

BBC RADIO ULSTER

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Friday 9th May 2014

The waiting is over.

It all starts today.

The opening stages of the Giro d'Italia 2014
right here, right now.

Coming soon to a closed road near you - 200 of
the world's top cyclists.

It's the 'Grande Partenza' - roughly translated
in these parts as the 'Quare Big Start'.

Visitors from all over the world have arrived in
large numbers. You can see confused tourists
standing around the streets of Belfast looking up
their guidebooks for a translation of 'Just stick
in your wee pin number love.'

And it seems that the whole of Northern
Ireland has turned pink to celebrate. I've seen
pink shop fronts, bus stops, bicycles and t-
shirts. I've spotted pink tractors, a pink horse
and pink sheep. Even Goliath, the iconic Harland
& Wolff crane in east Belfast has turned pink, I

think due to superb lighting rather than a wee man with a paintbrush and a million tins of pink emulsion. I've seen more things turn pink this week than on an Ulster beach on a sunny Bank Holiday Monday. Our international guests must think we are passionate about pink. Little do they know that as soon as the cyclists depart to pedal up the Italian peninsula, the pink will be gone and we'll be back to squabbling about orange and green for another few centuries! I wonder how many of our visitors will notice how much we're still struggling to agree a way of preventing our past from poisoning our future?

Of course, the reason why pink is the iconic colour of the Giro is because at the end of every stage of the race the leader gets to wear the coveted pink jersey. It's a symbol of exceptional achievement won through years of hard work, commitment and sacrifice. So maybe this weekend is a good time to reflect on the people we know who deserve a pink jersey for their years of hard work, commitment and sacrifice.

The person who's quietly caring for their ailing partner or parent.

The carer giving dignity to the most lonely and vulnerable.

The volunteer youth worker committed to young people who lack hope.

The person with a compassionate listening ear, supporting strangers in despair.

All of us know people who dedicate their lives to helping others. We won't be giving these heroes a pink jersey, and they probably aren't seeking recognition anyway. But we can find meaningful ways of acknowledging that what they do is appreciated and of enormous value.

If we could do this today it would be a good start, a big start. In fact it's fair to say it would be a Grande Partenza!