

GLIMPSE

Meet and Greet

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I have met some rather important people. Some made me feel unimportant by their shaking my hand, but their looking toward the next person whose hand they would shake after mine. In my perversity I have held on to their shakeless hand just a little bit longer than they had planned. I was being asked to accept their importance without their affirming mine. They had no idea that I could be a part of their lives.

I did meet a well-known quite famous football player of years ago and he held my hand and wanted to know who I was. I asked him a question about a certain play years ago, he energetically asked me if I really wanted to know. He invited me to sit down, we were in a crowded social gathering, and he told me the whole story with all kinds of little details. He made me feel my importance, which is different from his making me important. There is a difference. I am sure he doesn't remember me, but I remember his caring for more than his importance. I suspect he didn't need that importance constantly reinforced.

I shook hands with Pope John Paul II in Rome years ago and that was nice, but was made less exciting, because that very same day I had a conference with the retired General of the Jesuits, Fr. Pedro Arrupe. He had had a stroke and was able to speak only in his native language, Spanish. I had met him twice during his visits to the United States, but was one of many. I asked him if he was able to remember me at all. I had had some important letter-exchanges with him. In Spanish he replied, "Todas las cartas", "all those letters." The infirmarian thought he was just rambling, but I laughingly replied that his memory was still very sharp. Being remembered, what a gift!

In prayer each of us has first to not look past ourselves, that is, not look ourselves in the face. God is already present to my soul-face, but perhaps we are accustomed to our not being present to ourselves, our truth. In my meetings with

the Pope and the Father General, I could have felt unworthy and my not being the priest and Jesuit they would have expected me to be. I thought of that before those meetings and saw them as simple distracting temptations. It might be the truth though, but it did not make me unworthy of the being met. Prayer is always truth meeting truth. God does not have the same problem as we do about being present to the self-truth.

There is a strange kind of pride by which we can experience our not living up to the whom we want to be, thought we would be, or think we are. In that way we are unworthy when compared to our high ideals and expectations. Walking around like that will keep our face down-cast, not wanting our unimportance to be met by others and especially God. Prayer is a truly humbling experience in which we allow ourselves to be known as we really are. We have high ideals, those are very good, but the highest ideal is compassion, graceful acceptance of our truth as the receptive, yet urgent God is compassionate with us. I want to be, ought to be, thought I would be, better. Hello Pride!

God has always made much of little and takes our hand and looks us in the eye in an on-going creative embrace of Love. I could have sat with that football ex-pro for a long time; it was enjoyable. I am enjoying times of prayer since facing myself more humbly and allowing Jesus to meet me just as He met other who had faced themselves. He loves us the way He finds us and loves us enough to not leave us there. He takes more than our hand and holds our whole self. It is only a glimpse. Who makes you feel important or less so?