

**BBC RADIO ULSTER
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
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Did you hear this week that you can have your face pixelated?

No it's not a new approach to plastic surgery or the latest beauty tip from Coleen Rooney.

It has nothing to do with all those endless TV programmes that promise to make you less old, fat and ugly.

You can have your face pixelated on Google Street View. It's a new service where you can go online and get a 360 degrees view of streets in various UK cities. It's remarkable.

But this week Google has had to remove dozens of photos after complaints about privacy.

It's thought the pictures removed contained revealing images of homes, a man entering a sex shop, people being arrested and a man being sick.

Google have agreed that you can have images of you removed and replaced with a black screen. In other words you can get pixelated out.

I suppose that's good news. Ever since they launched Google Earth, where you can zoom in on a view of your street from a satellite above, I have been quite disconcerted by the idea that my bald patch can now be seen from outer space.

It seems, in the words of Nanci Griffiths, that Google is watching us, from a distance.

Now I have never accepted the idea of God as a grumpy old man up in the sky looking down and wagging his finger at me.

I don't see God as a kind of cosmic Sir Alan Sugar waiting to tell me that I have been hellfired!

But I am more challenged by the idea of an all seeing God than an all seeing Google.

Would a search for 'father working too hard to spend time with his children' zoom in on my office.

Would a search for 'worker bitching behind colleague's back' zoom in on yours?

On Belfast Street View you can zoom in on the Victoria Square Dome, the beauties of a restored Ulster Hall, the Waterfront, the Wheel and the City Hall. Zoom out a little and you see 13 miles of peace walls dividing up the city. More than 80 barriers if you care to count.

Interestingly there is no Street View for Africa. A search for 'children with malaria' might just zoom in on 3,000 children dying every day.

Some things are very uncomfortable to view, even from a distance.

But rather than pixelate them out, why not take a good look at ourselves, our community and our world?

If we are least trying to make some positive change then God might be nearby and who cares if Google is watching us, from a distance.

Tony Macaulay