**NEWSLETTER**

 **Parishes of St Anthony of Padua, Onchan; St Mary of the Isle & St Joseph, Douglas
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 **6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 16th February 2025**

**Racial Justice Day**

 **(**Year C for Sundays) (Cycle 1 for weekdays)

 *(Page 449 in Missal for Order of the Mass) (Page 800 for Mass readings)*

Dear Parishioners

It’s almost ten years since I came to the Island. Within days I was introduced to my first word of Manx dialect. That word is ‘Skeet’. It means more than normal conversation. A better description is ‘gossip’. In a small island, gossip flourishes. It can be healthy, but it’s often bad news that it feeds on, rather than good. There can be a competitiveness about it; being the first to announce the details of other people’s lives. Brownie points are earned with juicy bits of information which are shared, exaggerated and elaborated with lies. Poisonous words are more deadly than physical violence. And social media spreads the virus even more widely.

The biggest shock to me is that gossip takes place within the parish community, even before or after Mass at the back of church. What for most people is a wholesome and harmonious exchange of friendship and support between parishioners is for some a satanic exchange of character assassination. Individuals are targeted and reputations destroyed. Others exchange a critical commentary on aspects of the liturgy and the life of the parish of which they don’t approve. Such gossip is the work of the Devil. ‘*T*he sin of gossip is bearing bad news behind someone’s back out of a bad heart’*(Matt Mitchell).* The word Gospel means GOOD NEWS. As Christians we are people of the Gospel. Gossip, as bad news, is the direct opposite of the Gospel.

A few days before Christmas, Pope Francis had this to say about gossip within the Vatican itself: *"A church community lives in joyful and fraternal harmony to the extent that its members walk in the life of humility, renouncing evil thinking and speaking ill of others …… Gossip is an evil that destroys social life, sickens people's hearts and leads to nothing. The people say it very well: Gossip is zero."*

Before we speak, we can ask ourselves: Is what I am about to say born out of love or out of malice? Will it build up the Body of Christ or destroy it?’ There are three monkeys on my mantlepiece: ‘See no evil’; ‘Hear no evil’; ‘Speak no evil’.

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Last week I was over in Liverpool for a meeting of Deans. The Isle of Man is one of 13 deaneries in the Archdiocese. An issue we shared in common was the approach to be adopted for those seeking Baptism for older children so that they could gain admission to Catholic schools. Concern was expressed at the lack of respect shown by some parents who appeared to be ‘gaming the system’ to comply with school admission criteria.

Some of this resonated with my own experience here on the island. Due to the growing reputation of St Mary’s school an increasing number of parents are seeking a place there for their children. The school’s admissions policy gives priority to children who are Baptised Catholics. This has resulted in an increase in the number of parents seeking Baptism for their children. The inevitable scrutiny of those eligible has revealed that some parents seeking baptism for their child are not even baptised themselves and neither are their godparents. This renders meaningless the solemn promise they make in the Baptism ceremony to bring up their children in the practice of the Catholic faith – a faith they share, and which they are committed to passing on to their child. This in turn has raised issues about the godmother and godfather. They too are required to make solemn promises in the Baptism ceremony to support parents in bringing up the child in the Catholic faith.

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Last week we celebrated the first anniversary of the death of Shirley Savage – a lifelong and discreet supporter of St Mary & St Joseph parish. She left her wedding ring to the church on the understanding that proceeds of its sale should go to the parish. We have honoured her wishes. The value of the ring goes towards the cost of our new Mass books ‘In memory of Shirley & Gordon Savage’. *Fr John*

* **First Holy Communion preparation for children with special educational needs**: Our initial meeting with the children and their parents took place this week. Arrangements are now being made to provide suitable catechesis to enable them to make their First Holy Communion. Sincere thanks to all involved.
* **The Warm and Cosy Hub** is open in the meeting room at the back of St Mary’s Church **every Monday and Friday** from **10am to 2pm** until further notice. Thanks to the volunteers who help with this.

**Masses and Services for the coming week**

*All Masses and Services from St Mary’s are live-streamed*

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| **Saturday 15th February** *Racial Justice Day*6th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 5.00pm | St Mary’s | Josie Ridsdale, anniversary |
| **Sunday 16th February** *Racial Justice Day*6th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | People of our ParishesJoel & Elmer Marquez, thanksgiving |
| **Monday 17th February** | ***12.00 noon*** | ***St Mary’s*** | ***Requiem Mass: Patrick Doyle*** |
| **Tuesday 18th February** | *10.00am* 12.10pm | *St Anthony’s*St Mary’s | *Eucharistic Service* Ida Caley, recently died |
| **Wednesday 19th February** | 12.10pm | St Mary’s | Bill Dawson, recently died |
| **Thursday 20th February** | 10.00am 12.10pm | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Sandra Finnegan, recently diedJohnny Hannigan, recently died |
| **Friday 21st February** | 12.10pm  | St Mary’s | Mary & James Doyle |
| **Saturday 22nd February** 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 11.00am to 12noon5.00pm | St Mary’sSt Mary’s | Exposition and Confessions Florence & Syd Turner and Jane Harrison, anniversaries |
| **Sunday 16th February** 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time | 9.30am11.00am | St Anthony’sSt Mary’s | Michael Mulholland, anniversaryPeople of our Parishes |

We remember our parishioner **Pat Doyle** who died recently and whose Requiem Mass will take place on Monday. May he rest in peace. We think of his family and friends who mourn his loss.

***Bishop Paul McAleenan, Lead Bishop for Racial Justice, offers a short message for Racial Justice Sunday****.*

This is the 30th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday – a day to reflect on Racial Justice, pray for it and consider how we can ensure all God’s people are treated equally and with respect. This is also a Year of Jubilee – a time to put things right, especially our relationship with God, with each other and with the earth. In 2025, we are called to be Pilgrims of Hope. It is an ideal time to think more deeply about racial justice in our schools, in our parishes and in our community, our society.

Pilgrims always travel together. When pilgrims set out on a journey they know where they want to go, their destination. Our desire and destination is justice and fair treatment for everyone. No matter a person’s race, colour, or background, our Catholic faith teaches that we are all equal.

I ask you to be Pilgrims of Hope on our journey towards racial justice. In your parish, be Pilgrims of Hope in our journey towards racial justice by exploring how your local Church community can better reflect the diversity of your area. Welcome newcomers and address challenges and opportunities with sensitivity and understanding.

Be Pilgrims of Hope towards racial justice in society by advocating for Racial Justice where you live. We are to imitate the love of Christ by the way we think and how we treat others.

On any pilgrimage you need some equipment to help you on your journey, for example, a strong pair of walking shoes. For this pilgrimage towards racial justice, we need the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire us. We need faith, we need love and we need hope, that is, being confident in Christ’s promises and his faithfulness. Christ travels with us on our journey.  In this Jubilee Year, let us all be Pilgrims of Hope on the journey towards the goal of racial justice.