

Speaking truth to power has a cost. As Christians we shouldn't be surprised at this – it's the way of the Cross, it's the life of Jesus ending in a very visible failure. It was the way of the prophets and is the way of the Church – failure rather than success – finding ourselves at the bottom of a well, literally or metaphorically, and the Church as a source of division – provoking splits both internally and externally – a challenge to the world out there but also a challenge to the world within the Church itself. Pope Francis knows this dynamic very well. When he was provincial superior of the Jesuits in Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s he found himself too successful – to quote from Austen Ivereigh's very insightful volume on Pope Francis entitled ' Wounded Shepherd'

*'Having steered his province through the guerrilla violence and the brutal military crackdown of the 1970s without losing one of them to a violent death, in the 1980s he attracted and kept dozens of vocations at a time when they were in freefall elsewhere, both in Latin America and above all in Europe. At the Jesuit Curia in Rome they scratched their heads; what was Bergoglio doing right that other Jesuits had missed?*

*But there was resentment and jealousy too...'* (p78)

And fear that his Peronist leanings, his ministry especially to the poor, was threatening the Enlightenment, and one might also say the ' capitalist', leanings of current orthodoxy, both religious and political. He was removed from office and found himself in exile in Cordoba in Spain without a mission. It was a time of great personal suffering and depression but also a time of formation – he was learning the true meaning of failure – not a punishment by God but the means by which God's will is done on earth.

*'It was how the prayerful poor lived. It was how Jesus had lived. Lasting change came from fidelity to the divine will, not the slavish pursuit of present success. To allow God to act meant, to accept failure.'*

This is not something we like to hear but it's no more about the pursuit of failure as it is about the pursuit of success; rather it's about allowing whatever happens to form us in God's will, and what Pope Francis learned from his failure was the value of ' patience' that is ' *the faithful willingness to suffer in the hope of future change* '. I wonder whether there isn't something here of what Turvey is about – here we are a very small community both here at All Saints and at the Abbey, not quite sure what is going to happen next but bearing this fragility with patience – learning indeed to love the uncertainty it brings because this is the uncertainty which faces all people always everywhere – it's our human condition, it's who we are as creatures, it's who we are before God. And surprise, surprise, what we discover in realising this, is that this is precisely where we encounter God, that far from God leading us at a distance, God is here among us as the one who invites us, not merely to follow but to remain with him; God then as our constant companion in Christ, the one who, both literally and metaphorically, shares our bread – the broken bread, the way of failure and success.

Br John Mayhead

Monastery of Christ Our Saviour