

From time to time, all of us have been guilty of taking some remarkable things for granted, simply because they have become familiar to us. Take, for instance, the ancient and honorable game of golf. Most of us understand the basic principles of golf. Some of you play golf. Some of you play at it. But suppose you had to explain golf to someone who had never seen it before -- say an Aborigine from the Australian outback. Don't you think an Aborigine from the Australian outback might find our game of golf rather strange?

"Why is that big man trying to punish that little ball by hitting it with that long stick?" he might ask. "He's not trying to punish the ball," you explain. "He's trying to drive it. He wants to put the little white ball in the tiny hole way over there, about 500 yards away." "Why not just walk over and drop the ball in by hand? It would be a whole lot easier. Trying to hit such a small ball with such a long stick seems like a waste of time." "Well," you respond, "that's part of the challenge. Nobody wants to put the ball in the hole the easy way. In fact, we pay an expert a lot of money to make sure the ground around the hole is especially tricky. See the woods over there, and the rough grass and the pond and the sand traps? Those are all places where the little white ball can get caught or lost." "Oh, now I get it!" says your friendly Aboriginal visitor. "If it takes a long time to put the ball in the hole, everyone is happy."

You shake your head. "No, if it takes a long time to put the ball in the hole, someone usually gets angry. See that man over there, throwing his clubs around and cursing?"

He's furious because he just hit his ball into the pond for the third time!" "Then, tell me," your friend asks, with a puzzled look, "why does he bother to play golf at all, if it only makes him angry?" To which you respond, "That man comes here twice a week to play so he can relax!"

We can be so used to something that we take it for granted, we don't really think about what we are doing, why we do it, and what all is involved. Imagine trying to explain the Eucharist to someone who has never heard of Jesus and just can't imagine what you mean when you say you share his life, or even why you would want to. So today I want to pause just a bit to reflect on those basics.

He was conceived and born contrary to all biological law. He grew up to be a very bothersome man. He told the truth and it cost Him His life. He could have avoided assassination by going fishing in Galilee for the weekend. He was often seen talking and laughing after His death. He remains forever a question mark with which people are never quite finished. Non-believers forever worry lest they might be wrong.

As a babe, He terrified a king. As a youngster, He puzzled scholars. As a man, He intimidated a Roman governor. He was constantly in hot water. He did not seem to mind. He felt it would keep Him clean. He had no training in psychiatry. Yet, He has cured more minds and spirits than anyone else in history.

Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon established mighty empires by force. He began His with love and service. Theirs have disappeared. His remains. Statesmen, Artists and philosophers have all held the spotlight for a short period. But their names are written in the sand.

His is spoken with frequency by one billion followers. Each week millions assemble to salute Him in the Eucharist. He spoke that last night to a small band of illiterate men as though the memorial ceremony would continue down through the centuries. History has proved Him correct. He calls us to Liturgy both to remember Him and worship Him. The first food consumed on the moon was bread and wine consumed in His name.

Those who discover they cannot believe in Him live with sorrow. Those who believe but lack the courage to resemble Him survive with regret. Though centuries separate us from Him, He is more alive than we. We will not even be memories in the next generation, but He will flourish. He no longer stands waiting to be judged. He has nothing to prove. He has survived the test of time. It is we who are on trial in our reaction to Him. Unlike countless peoples who impacted society by jumping in front of it and going with the flow, He got in front of the parade to take it in the opposite direction.

After almost a century in Russian labor camps, He walks openly in Moscow, Kiev, and St Petersburg. No one seems surprised. No historian can portray humanity honestly without giving Him a spot on center stage. Millions utter His name upon rising. Other millions shout it throughout the day in anger or pain. For still other millions, it is the last name they whisper before they die and the first they expect to speak when they awaken in His presence.

He is the hero you could never invent. Angels rush to Him. Devils flee from Him. He not only pushed the envelope. He broke through it.

However we wander and stray through life, He pursues us always. He is the long delayed but always expected something we live for. He has no interest in people theorizing about Him but rather reproducing Him in their lives. It is not He who needs us. It is we who need Him.

And when we pause to remember who Jesus really is, how could we not want to be close to him? Not just know about him or remember him or admire him or even be friends with him. His is the life that changed the world, the life that broke the bonds of death itself; how could we not want to share that life in the fullest way possible?

He makes that intimate sharing possible by joining our lives with his in the Eucharist. He comes to us as the bread of life, as food that literally becomes part of us and little by little the Eucharist transforms us. How could we ever take something like that for granted? How could we ever just skip the opportunity for the most amazing experience available to the human race?