

Family Groups



PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT

A Ministry of the Passionists

NEWSLETTER SPRING/SUMMER 2020

To our Passionist Family Group family:

We can look back on the happenings of the year to take stock and we must look forward to what is to come.

No one could have predicted the happenings of the year – bushfires, floods and storms as well as a global pandemic. Each of these has had an influence on us in one form or another. Perhaps the longest-lasting effect was that of the pandemic. Depending on where each of us lives, the experience of the pandemic would differ.

One of the big effects for the majority would be the separation from family and friends that was implemented in an effort to reduce the transmission of the virus.

During this challenging time, you, the members of Passionist Family Groups were encouraged to be very aware of each other and to find ways to support each other: a very important aim of our Movement! We found many different ways of doing this – emails, phone calls, Zoom/ Skype, newsletters, telephone trees and more.

Let us remember to continue these practices now that more freedoms to move about have been achieved.

What 2021 will look like in this regard is unknown. We can have hope that we are on the right track and that group members will be able to meet and that we, as members of our Team, will be able to visit.

This too is a time of celebration for the Passionist Family who is marking 300 years since the foundation of the Congregation of the Passion by St Paul of the Cross with a year of renewal of mission – Gratitude, Prophecy, Hope.

In this Season of Advent when we wait in joyful hope, to you we send our blessings for a Happy Christmas.

- Gwen, Russell, Frances, Michael, Mary and Dennis

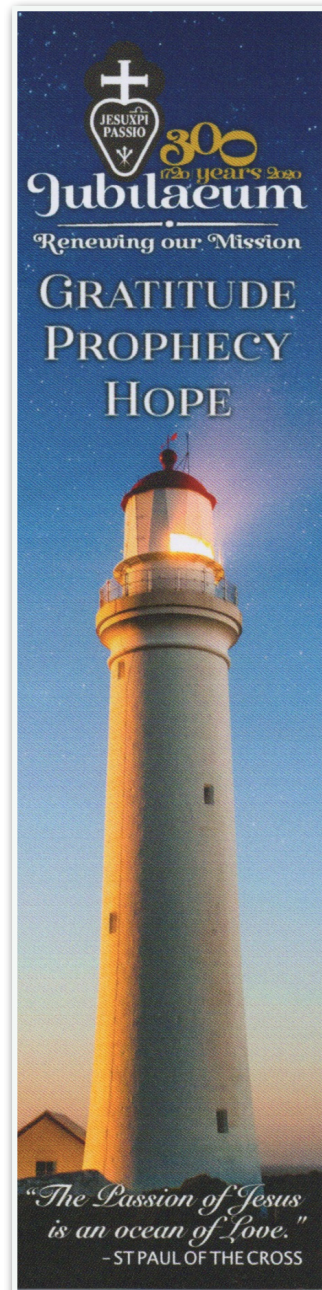
Passionist Jubilee - Celebrating 300 years

On November 22, the Passionist Congregation began a celebration of the founding of the Congregation by St Paul of the Cross on that day in 1721. Paul was a layman when he founded the Passionists and today there are thousands of lay Passionists throughout the world and many others who are attracted by the Passionist charism and spirituality. It is that founding charism that all linked to the Passionists will be celebrating during the Jubilee. *The Jubilee Year theme is 'Renewing Our Mission'.*

Gratitude: To remember the past with thanksgiving to God who has blessed us

Prophecy: To faithfully read the signs of the times and find new ways to evangelise through the lens of Jesus' Passion

Hope: To discern God's plans and promises for a meaningful future



Family Group Day at *The Fort* - Queensland

“*Serve One Another Humbly in Love*” Galatians 5:13



The PFGM Northern Leadership Team led a day for the Family Groups at the Passionists' Monastery in Brisbane on the 24th October. This day was professionally recorded and will be made available on the Passionist Family Group Web Site in early 2021. Our hope is to enable all Family Groups to access these resources to share with their own groups.

Family Groups in a Changing Church and a Changing World

- Fr Ray Sanchez



Fr Ray's presentation was timely due to our experiences during COVID 19. A series of questions led us to reflect and respond:

- *What are we bound to and how has the pandemic impacted each of us?*
- *Given the Family Group's Aims and Goals, how have we been challenged during 2020?*
- *What have we gained?*
- *What might 'new beginnings' for the PFGM look like?*

Fr Ray introduced an interesting model to see how we can move through and let go of the past and move into the future with hope.

