

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jun 12th 2018

If we are ever at rights with God it is not because of anything we have done, but because of God's goodness and mercy. Success stories are nearly always riddled with ambiguity and hidden compromise; they are the ego's work. The only success story that holds any interest for us is that of Jesus—and he was a failure! On the level of ordinary wisdom, yes, he failed. “He saved others but he cannot save himself,” the onlookers said as he died: the three gospels record it (Mt 27:42; Mk 15:31; Lk 23:35). This tremendous failure is the revelation of God in human terms. And (to quote Tugwell again) “we who are followers of Jesus Christ are called to be imitators of him, and so should not be at all surprised to find that one of the arts we have to learn is the sublime art of weakness.”

“When I am weak then I am strong,” wrote St. Paul (2Cor 12:10). It is fatal (for oneself and for others) to have the wrong kind of strength. “The strong are always the same,” wrote Hemingway, “they face the truth with a bull-whip.” Such people will never be the “salt of the earth”; they may well set the world on fire, but they will never be “the light of the world.”

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