

## Is the Word of God too loud to hear?

We're all familiar with Gulliver's sojourn among the Lilliputians, a people who stood only six inches tall. We're not so familiar, perhaps, with the reverse experience he had when he met the Brobdingnagians, who averaged sixty feet tall!

There Gulliver stood in a field of wheat forty feet high, while a line of Brobdingnagian reapers approached wielding seven foot sickles. Gulliver screamed as loud as he could, whereupon one of the reapers looked at Gulliver as if he were a mouse, then bent over, picked him up and held him before his eyes. While Gulliver's voice must have seemed so tiny, when a Brobdingnagian spoke it must have resonated like thunder!

The Brobdingnagians treated Gulliver gently as a curiosity. Eventually he was able to converse with their king and boast about England's empire and political institutions. He failed, however, to realize that this gigantic king could evaluate all Gulliver said from a much higher vantage point. And so, far from being impressed by Gulliver's account of English history, the king was appalled. To him it appeared to be nothing but a petty "heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, hypocrisy, cruelty, envy, lust and ambition could produce!" He could only conclude Gulliver's countrymen "to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth!"

Embarrassed by this assessment, Gulliver tried to impress him with the achievements of European science and technology, inventions such as gunpowder and cannonballs (and we might add hydrogen bombs). This too left the king amazed at "how so impotent an insect would entertain such inhuman ideas." He then ordered Gulliver, "if he valued his life, never to mention these things again while in his kingdom."

Gulliver privately ridiculed the king's reactions as shortsighted, forgetting that it was he who was short and therefore shortsighted in this land of benign giants. And obviously Gulliver's comprehension of the Brobdingnagians was compromised by the sheer volume of their king's discourse – he heard the words but didn't quite hear the humaneness of their philosophy – and so he remained stuck in his own culture's inhumane habit of mind.

But may we not see in the Brobdingnagian king's bigness, not only of size but of mind and voice, a reflection of the Jesus of today's Gospel? Even as Gulliver was deaf, so too have we been deaf and tongue-tied relative to Christ's Gospel, both in terms of its bigness of mind and heart, ethics and depth? And so must we not as often as possible re-experience today's Gospel wherein Jesus touches *our* ears and tongues and groans and says with urgency: *Be opened!* - which amounts to: Be Big, Be Grand, Be of an Immense Stature of Soul, Let your Graciousness resound like the Thunder of God, the Thunder of the Gospel, behind which there is always the *still, small voice* of Love, of Mercy, of Understanding?

You know, of course, where Gulliver ran into the Brobdingnagians - along our Pacific Coast, somewhere near a place called Cape Mendocino, which leaves all of us who live in this region today with some pretty big shoes to fill.