The Spirit of Family Groups – Russell Winterscheidt

Russell took us through an historic journey from the Second Vatican Council and a pledge made, at that time, by many Bishops to live like the poorest of their parishioners. Then on to Pope Francis' influence for a church to live simply and humbly. Similarities were drawn between the Bishops' Pledge, Pope Francis' values and those of the Passionist Family Group Movement.

By sharing stories from his own Family Group, Russell showed how the **Spirit** in our groups can be seen more as *faith in action*.



People were asked to reflect on:

- *What aspects of spirituality pertain to our lives in the Passionist Family Group Movement?*
- *Are we actively seeking to include others?*
- *Are we living like the early Christians and being a good example to our children and others in our communities?*

Belonging is more Important than Getting Together – Celine Bowman

For Celine, her creative thoughts began flowing after reading Fr Brian's Blog, **Belonging is more Important than Getting Together**, in this year's Winter PFGM National Newsletter.

Celine emphasised that *belonging* gives us the sense of fitting in or feeling like you are an important member of a group. *Belonging* meets the human need to be accepted by others for *who we are*.

Celine raised some of the challenges, for all of us, in our Family Groups.

- Are we doing enough to stay connected in these challenging times?
- What are some suggestions/creative responses to this challenge of staying connected?
- In what ways are we stuck in just "getting together"?
- Can you share a story from your group that illustrates the power of belonging?



**Happy New Year!
I'm going to stay up
on New Year's Eve
this year. Not to see
the New Year in, but
to make sure this one
leaves!**

AFL Grand Final Fever hits Hobart, Tasmania

Coordinator Michael Ball, explains:

*"This morning, October 24, 2020, was the first **St Joseph's Family Group** activity in Hobart since March, apart from the 'normal' post-Mass coffee on Sundays at the bookshop. About 20 of our Family Group members gathered for our traditional Grand Final Footy Breakfast. Fr Peter and Br Ed certainly enjoyed themselves."*



*Geelong and Richmond supporters at the Hobart Grand Final breakfast:
L to R: Michael Ball, Fr Peter Addicoat, Brother Ed & Kerry Hennessy*



(No doubt, Fr Peter Addicoat PP relished the Tigers' win!)

ECHUCA (Victoria): *The Family Group coordinators, Carmel and Ted McKenzie, have encouraged their Family Group members to record their life stories for posterity. Carmel sent us this bio to share:*

BERYL PEARSON

I was born in Echuca in 1931 but lived most of my life on Gunbower Island on a farm owned by my parents, Mary and John Norman. My brother Angus was 8 years older than I and my sister Fran (Beehag) 5 years younger. We went to the Island State School near our farm which backed onto the Murray River. On hot nights we swam and picnicked with neighbours. In order to go shopping and attend Mass and church working bees, we had to cross Gunbower Creek. I often helped Mum with the cleaning, sometimes by lantern light, in the years of the Mallee dust storms.

I was a boarder at St Jo's from 1945 until Dec 1947 in which year I was Dux of the School. Strong friendships were made which have lasted a life time. We often sang at St Mary's 8.00 am Mass and at weddings.

In 1948 I started Student Teaching at Gunbower Island School and next year at Gunbower before attending Bendigo Teachers' College. My first teaching post after graduating was at Rushworth Migrant Centre, an old army camp which had been an internment camp during the war. There were 2000 migrants, without English, and 12 teachers who spoke English. We all lived in partitioned army huts enclosed by high barbwire fences.

I had met a wonderful man, Noel Pearson before this and he brightened my days by writing letters and visiting.

I then moved to the Melbourne suburb of Kingsville finding it much easier to teach English speaking children. Noel and I became engaged and built a house on our block of land in East Bentleigh where I started teaching.

After marrying at Gunbower in 1952 we had 4 children and enjoyed a very friendly neighbourhood. I attended an evening millinery class at Oakleigh.

