

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 August

This weekend is Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 August in the Twentieth Week of Ordinary Time.

Tenebrae, directed by Nigel Short, sing the Shestopsalmiye from Rachmaninov's Vespers. "Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise." As I enter into prayer today, as I enter into this conversation with the Lord, I too ask him to open my lips to speak to him, but first for an open ear to listen to him.

This weekend is from the Letter to the Hebrews.

The poet Wordsworth wandered lonely as a cloud. But here we find ourselves wrapped in a cloud of witnesses, surrounded by those whose faith strengthens our own. These are words of encouragement, but also of challenge. Through the strength of Jesus and the support of all the saints who have gone before us we can feel strong enough to run the great race to the end. But we're reminded that the struggle against sin is not always easy. How do you understand this struggle? Do you find it difficult? Ask God, now, for help.

Do you feel weighed down by weariness, discouraged in the face of sin? Can you name any weights that you carry? Who, among the "cloud of witnesses" in your life has helped you not to lose heart? What has been a source of joy?

As you hear those words again listen to the contrasts in it: sin clinging closely, taking heart from Jesus, the joy of his triumph over sin and death. Can you get in touch with that joy and hope?

What words stay with you from the reading? What thoughts and feelings do you want to share with Jesus "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith"? Where in your life do you need to ask for the gift of perseverance and resistance?