

Speaking to the soul



Beauty

Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewellery or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that

comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.1 Peter 3:3 - 4

I don't feel competent to comment on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewellery or beautiful clothes! However, I don't believe that Peter was saying that these things were wrong in themselves. His point was that they shouldn't be our priority, and they certainly shouldn't become a matter of concern for us. Our priority needs to be our inner selves – our character.

Our society is obsessed with image. What matters is how we look and the impression that we leave on other people through our appearance. There is no doubt that these things can easily become a matter of anxiety and Jesus drew attention to this. In his Sermon on the Mount, he spoke about people's anxiety about their food or clothing. He pointed to the birds and observed that they were perfectly cared for by God, and he reasoned that if God was able to look after them then he would be absolutely sure to care for us too (Matthew 6:25-30).

Caring for our character is both immeasurably more important than our hairstyle, jewellery or clothes and much harder work. A couple of hours spent in a hair salon and doing some shopping might succeed in giving us a completely new look, but the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit will take much longer. It will need us to spend much time with God. Such a character won't be the result of our efforts but will happen as we allow the Holy Spirit to renew us and mould our thinking and actions. This is the real, lasting beauty that we all need to seek.

QUESTION

Why is the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit so precious to God?

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you that your Holy Spirit is at work in my life. I pray that you will constantly renew my desire to look more like Jesus. Amen

Window - St John's Malone side-chapel