When my parents retired, Noel was keen to try farming and we moved to Gunbower Island gradually improving the stock rate and milk production. We had 6 more children who attended the Island school until it was forced to close. Our girls then went to Cohuna School and St Joseph's, Echuca, later. The boys were boarders at Rupertswood, Sunbury developing a great love of horses. Noel was the local Horse and Pony Club instructor and 'Secretary of Everything'.

My interests were CWA and Catholic Ladies' Meetings and all they entailed. I was often President. Meals on Wheels, Home Communion, Church Working Bees and Flower arrangements for weddings were other interests.

We downsized and moved to Echuca when Noel's health deteriorated. He was very grateful for the care from parishioners. At this stage I have 29 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren in whose lives I love to be involved. My children are all considerate and kind.



NOTE: Beryl is a much loved member of the Wallies Group and very generous and caring, rarely missing a gathering.

Brian's Blog

John is a moral theologian and Director of the Nathaniel bio-ethics centre in Wellington, New Zealand. He is a member of the Formation Commission for the Passionists in Holy Spirit Province (Australia, NZ, PNG and Vietnam). John and his wife, Kerry, have been parish and regional coordinators of Family Groups in New Zealand for many years.

It is no exaggeration to refer to the proliferation of loneliness in our society as an epidemic. The 2018 Australian Psychological Survey reported that 50% of Australians feel lonely one day each week.

We have long known that loneliness is strongly linked to mental well-being, including people's levels of anxiety and depression. Research carried out this year shows that even short periods of isolation related to coronavirus lockdown can have a marked impact on people's mental health.

In her recent book, *The Lonely Century*, Noreena Hertz, notes that lonely people have higher risks of coronary disease, stroke and of developing clinical dementia. Also, lonely or socially isolated people are almost 30% more likely to die prematurely. (p 17).

In his book *Lost Connections*, Johann Hari suggests: "You need to have a community. You need to have meaningful values, not the junk values that tell you happiness comes through money and buying objects. You need to have meaningful work. You need the natural world. You need to feel you are respected. You need a secure future. You need connections to all these things." Pope Francis in his most recent encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, writes that "We need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home". (n.17).

How are we going to fix our broken communities? What are we going to do as families, churches, volunteer groups and workplaces about this latest epidemic? The 'vaccine' to inoculate our country against the terrible scourge of loneliness lies in the hands of all of us.

Fr Brian writes:

'If you are reading this reflection, it is likely that you are a member of a Passionist Family Group and perhaps involved in leadership. Given the months of social isolation we have experienced and the fear that remains in the community about re-engaging in social contact, it is important that we don't let the situation drift. We can respond to many of the challenges of loneliness and social isolation.

Our Family Groups are ideal for offering support and care, but we need to be creative in finding ways of making contact with one another. Traditionally many Family Groups wind down during December-January. Perhaps many groups need to wind-up! Zoom meetings are good, but they do not include everyone. As opportunities open up for reconnecting, let's be active. Let's find a way to hear each other's stories.

What has it been like? Are you lonely? What do you need? How can we help?'

Brian Traynor CP



Left: In September 2020, members of one of the Montmorency Parish's Family Groups met by Zoom and shared a 'special item' from their early years. PP, Fr Terry Kean joined in also.

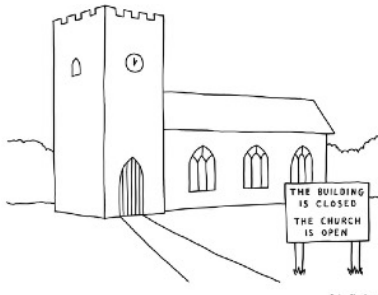


Celebrating Special Anniversaries

Anniversaries are always worth celebrating, especially those that mark decades, a quarter of a century and more. However, 2020 with its social restrictions due to the C-19 virus, has prevented such celebrations for many Parish Family Groups this year.

In a letter written 15 years ago by the PFGM founder, Fr Peter McGrath, to the Parish Family Groups in Montmorency, Victoria, on the occasion of their 10th Anniversary, Fr Peter's words still ring true and could be applied to all Family Groups.

Congratulations to all the Parishes and their FG members whose significant anniversaries occurred this year as you continued "*caring for one another and building up the Parish Community*" in spite of the various limitations imposed on us due to the virus.

