

## GLIMPSE

Pleased to Meet You

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Being in the presence of persons of fame or in some way a celebrity can make us feel important or a little kind of celebrity ourselves. Thirty years ago I shook hands with Pope John Paul II and I'd say he felt pretty good about it, especially when I greeted him in Polish. Years before that encounter, I was at a wedding of a famous hockey player in Boston and felt like a little kid. I wanted to get autographs and chitchat with them about my ideas about hockey and sports in general. The Boston players seemed to be having a very good time dancing with their wives and fooling with each other so I kept my ideas to myself.

Something within me had changed in the six years from the wedding until the Pope had an audience with me. I think it has to do with the concept of the "Majesty of God" which had changed for me. That sounds rather majestic I suppose, but here is what has changed. God's grandeur is different. God's awesomeness, majesty is not as we picture: kingly thrones, wings and trumpets. God is not our "buddy" either. God's majesty is not even a concept. The real issue in superconceptualizing God is that we keep God way up yonder and we are way down under. That will form in each of us then a "Little-boy/girl" image which prevents us from being real human persons in the presence of God.

God is not a celebrity! We are growing-up-persons, because Jesus mingled with such as we are. So the Pope was met person to person by a me that didn't ask for his autograph. Are we more important, because we meet "important" others? Here's the whole picture. Nobody gives us our importance! Nothing we do makes us any more important than before. We really have reached spiritual maturity when we meet anybody else and experience their person as one who has the same dignity, beauty, status as we do ourselves.

There is a wonderful world-wide community-based organization, L'Arche. The L'Arche communities welcome "specially-blessed" adults into their Christian groups. Living and working with these women and men helps to mature the L'Arche Assistants. Once you spend time with David, Gordy, Peggy, John, wanting autographs is no longer on the menu. We do not get our dignity from those whom we celebrate and meet and get their signatures. We meet them and allow them to meet us if they have the time. If they do not, they have missed a great opportunity. This is not pride. It actually is humility with which we accept

gratefully the gifts that we are. Perhaps we need the autographs of "the biggies" to temporarily boost a little-poor-me, but as with any mind-altering drug, the diminishment soon falls upon the user. If I am getting my name, image, importance from meeting you, I am not actually meeting you, but using you to meet a false me. In a real faith-way, Jesus is God's signature written in ways we live and relate. That signature is written in the persons of wealth, power, beauty, achievement. It is written in the hidden, quiet, disfigured, and all those kinds of folks Jesus met. He gave them His autograph which became a part of their names and image.

When someone says to me that they are pleased to meet me, I would wish that they are pleased by how I have met them and helped them to meet themselves as well. Pope Francis shook lots of hands this past week for sure. I assume they are feeling better, because the Pope met them. I would hope they feel better for how he helped them meet themselves. It is only a glimpse, enjoy your own signature.