

# Family Groups



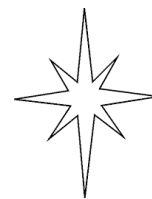
## PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT

*A Ministry of the Passionists*

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2019/2020

### Christmas 2019

As we come to the end of 2019 and prepare for the coming of our Saviour at Christmas, we reflect on the past year and especially on the involvement that we have enjoyed with many members of our Passionist Family Group Movement.



Much has been achieved as we and our teams have made contact with and visited numerous parish communities throughout this wide brown land of the Southern Cross. In particular, we are reminded of the many labourers in the vineyard who have continued to support our Movement as we strive to build and nourish our parish communities.

We would like to thank Father Tom McDonough, Provincial of the Passionists, and his Council for their continued support and encouragement.

In particular, we thank Father Brian Traynor, our advisor, for his faith-filled wisdom and guidance of both our Team and the Movement, not just in the past year, but throughout his priesthood.

We thank Father Ray Sanchez for his many visits to parish communities in Queensland, NSW and the ACT and his inspiring homilies and presentations.

We thank the bishops and parish priests who have welcomed and supported us in our ministry.

We thank our teams of diocesan and regional coordinators who have nurtured the PFGM in their respective areas.

Finally, and not least, **we thank you**, the members of our Movement who carry on the ministry in your daily lives by taking the time to seek the face of Jesus in those you meet, especially in your parish communities.

We wish each of you a Happy Christmas filled with the joy and peace of the Christ child.

Mary and Dennis, Frances and Michael, Gwen and Russell, - National Coordinating Team

### Passionist Family Group Prayer\*

God of all,

We pray that our Passionist Family Groups will reflect the true sense of belonging that draws strangers to become friends.

May our spirituality enable us to constantly celebrate belonging to 'A Family for All'.

May we continue to recognise and learn that the gospel is lived in community so that we give with compassion and generosity and receive with humility.

May those who have come seeking a new home, either from another part of our country or from overseas, find a warm welcome among us.

May those who have belonged for many years be encouraged to continue belonging to their Family Group.

May our parishes be enriched and strengthened by our commitment to one another.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen



\*The National Team composed this prayer during 2019 and invites you to use this at your special gatherings.

Our National Newsletter contains reports on recent PFGM events. No doubt, there are many more that occurred in your parishes and homes that are not recorded here. We encourage and welcome reports of events, and photos, too. However, please check that any persons appearing in your photos have given permission for distribution and possible publication.

Please send reports and approved photos with captions to: [pfgm.victas@gmail.com](mailto:pfgm.victas@gmail.com)

Thank you!



A weekend conference, an initiative of the Northern PFGM Team and convened by that Team, was held at Santa Teresa's Retreat Centre at Ormiston. 'Younger' adults aged between 25 and 55 from various parts of Queensland were invited. **The conference sought to discern whether the PFGM Model remains relevant to younger generations and to explore new ways of connecting with younger people.** Its title, *Adjusting Our Sails*, anticipated that the Movement may have to explore new ways to move forward.

Twenty-eight adults came together with the members of the PFGM National Coordinating Team. The 'young' attendees were drawn largely from Parish Renewals run by the Northern Leadership Team during the last two years and are quite new to Family Groups. *A very positive outcome of these Renewals has been the increase in the number of younger families joining Family Groups.*

The Conference's excellent facilitator, Philomena Billington, is very familiar with the PFGM and has belonged to a Family Group. Phil also facilitated the PFGM National Conferences in 2018 & 2019.

The *Adjusting Our Sails* conference was a great success with the participants reinforcing that the PFGM Model is still very relevant to their lives and that they are very keen to see the Movement continue and grow. Many suggestions were made about how to spread the message about Family Groups within existing parishes and also how to reach beyond parishes to the wider community. A key suggestion was that more use be made of the PFGM web site and other electronic communications.