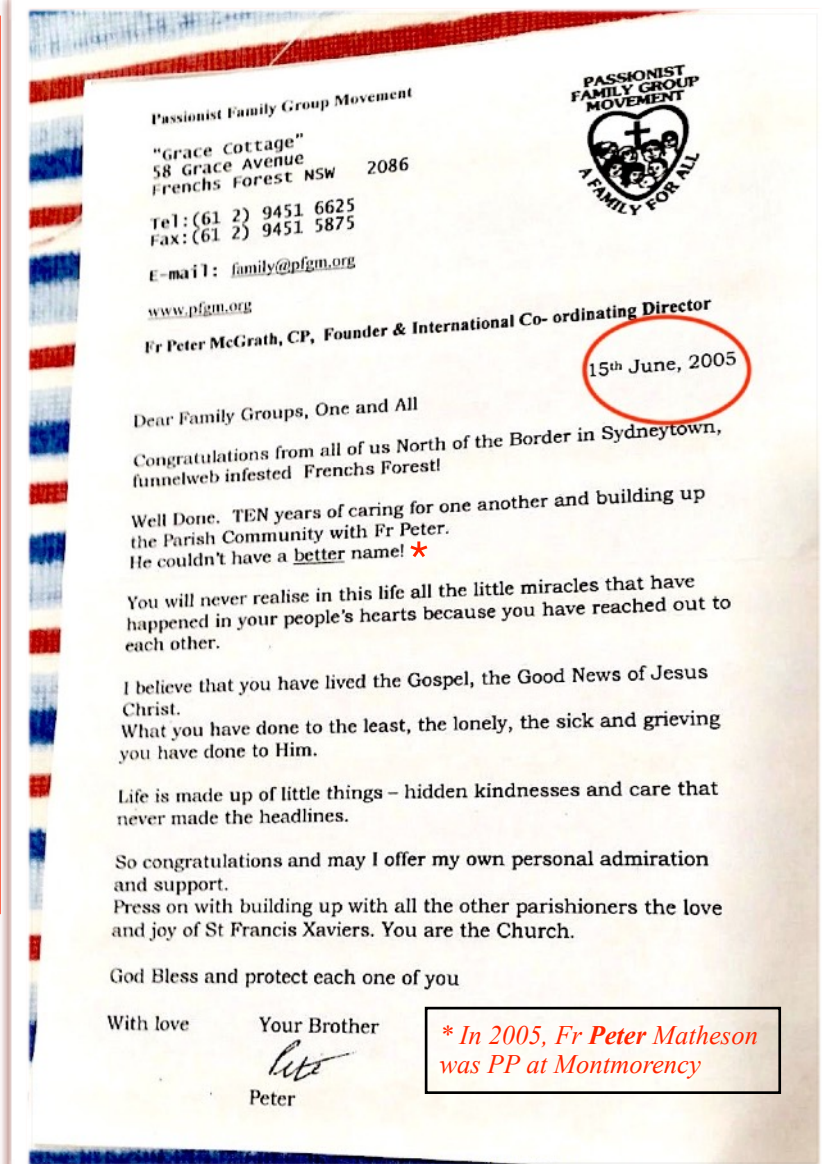


Safeguarding

Policies to ensure best practice for the safety and wellbeing of children have been put in place by every organisation since the Royal Commission into *Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* issued its recommendations.

The requirement for a personal police clearance and working with children check, to undertake some ministries has annoyed some people. While it is an inconvenience, we know and agree that we must place the safety of children at the very top of our priorities. The destruction of lives that was revealed by the Royal Commission makes it imperative that we do everything possible to prevent such behaviour occurring again.

Every parish has a Safeguarding policy and a Safeguarding officer, as do the Passionists. Where ministry is carried out in the name of a parish (e.g. Passionist Family Groups in a local parish), or on behalf the Passionist Family Group Movement (e.g. Regional support teams) there are particular regulations that can be found in the respective Safeguarding policy. It is our hope that no one ceases to be involved in their ministry because of these requirements, since we need all hands on deck in these challenging times.



We wish you a happy and blessed Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus

