

Do You See What I See?

Recently the mother of an 11th grade student told me that her daughter really liked *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. When I said I was glad to hear that a young person today was able to appreciate a novel written in 1850, my friend told me that it was only after having read the novel **three times** that her daughter **came to see** the beauty and truth in the story that had been assigned as part of her English class.

Growing into the Truth

In high school and in danger of failing my junior year English course, I took advantage of an extra-credit trip to Philadelphia to see a new play called *A Man for All Seasons* starring Paul Scofield and Robert Shaw. My main memory of the event was how I could get up courage to ask the girl sitting next to me for a date. A few years later, when I saw the movie *A Man for All Seasons* starring the same two actors, I was blown away by its power. The work was the same, the actors were the same, what was different was me--I had a little more life under my belt and had grown in my capacity to take in and to be taken into a story that was prior to and bigger than me.

Our First and Only Christmas

Each Christmas is our first and only Christmas. If I am 5, then this is my first and only Christmas as a five year old; if I am 87, then this is my first and only Christmas with an experience set of four score and seven years. What do I see this Christmas? What have I become capable of seeing at

this point of my journey? Am I becoming more fully one with Christ and so becoming more able to see as Jesus sees, and judges, and acts? Am I becoming more capable of receiving the gift of the Beatific Vision?

The Ghost of Rodney Dangerfield

On this, my first and only 62nd Christmas, I'm seeing how much I have been scandalized by the Incarnation. I think I've been ashamed that God's work of salvation seems to take so long---at times seeming so slow that I wonder if it is happening at all. God, for reasons that are God's, has chosen to become incarnate, to enter into and take on all that is human. Part of what is human is time. **We** take time; we develop (or not) through time---with stops and starts, twists and turns, dead-ends and break-throughs. I had been unconsciously assuming that if something doesn't happen suddenly ("Shazaam!"), it is not miraculous, it is not special, it is not "of God." I am now coming to see that the wonder is not so much that salvation happens suddenly as that salvation **happens at all!** God is! God cares! God intervenes! Even more marvelous, I am coming to see, is that salvation happens in HUMAN way---taking into account our limited capacities and the dignity of our resistance, accepting our fears and our freedom. Since Jesus and because of Jesus and in Jesus human beings are offered salvation in way that respects wounded human nature, even as grace elevates and perfects a fractured humanity and a fragmented creation. When it comes to God and His Intervention for our good, we (unlike Rodney Dangerfield) cannot say, "We don't get no respect!" We may, in fact, wish for a little less respect and a lot more by-passing of humanity; however, God's ways are not our ways----as is expressed in the surprise on the face of the non-human and super-quick Gabriel beholding the first move in God's saving

human beings in a human way:



The Annunciation
by Marco Romano
St. Mark's Cathedral
Venice, Italy