### ***Some quotes from attendees:***

- *There is great anticipation of what our involvement in the PFGM can bring.*
- *Recommitment to the core idea and values of the PFGM.*
- *Opportunities to be listened to and to learn from others' experience and ideas.*
- *That having like-minded individuals come together like this is valuable and helps us feel supported and that we are not alone.*
- *Renewed enthusiasm and feeling encouraged.*
- *I loved the way everyone was welcoming; the way Phil facilitated to get the best out of each individual willing to share and as a group. The Mass was beautiful*
- *There is hope and inspiration for the continuance of the PFGM.*
- *A chance to reset and value the importance of listening and creating an inclusive world with Family Groups.*
- *Loved the spiritual aspect of the weekend*



**Conference participants on Sunday morning**



## South Heads North

*Michael and Frances Sullivan from the PFGM Southern Team visited PFGM Northern Team members Gwen & Russell Winterscheidt and Jeanelle Bergin to experience and learn from a Renewal Weekend at the huge Burleigh Heads Parish. The Renewal was supported by Passionist Priest, Fr Ray Sanchez. Each of the Northern Team spoke, at one or more of the nine weekend Masses, at various locations. They promoted membership of the Movement with enthusiasm across this huge parish with pleasing results.*

**Saturday, October 26:** We all met for a coffee in the Currumbin Park where we chatted about the planned weekend's Renewal. We attended the evening Mass at the *Burleigh Heads Church*, met the Parish Priest, Fr Morgan Batt, who prefers to be called Padre as he had spent many years as an Army Chaplain. Gwen and Jeanelle spoke about Family Groups at that Mass while Russell spoke at the evening Mass at *Palm Beach* and Fr Ray Sanchez spoke at *Miami*. Afterwards, we enjoyed dinner with the Burleigh Heads FG coordinator, Rosemary Hanley.



Burleigh Heads  
Family Group members  
celebrate  
their 21st Birthday



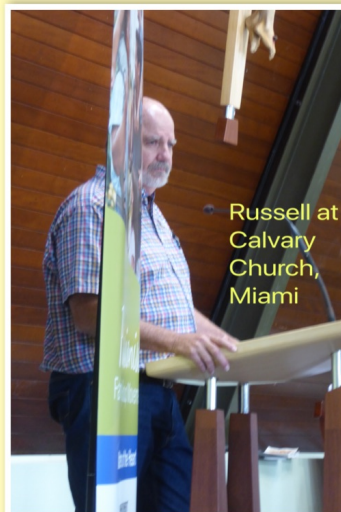
October 27, 2019



Gwen & Jeanelle at the  
Infant Saviour Church,  
Burleigh Heads



Russell at  
Calvary  
Church,  
Miami



Passionist Family Group  
Movement Renewal in  
Burleigh Heads Parish:  
October 2019



Fr Ray Sanchez at  
Mary, Mother of  
Mercy Church,  
Burleigh Waters



On **Sunday, October 27**, Russell promoted the PFGM at Masses in *Miami* and *Mudgerabah*. At the large, new church at *Burleigh Waters*, Fr Ray Sanchez concelebrated the Mass and spoke about Family Groups as part of his homily. We were all invited to the Parish's Family Groups' 21st Birthday celebration lunch at the Emerald Lakes Golf Club where we chatted to various members including a young couple who attended with their sons after recently moving into the parish.

### From Gwen:

*Two weeks later, on Friday night, November 15 with the aroma of sausages cooking, the parish hall was filled with anticipation as people waited to meet their new Family Group. The Spirit was with us! Three new groups were formed and both existing groups welcomed new members. Padre announced the new groups and shared his own journey in a Family Group at *Rosedale*. All involved are grateful to Rosemary Hanley (Parish Family Group Coordinator) and Patsy (Parish Secretary) for organising the 'Renewal Night & Sausage Sizzle' as well as the administration that goes into a Parish Renewal. It was a great night!*



## *Trekking across New South Wales...*

*- Bringing the Spirit of Passionist Family Groups*

Fr Ray Sanchez CP brought his extensive experience of PFGs to many people in NSW during November. In a matter of days, Fr Ray visited several parishes in the Dioceses of Maitland-Newcastle, Broken Bay and Wollongong and Sydney Archdiocese supported by Dennis & Mary Morris of the Central Team. Many heard Fr Ray at Mass or through his presentations in various parish centres. Those who came said that they were uplifted and renewed in their PFG life. Others left, reinvigorated, intending to take the Family Group message to their own group and the wider parish, by using the material that Fr Ray had shared with them.

