

27th September 2022

Gossip

**“Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes
from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it:
it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker.”**

George Elliot, *Daniel Deronda*

There is a difference between gossip and a healthy interest in the affairs of the people around us. The former can not only emanate from George Elliot’s “bad taste”, but also spread acrimony and hurtfulness, akin to the lingering smell of pipe-tobacco. The latter can be of benefit to a community, bind us closer to one another and, in certain circumstances, inform our prayers – like the news exchanged in my dad’s fish-van queue.

Our local community has its own *Facebook* Group. Like all social media outlets, it can be misused, though the group’s moderators are at pains to weed out those who might use it as a platform for misinformation or an avenue for their prejudicial rants. But most of the time, it’s a useful way of news being shared throughout the village: a warning about vandalism; the opening of a new shop; the entertainment at the pub; road-works at the entrance to the village. All helpful stuff.

Not long ago, one of the folk who lives near me was tragically killed in a road accident. News of that was shared on the *Facebook* Group. It wasn’t gossip, and it certainly wasn’t in bad taste. It was a community doing in a digital age what would have happened in my dad’s fish-van queue, information being shared for everyone’s benefit. When it came to the arrangements for the funeral, that was on *Facebook* too. As a result, a bereaved family, and, indeed, a whole community in mourning, were included in my prayers. Yesterday, out dog-walking, I met a local man who up-dated me on the family’s circumstances. Once again, as a caring man shared his concerns for local folk, my prayers were appropriately informed.

Beware of the “bad taste” of gossip, especially if the information isn’t credible or might even be malicious. But give your mind to shared concerns for your community and its folk. That way, we bind round one another, our prayers are more informed and our concerns for the needs of those around us more focussed as a result.

A prayer for today

Ever-present God, may my prayers today be relevant, clear and properly informed. Amen

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