

The Attraction of Beauty [by Paul Farmer 01730 267056]

As a child I was always fascinated by the imagery of the Pelican – the bird who restores life to its young with its own blood. In Christian art of course the Pelican is an emblem of Jesus Christ, by "whose blood we are healed." It is also a symbol of charity. St Thomas Aquinas uses this symbolism in his Eucharistic hymn *Adore Te Devote* with the words (in Latin) *Pie pellicáne, Jesu Dómine - Lord Jesus, good pelican.*

One of Aquinas's most significant works is the *Summa Theologica*. In it he describes what he calls the attributes of God. One of them for example is that God is the total essence of Goodness, and another by implication that God's nature reflects unimaginable beauty. Last July my first grandchild Lydia Rose was born. I had been concerned however that my encounter with "*Grandad-hood*" would result in my being at best a very reluctant grandad. Thankfully though, my heart has been melted by such a beautiful child.

Authentic beauty in whatever form leads the human heart to the transcendent. With Lent starting today, these thoughts on beauty and why at a deeper level we are all attracted to it could be the basis for a Lenten prayer.

For those of you who come to town on Saturday mornings you may have seen Ron sitting in his high vis outside Waitrose. Now and again I get him a coffee, but in the encounter it is I who receive a much greater gift because he radiates a real and inspiring authenticity. My prayer then this Lent is to meditate on the question *how in my humanity can I be the real thing, genuinely authentic?* Through this prayer my hope is that my life will reflect a little more the mysterious and healing beauty of my heavenly Father, the Creator of all things.

Paul Farmer
St Laurence Catholic Church
Petersfield