

## More than meets the eye

I had a strange experience two weeks ago. I have had a 17 inch wide print of a photo taken of myself embracing my sons, one on my left and one on my right in front of a blossoming azalea bush - when Adam was just about three and Philip was one year old. It was a treasured photo in color done in 1971. At long last I wanted to frame it and so brought it to a framer. When I went back later to pick it up framed, I was taken aback! The photo was somewhere around two thirds of its original size. I immediately engaged in an argument with the framer. *This is not the photo I gave you! The one I gave you was much larger than this. Did you reduce it? This is so disappointing. Where is the photo I gave you?*

The framer quietly assured me that the photo I gave him was right there in the framed picture on the table. I insisted it couldn't be, because the original was much larger! *If you insist this is the photo I brought in and I know it isn't, then we must be both living in two different realities* (which scared me for it occurred to me that if this man is right, I must be losing my mind). So I went home carrying the framed picture but telling the framer to keep looking around his shop until he found my original print.

Except that once I got home and began to cool off, the framed picture of my sons and me seemed to be growing wider . . . and it occurred to me that maybe the framer was right: that a frame around a photo can create an optical illusion, make a picture seem to shrink – until the original size emerges once you get used to it. So I called the man and asked if that were a common effect of framing a print and he said, “Yes, that often happens.” Immediately I apologized profusely and marveled that I could be so old a man and not have known something like that.

Which reminds me of Edgar Allan Poe's story “The Purloined Letter” which tells of a game people used to play in pre-modern times. The rules were simple. A map of France with all its cities and towns and rivers and so forth was laid out and one player would challenge the others to guess the name of a specific location he had chosen. Of course the locations were printed in all sizes as they usually are on our road maps today. But the choice that none of the players might notice was the widest, biggest one – the very name F R A N C E which would be spread all the way across the length of the map – too obvious to be seen.

As with me and my photo such experiences alert us to our human tendency to see small, to think small, to live in a shrunken world than out there in the wider, immense, deeper, so much more ample world God puts out there - - and the even more wonderful fact that he locates that wider, immense, deeper reality intact within the framework of our every day world if we only had the patience to look for it, to notice Jesus within our walls even though we keep our doors locked. It was William Blake who said it so happily a long time ago:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand / And a Heaven in a Wild Flower, / Hold Infinity in the palm of  
your hand / And Eternity in an hour.