

A Reflection from a St Mary's Churchwarden (Charles Wilson)

If you've ever seen the 1990 film *Pretty Woman*, starring Julia Roberts and Richard Gere, you may recall what she said when she was put down by a snooty shopping assistant, "Big mistake. HUGE mistake". For some reason, my family always enjoyed that line.

Most of us hate making mistakes. The trouble is, we think our mistakes are a slur on our own character and integrity, and we may even incline to take a dim view of our own self-worth as a person. Which is a pity.

In recent years, I've come to see that mistakes are really my only 'learning experiences'. I don't learn much when things go right. It's normal life as we expect it to be. I may enjoy those moments, but I don't learn from them.

I recently travelled by Eurostar train to Paris to see my brother. I'd carefully booked everything, but I failed to notice some 'small print' saying that the entry gates for the 10:42am train closed 30 minutes before departure. So delivering my wife and others to the set-down point at 10:12am wasn't very smart. I still had to park ½ mile away, and walk back, with a heavy rucksack.

Julia called my mobile: "*I thought you'd like to know that the gates are closing NOW, 30 minutes before departure. I suggest you run.*" So I ran. A heavy rucksack annoyingly leapt for joy on my back. By the time I reached the Terminal my heart was pounding, I was gasping for breath, and struggling to speak. Literally. A cardiac arrest even went through my mind. But, late as I was, I was allowed to go through the barrier into Security.

Small print. Big mistake. I nearly ruined my sister's holiday. In future, I will definitely read the ticket information much more carefully. I don't want to risk doing that again.

So what's the relevance of all this to the Christian life? Well, at Pentecost Sunday, and Trinity Sunday, just celebrated, the giving of the Holy Spirit is celebrated. Jesus describes the Spirit as the "Counsellor".

Acts 2 describes how the first Christians were given the Holy Spirit of God dramatically, and the first church community was born. They were empowered to do miraculous things, such as praying in tongues, prophesying, physical healings etc. And their inspired love meant that they shared their possessions. It was, and still is, very radical.

Despite having the Counsellor, the Apostles – and we likewise today - continue to make plenty of "mistakes". But I suspect we make fewer than we otherwise would! And sometimes, my mistake is the opportunity for someone else to shine, or be gracious.

Yesterday, for instance, I was half-way through an email circulating a plea for help when I knew I just had to stop writing it, and pause. 30 minutes later, a phone call came through which rendered the email completely irrelevant. It was a solution beyond my wildest dreams. Thank you Lord!