



Family Group

PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT NEWSLETTER
SPECIAL EDITION - FR PETER MCGRATH RIP

FEBRUARY 2019

Father Peter McGrath CP 1939 - 2018

On the third of March 2019 we mark the first anniversary of the passing of Father Peter.

For us, as members of the Passionist Family Group Movement, it is a time to pause, reflect and give thanks for his life and ministry amongst us and to pray for him, his family and ourselves, his friends.

In many ways Peter was a larger than life character with many gifts, especially his priesthood, which he shared so generously with us while, like us all, at times he struggled in life and experienced suffering and pain.

At this time, we especially remember Peter's sister Anne and her family, his Passionist brothers, his communities at St Anthony's and Grace Cottage and his many friends.

No doubt, there will be more than one commemorative Mass to pray for Peter and to give thanks for his journey amongst us all.

It is worthy of note, when Peter became parish priest at St Anthony in the Fields in 1972 and formed the first family groups, he did not set out to establish a movement. Rather, he responded to what he perceived was a hunger for belonging to the Christian community within his flock at Terrey Hills.



Peter frequently reminded us that, by belonging, we were responding to the call of Jesus to "love one another as I have loved you".

Peter's vision of Christian community was so compelling that other parishes sought him out and, with the support of his team at St Anthony's and others, Family Groups were established in numerous parishes throughout Australia and New Zealand as well as parishes in England, Ireland and the USA.

The Passionist Family Group Movement was born!

In Australia today Passionist Family Groups exist in approximately 180 parishes in 23 dioceses.

As we prepare for our Plenary Council, it would seem that the hunger for Christian community in our Australian Church is as compelling today as it was 47 years ago at St Anthony's in the Fields. As Bishop Pat Dunn, Chair of the New Zealand Catholic Bishop's Conference, recently observed "It occurs to me that Passionist Family Groups appreciated the importance of 'belonging' right from the very beginning."



Father Peter's legacy lives on!

The Passionist Family Group Movement is a mission of the Passionists

Fr Peter wrote many inspirational articles. This one is timeless!

Spirituality/Perfection Family Groups/Compassion

While being battered by incessant TV commercials during the first State of Origin Rugby League Match (where we were battered by the Maroons) I was prompted to think about what the media does to our society. I think the media has a big influence on pushing us further and further down the road towards the incessant quest for perfection.

We have to be perfect. The beautiful people have all the fun. This quest for perfection even reaches into our spirituality, our church activities, and our relationship with God. The more perfect we are the more God will love us.

Yet we read in THE GOOD BOOK that God looked at creation and said "it was good". We read further that God sent his own Son because he loved the world.

If you consider the greenhouse effect and the ozone problem, it still seems that some of us are doing as much as we can to destroy the world. But most of us still love creation and want to have a healthy and free world for our children in the future.

However – if you stop and look at creation, you see that beauty and imperfection go hand-in-hand. Next time you are with your Family Group out in the bush. Take a look at a magnificent gum tree. It stands out tall and strong as a creation of beauty. Yet if you look at it closely it is scarred, knotty and imperfect. So it is with every human body. There is no such thing as a perfect 10! So it is with our human spirit. There's love and generosity, then on the dark side, our envy, selfishness and meanness.

The trouble with this whole quest for ego perfection is that not only does it isolate people in competition, but it also misses the whole point of creation, life and community building. If we were perfect and had everything we needed, we wouldn't reach out to others. "If the eye could hear, the body wouldn't need the ear, and if the ear could speak, it wouldn't need the tongue" (St Paul).

It is our imperfections and the imperfections in others in Family Groups that call out the gifts of listening, of understanding, of healing and compassion. There is no such thing as a perfect Family Group. An imperfect Family Group bears the hand and mark of God. We can rejoice in our scars.

Finally, unfortunately, the command of Christ in St Matthew's gospel – "Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" has been greatly misunderstood and used to reinforce an egocentric private spirituality for perfection. The Greek word in the text means, "Be you full grown, be complete and whole". This does not eliminate scars and imperfections that are the sign of growth.

St Luke's gospel indicates that it is all about the way Christ's command is expressed. "Be you compassionate as your Heavenly Father is compassionate". We only have to think of God the Father caring for the smallest sparrow to realise the direction and challenge we have in our Family groups and the type of 'spirituality' the challenge produces.

Fr. Peter McGrath CP

Calendar for 2019

February

24 **Canberra/Goulburn**
Holy Spirit Parish Centre, Gungahlin
Fr Brian Traynor CP

March

9-10 **Bundaberg** Catholic Parishes
(Rockhampton): Fr Ray Sanchez &
Jeanelle and Denis Bergin
9-10 **Kingscliff** Catholic Parish (Lismore)
Gwen and Russell Winterscheidt
29-31 **Victoria – Tasmania** Special Weekend
Together We Belong
Holy Cross Templestowe

April

6/7 **Rochedale** St Peter's,
Fr Ray Sanchez - (Brisbane)
12/14 National Planning Meeting
Nurturing the Seeds
Holy Cross Templestowe
27 April – 6 May
Armidale Diocese Gwen and Russell

May

4/5 **Port Macquarie** "Saint Agnes" (Lismore)
Fr Ray Sanchez
17/19 **Booval** – Sacred Heart (Brisbane)
Fr Ray Sanchez

June

June Gwen and Russell to visit **Lismore**
Diocese and parishes in **North**
Queensland
15-16 **Wagga Wagga** Fr Brian Traynor CP
21-23 **Alstonville** Our Lady of the Rosary
(Lismore) Fr Ray Sanchez

August

4 **Family Group Day** (Brisbane)
A day for leaders and members of the
Family Groups at The Fort
10-11 **Parramatta Diocese** Fr Ray Sanchez CP

November

2/3 **A Day and Evening** The Fort (Brisbane)
10-11 **Newcastle Maitland** Fr Ray Sanchez CP
12-13 **Broken Bay Diocese** Fr Ray Sanchez CP
14-15 **Sydney Archdiocese** Fr Ray Sanchez CP
16-17 **Wollongong Diocese** Fr Ray Sanchez CP

Remembering Fr Peter McGrath CP

3 March 2019

9am Mass

St. Anthony in the Fields
Terrey Hills Northern Sydney
Morning tea after Mass.
Please bring a plate.