

Passionist Family Group Movement

Australia Planning Meeting

Nurturing the Seeds

12-14 April 2019

And so Fr. Peter's energy continues. The Spirit hovered as the skilled and focused facilitator Phil Billington engaged with the National Coordinating Team: Dennis & Mary Morris (ACT/NSW), Gwen & Russ Winterscheidt (Queensland/Northern NSW), Frances & Michael Sullivan (Victoria), supported by Trish & Roger Guiney (spelling) and Alison (Tony being absent) Woolley (Vic), Janelle & Dennis Bergen, and Maryanne Breston (Qland). Coordinators from (NSW) included: Annette & Tony Gutteras: Denis & Elizabeth Farrer: Marg & Paul Casey, and Michael & Cathy Hawton, supported by the Passionist Priests: Frs. Tom McDonough, Brian Trainor, and Ray Sanchez.

We gathered Friday afternoon, and even though Phil creates a marvellously relaxed atmosphere she also ensures we stayed focus and meet our purpose to reassess the goals created in Templestowe the previous year.

Laughter, fine food, storytelling and listening make up the essence of Family Groups, and this Family Group is no exception. Linda and Paul (NZ) set the scene with an ice breaker, encouraging both listening and talking, and ensuring all were comfortable. Even though most of the group had met before, there were some new faces: Kathy & Michael (Coffs Harbour) and Maryanne (Qland) who acknowledged they were unaware of the expansive organization of the Ministry, yet were delighted to be part of this new Family Group learning and sharing. We began by sharing in small groups, then in bigger groups, and then in the entire group. This allowed each person to connect in an easy manner.

We focused on our Hopes for the Future and Looking at the Trends throughout the Ministry: What would we do differently if we could change one thing? One suggestion was that the Bishops and PP would endorse the spirituality of the Movement. We worked hard and didn't even see the outside world for a day and a half! Congratulations to Phil for managing Paul, the comma and colon (as in punctuation) Nazi!

After Phil's exit, Fr. Brian facilitated for the rest of the gathering. He focused on "Safeguarding" (how we protect our vulnerable children)—the Bishops'

response to the Recommendations from the Royal Commission. (Catholic Professional Standards Limited are redrafting the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards to be implemented by all Catholic entities, ministries and organisations across Australia.)

We spent time looking at the traditional model of Church in regards to congregation participation. That is, traditionally as a Church we believed, then behaved, and lastly belonged. The model the Pope is endorsing is that of the PFGM: To Belong, to Believe and then to Behave. Fr. Peter was certainly ahead of his time in recognising the need in us all and gathering small groups where we do indeed belong.

One of the highlights for me is the expression of the liturgy in so many varied forms: acknowledging Country in the gathering prayer, Dadirri, which is a reflection by Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, thought provoking and the essence of Family Groups (the essence being that “All persons matter, all of us belong”). Another aspect was nurturing the seeds, how we care and protect the seeds. This is based on the Parable of the Sower; how the seed is propagated and disseminated throughout the Group and Parish life, and the Church. We have challenges to meet. How do we do this? A Reading from Fr. Noel Connelly SSC titled “Have we too much in our head to hear the Spirit?” was the topic for our final reflection.

A major change for the PFGM over the 48 years that it has been in existence relates to the fact that from its inception until last year the PFGM was led by the Passionists, that is, the Passionist Religious Clergy leading the Ministry supported by Lay people. However, since 2018 the PFGM has been led by the lay people supported by the Passionist Clergy. We listened to sociologist Michael McQueen share his sociological insights into Generation X, Y, and Millennials, and, of course, the good old Baby Boomers. However he somehow omits the generation before the Baby Boomers! (Though I can assure you we will not be ignored!).

One area of importance is to especially consider the under 55s in that we need younger new members as part of a succession plan, and we want to find the best ways to engage with those under 55. Lots of good thoughts came from the reflections here.

Saturday evening allowed for creative, artistic, and humorous talent. Linda, who had originally started the ice breakers, presented us with a challenge.

Each group was to recreate words to a given song incorporating something that they had learnt or felt important during the day. Songs chosen for rewriting varied in style, for example, *We will, We will rock you*, *Halleluiah*, *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, and *Day-O*, to mention a few. We were considering entering the latest TV Grammys! Of course we, the “Simpson “group, felt our song won when we focused on the correct use of the comma and the colon— as had been done in parts of Saturday!

How blessed we have been. Gathered together in God’s name; led by the capable Phil and Brian, connecting with each other, sharing stories, provided with excellent, healthy, delicious food plus wine, waited on by the Victorian Housemaids and chefs. We felt that we had shared in a new Family Group experience and communed together in a meaningful Mass with Fr . Tom (while outside many people were gathering to perform the annual local Passion Play). We completed our goals for our Vision and Direction for the next three years. We met the challenge! Well done to you all.

A big thank you to so many who laboured hard for many months in ensuring the workshop was effective and meaningful. We are most appreciative of your talents, time, and generosity. Perhaps next year we from NSW could entice you to come over here and we will spoil you all and treat you with kindness and love that we received. (Just for your information, I have had the commas checked!!!!!!)

Marg Casey