrection.¹ So it is with this anthem's poetic lyrics; the mood is somber, yet the symbolism of the rose is a hint of the joy of Easter Sunday.

Though Night Is Dark

When days are short, when nights are long,
In caves we hide our whispered song.
Our hymns arise from our despair,
Though night is dark, our rose is fair.
It blooms within our silent prayer.

† *The word Lent is derived from the Anglo Saxon word lencten, meaning "lengthen" and refers to the lengthening days of spring.¹*

In the first line of the anthem, we sing of a time when the days are short and nights are long.

† *Lent represents the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness where Satan tempted him and where Jesus prepared to begin his ministry. It includes Jesus' last days on earth with his arrest, trials, and beating.*
In the second and third lines, despite a mood of despair, there is reverent worship and hope with hymns sung.

† *Lent includes the sad and confusing time for the disciples when Jesus was pronounced dead and entombed.*
In the fourth line, we sing of the dark mood when Jesus was crucified and buried. But we also sing of a fair rose. The rose is a metaphor for sinless Jesus who took on the sins of the world. A wild rose has five petals representing Christ's wounds from the crucifixion.²

† Lent ends with Christ conquering death through His amazing love for mankind.
In the last line, we sing of the rose blooming even in the midst of our somber reflection of Jesus' death. It is because we know of the joy, hope, and love that is to come with Jesus' resurrection. A rose is a spiritual symbol of God's love at work in the world.³

Prayer: Lord, you experienced and overcame Satan's temptations in the wilderness, and you endured the crucifixion and conquered death for our sins. Hear our prayer of thanks and gratitude. Accept our regret and repentance for times we have been tempted and have yielded to it and for times we have not represented you well to others. Hear our humble prayer of thanks for your mercy and forgiveness. Amen.

¹[What is Lent and why does it last forty days? | The United Methodist Church \(umc.org\)](#)

²[Flowers Associated With Christ & Their Meanings \(synonym.com\)](#)

³[Sacred Roses: The Spiritual Symbolism of Roses \(learnreligions.com\)](#)