In his presentations, Fr Ray traced the development of Christianity from apostolic times through to the present day which is now more and more secular. He contends that the PFGM is greatly needed. He highlighted the goal of the PFGM that is to be Christ for others. Through 'loving one another' we build parish community when we share in each other's joys and sorrows, giving example to our children. Thus, we are holding parishes together in a time of transition, providing a base for evangelisation in a time of decline and a Christian Family environment for children. The PFGM is very relevant in today's Church!

*- Dennis & Mary Morris*



*Anne & Des Little with fellow PFGM members who came to Our Lady of the Rosary, The Entrance to hear Fr Ray.*



*Pauline & John McGrath, Fr Ray and Mary Morris at St Francis Xavier, Belmont*

## *... and along the coast*

We were blessed in every way when Fr Ray cp visited the parishes of Unanderra and Nowra on the NSW South Coast in the Diocese of Wollongong to to enliven the Passionist Family Group Movement.

In his homilies on the weekend of November 16/17 November, Fr Ray related a story about a couple from Coffs Harbour. The husband, Brian, did not believe that Christianity worked. Brian was very sceptical; he had seen little or no evidence that people "loved one another or cared for each other" over his life time. He joined Family Groups reluctantly, thinking, "No sermons or prayer groups, but a social group would be pretty harmless". Sadly, Brian contracted cancer and needed treatment. His Family Group rallied around with support in various forms: collecting the children from school (he needed to have treatment in Brisbane), visiting and talking with the family. When his treatment became more demanding, the Family Group drove him to Brisbane and stayed the night with him. He could not understand why people would help him and not ask for anything in return. Their support increased as he became more physically immobile. So that his family could spend their precious time together prior to his death, the Family Group increased their practical support: mowing lawns, cleaning the house, delivering meals. They had become "a gentle light" to the family in every possible way, asking nothing in return. Brian died at peace and with faith. He had experienced real love throughout his sickness.

Family Groups are developed through interacting socially. This is how people develop trust and relationships. However, the bonds then go deeper than "just social"; and people's care builds small communities in which people feel connected and find a purpose in the Church. These connections spread to the larger parish community. At an appropriate point, Fr Ray invited members of the congregations to register to join a Family Group and quite a few did so.

A shared lunch was enjoyed by many (44) and, as is typical of the "loaves and fishes", there was much food to share. Thank you to all who contributed to make the day an inspiring and positive re-enlivening of our lives. We are most grateful to Fr. Duane from Unanderra and Fr. Pat from Nowra for their positive engagement and support. Likewise, we are very appreciative of the work put in by Mary and Dennis Morris of the Central Team.

*- Margaret & Paul Casey*





## St Mary's, Echuca - Victoria

Coordinators Carmel and Ted Mackenzie reported on their Echuca Parish Expo held in November, 2019.

"Our Expo recently was successful again. Organisers of the Expo generously gave us an extra space which enabled us to display more. People did stop and look and some took pamphlets. A member of the Uniting Church said how impressed she was with the display. She has been invited to attend our next Group function.

We will have our first Combined Function in April/May. We usually celebrate the 10.00am Mass with PFG members participating in ministries. After Mass we provide morning tea to the Parish. We would like to improve on this next year and see if the Parish Pastoral Council would be prepared to combine the 3 Masses into one with the focus on Family Groups. We would still provide morning tea for all attending.

