

## Mirrors can never reflect our true selves

by Mark Pavilons

When you look in the mirror, what do you see?

What more can you bring out and what more can you give?

These may not be questions we routinely ask ourselves, but perhaps they should be part of our daily ritual, like brushing our teeth or skipping breakfast.

For me, I avoid those glass and metal contraptions because I'm not a glutton for punishment.

There are versions of me better forgotten, buried deep and left for dead.

I found a photo of myself prior to a procedure I had done on my nose. It had become inflamed by a somewhat rare condition known as rhinophyma. It typically results in large masses on the lower half of the nose, which takes on an almost cauliflower-like appearance.

I resisted treatment because it was cosmetic and came with a hefty price tag. The turning point came when a mother and her daughter, sitting on a ferris wheel at the Bolton Fall Fair, pointed at me, laughed and actually took photos of me.

It took everything I had inside to stay calm for my child in tow but she could sense my turmoil.

The procedure involved electrocautery, basically an electrically charged ring-shaped scalpel that melts and carves the affected tissue. Roughly two-thirds of the way through, the freezing began to wear off, and tears flowed from my eyes because I was helpless in the chair.

I actually embraced the physical pain (and scars) because it was far better than the emotional ones.

I'm reminded of that phrase, "what doesn't kill you ...?"

There was a moment, in that chair alone with my thoughts, that I almost preferred death.

I share this unpleasant story because I think it's a good example of the delicate emotional balance of looks and "what's on the inside."

I'm sure there are many, many souls who suffer with conditions -- scars, birthmarks, or physical limitations -- who have to dig deep to find the strength just to make it through the day.

I'm also almost certain they avoid mirrors, too.

When I glance at the horrible invention, all I see are flaws, dings, scratches, dents, lines, crevices and fjords. Instead of a manly, well-proportioned visage, I see a road map, one that resembles an untravelled dirt road through the desert or some uncharted land.

But enough about beauty. After all, mirrors only show part of the truth.

Doreen Virtue once said that since we're creations of God, we "reflect the Divine qualities of creativity, wisdom, and love."

Just how do we come face to face with ourselves, looking exactly as we look to everyone else??It's a conundrum I've wondered about for years.

We walk around, trying to hold our heads high, but really have no idea what we look like to the outside world. Our eyes are out front, not at the sides like a chameleon (even though that would have some advantages). I don't have my own image etched in my mind and have a hard time even describing what I look like to others. When meeting new people for the first time, I simply say I'm tall with glasses.

Some say a mirror is not a true reflection of who you are, but rather how you see yourself.

Also, it's a misconception that mirrors flip the image ? they reflect exactly what they see, it's our brain that flips the image.

As members riding the same passenger train in our society, we are partially to blame for the whole image thing. Looks are important in TV commercials, movies, fashion and designer everything. We eat it up, then complain about it.

When you look at old photos, or even turn-of-the century clippings, you will notice our forefathers and mothers were well dressed and always prim and proper. They were not what you'd call hunks or starlets. Being well groomed was important in that it showed you had breeding and manners.

Antique mirrors were, in themselves, works of art. The frames were much more beautiful than the glass itself. They were part of the decor, not something you spent a great deal of time in front of.

So, fellow average looking types, let's take comfort in that fact we're built for comfort and lofty things, not superficial purposes!

You don't need movie star looks to send a rocket into space or solve hunger and prevent the destruction of the rain forests. You don't have to be attractive to make a difference.

As Michael Jackson said in Man in the Mirror:

I'm starting with the man in the mirror

I'm asking him to change his ways

And no message could have been any clearer

If you wanna make the world a better place

Take a look at yourself and then make a change.

So my friends, regardless of what we see in that vile, nicely framed reflector, our talents, accomplishments ?eck, our endless potential ?re what matter. We have the ability to give, share, pass down, guide, teach and lead by example.

Regardless of our outward appearance, we are blessed, simply to be here, right now, in this day and age. We have abundance and we have freedom. We are tolerant and compassionate. We're even, dare I say, optimistic.

We have the ability to spread joy.

Our smiles, crooked as they may be, are worth their weight in gold.