The Parish has had one combined Mass already which was a great success and gave people the opportunity to meet those from other Masses. I know that they are keen to have several during the year to build sense of community – belonging. We have detailed to our Plenary Council Representatives how Family Groups fit well into our Parish Vision."

### St Joseph's, Warrnambool - Victoria

Coordinators Jane & Chris  
Thompson reported:

"We had our annual Passionist Family Group Masses last Sunday on October 20 where an excerpt from the "Matters of the Heart"\* video was shown at the end of Mass to follow our speeches about what it is to be in a group and to open our door to anyone who would like to join or ask questions."

\* Excerpts from this video can be found on the PFGM website: [www.pfgm.org](http://www.pfgm.org)

Fr Peter McGrath remembered:

In a recent Newsletter, Passionist Provincial Fr Tom McDonough reflected on the role of Fr Peter McGrath, our Movement's founder, with these words -

As the bushfires rage through the country, and as firefighters from all over Australia and around the world battle them, let's remember for a moment, our brother, Fr Peter McGrath, chaplain for so many years to the Rural Fire Service. This was a ministry of which Peter was very proud, as we know. Both the present Commissioner of the RFS, Shane Fitzsimmons, and his father who was also Commissioner, were parishioners of St Anthony in the Fields. At his funeral members of the RFS formed a guard of honour to farewell Peter, Shane gave a memorable tribute and presented me with the folded official flag of the RFS, which is in our memorabilia cabinet in the Provincial Office



## Celebrations in Canberra

*Congratulations to Passionist Family Groups at **St Jude's, Holder** who, in October, celebrated 30 years of sharing and caring with participation in Sunday Mass followed by morning tea and a picnic lunch in the grounds of the Church.*



*Recommissioning at **BELCONNEN** Parish*



*Congratulations also to Passionist Family Groups at **South Belconnen Parish of St Matthew & St Vincent de Paul** where during September the leaders and parish coordinators were recommissioned during the Vigil Mass and a shared lunch and a fun afternoon with trivial pursuit completed the celebrations.*





\* We asked our good friend and PFGM advisor, Fr Brian Traynor, to contribute something to our Newsletter that gives us all some food for thought.  
Thanks Brian.

## BRIAN'S BLOG

He is not a well-known person, but the prophet Habakkuk writing around 2,600 years ago, can provide us with hope at a time when being a 'church-belonger' is tough going.

Habakkuk wrote, "I hear what is ahead, and my body trembles; my lips quiver at the sound; rottenness enters into my bones; my legs tremble beneath me. Yet I will quietly wait for the day of trouble to come from those who will invade us. Even if the fig tree does not blossom, even if there is no fruit on the vines; even if the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, even if the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; God makes my feet like those of a deer so I can walk in the high places. (Habakkuk 3:16-19)

Israel was facing invasion from Babylon. The prophet describes his fear but also despite all the losses that might occur, he expresses his ultimate hope. We need this kind of hope today and the seeds for such hope can be in our Passionist Family Groups.

We are living in a world facing so many global challenges and suffering a shortage of true leaders. Our church is reeling from the betrayal of child sex abuse as well as a paralysing inability by many leaders to speak with relevance to any generation, let alone the young. Every week parishes report depletion of numbers, so for those who remain, there is a real need for hope.

Of course our true hope lies in taking up the invitation of Jesus that we create 'a family for all' or as he called it, 'the kingdom of God'. It is in the experience of true fellowship that people discover the simplicity of the gospel - 'love one another, as I have loved you'. As you celebrate end of year functions, be encouraged that despite all that is wrong in our world, the signs and seeds of hope are in the efforts we each make to reach out and include others in our fellowship and the discovery that we need to do so little to bring hope and joy to our world. Just belong and you will grow in believing.

Brian Traynor CP



*Celebrating 35 years on 2020.*

The Diamond Creek Parish of the Sacred Heart was one of the first Victorian parish to embrace the Passionist Family Group Movement in 1985. Almost 35 years later, its banner hangs proudly in the church against a background of beautiful eucalyptus leaves.

