

Family Groups



PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT

A Ministry of the Passionists

NEWSLETTER SPRING 2019

“I Grew Up in a Passionist Family Group”

Claire Victory, the new President of the St Vincent de Paul Society's National Council, grew up in a family that belonged to a Passionist Family Group in their local Parish in Edwardstown, South Australia where Family Groups are still active.



Claire says: “*Passionist Family Groups came to our parish when I was a child, and our Family Group soon became a key part of our family's social life. In our Family Group were couples, singles and families, spanning a range of ages – some who we already knew well, and others with whom we had not associated much previously. We enjoyed picnics, dinners, sports and activity nights and weekends away together. As well as helping me in my formative years to feel comfortable with people from different age groups and backgrounds and recognise the importance of companionship to people, our Family Group helped to keep me, my sisters and our parents connected with so many of our fellow parishioners and helped to foster a sense of community.*”

Claire is the first woman ever elected to the role of President of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia. She is the first South Australian to fill this role; and she is the youngest President of the Society in the 165 years it has existed in this country. In her new role, Claire stated that she was looking forward to continuing and strengthening the Society's work towards building a more just and compassionate society.

Celebrating International Family Group Day 5th May 2019

On a recent Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, led by Fr Tom McDonough CP, Family Group people gathered around the altar to celebrate Mass on International Family Group Day. It was a wonderful experience, on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee in Tiberias. as they remembered and gave thanks for the Passionist Family Group Movement and its Founder, Fr Peter McGrath CP.



Passionist Family Groups featured in Australian Catholics magazine- Spring 2019



Southern PFGM Team Member, Trish Gurney, gave generously of her time to be interviewed by journalist, Michele Frankeni, of the *Australian Catholics Magazine* about Trish and her

family's experience of Family Groups when they migrated to Australia years ago. **The resulting article with great pictures is available in the Spring Parish edition or the online Spring 2019 edition at:**

www.australiancatholics.com.au Here is an excerpt:

The Passionist Family Group Movement deepens relationships within parishes and among parishioners.

Trish and Roger Gurney had migrated from Zimbabwe and were looking for ways to connect with people in their Victorian Our Lady of the Pines Parish and in the area when they heard about the Passionist Family Group Movement.

Trish, newly arrived in Australia in 2003, was eight months pregnant with her son Ryan and had a toddler, Emma.

'We had one family member here, my brother, but his kids were a lot of older', Trish says. 'When we heard about the family groups we thought that would be a way of getting to know people and to get involved in the parish.'

She and Roger became leaders of a new group that included 14 other families who had younger children.

'It has been great. Through the group we found out about a lot of places. Being with families with similar age children, we found out about schools and clubs.'



Re-kindling the Flame for Family Groups – August 3, 2019 QUEENSLAND

A Formation Day for Passionist Family Group members from the Toowoomba, Lismore and Brisbane Dioceses was held on a warm sunny August day at the Passionist Retreat Centre, "The Fort" at Oxley in Queensland. The presenters included *Fr Ray Sanchez CP*, National PFGM Team members *Gwen and Russell Wintescheidt* and Northern Region Team member *Jeanelle Bergin*.

Fr Ray addressed the question, '**Can Family Groups meet the challenges that face our Church today, in a time of transition?**'

The Wintescheidts' spoke of **The Relevance of Passionist Family Groups** and was framed by the participants' experiences within their own Family Groups, including the different stages that Family Groups pass through as the members journey together.

In her presentation, **Leadership with Love**, Jeanelle encouraged Parish and group coordinators to look at their own gifts as well as those of members in their Family Groups.

The participants were pleased to have a day to share, explore, learn and rejuvenate their own spirits and the spirit in our Family Groups and, of course, enjoyed a meal together!



Melbourne's Archbishop endorses the PFGM - VICTORIA

In late July, 2019, PFGM Southern Team members, Michael & Frances Sullivan met with the Archbishop of Melbourne, the Most Reverend Peter Comensoli, in his Melbourne office where they were greeted warmly as they chatted about The Passionist Family Group Movement. The Archbishop readily expressed his endorsement of the work of the Movement with which he was familiar from his time in the Broken Bay Diocese in NSW.

In a follow-up letter, Archbishop Comensoli wrote: "Creating support networks and strengthening the bonds of friendship - paired with ways to express life's joys and challenges with those who share the same vision and commitment to Christian family life has become very important. The PFGM has certainly modelled a beautiful way to be present to the needs of families throughout their life journey."

An Inspiring Visit to Parramatta Diocese NSW

Our weekend in early August with Fr Ray Sanchez CP was a terrific experience and exceeded our expectations in terms of the response from people in the three churches he attended. Prior to the weekend, the Parramatta Diocesan Pastoral Planning Office assisted us in promoting opportunities to hear about Passionist Family Groups throughout the Diocese. Thus, many other parishes were represented over the weekend and we now have a number wishing to re-vitalise their groups or to introduce the Movement to their parish.

Fr Ray celebrated the Vigil Mass at *John XXIII Parish, Stanhope Gardens* where he introduced Passionist Family Groups to the parishioners and shared an affinity with the significant number of Filipino members of the Parish. On Sunday morning, Masses were celebrated in *Mary Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown*, a very multicultural parish which has two Mass centres.



In each case, preparation paid off with PFGM brochures on the seats and a cuppa afterwards. Ray's homily was inspiring; he linked the Gospel to the aims of Family Groups by sharing his own experience of the Movement.

A cup of tea following Mass gave further opportunities to speak with the parishioners. Dennis and Mary Morris (NCT members) were also available to chat with people after each Mass and were joined by Tony and Annette Guterres (Sydney Archdiocese) for the 10am Mass. There were many registrations of interest in the PFGM and at Blacktown, already enough for a few new groups to form.

Representatives from other parishes arrived for Fr. Ray's presentation which followed the 10am Mass. Broadly speaking, he demonstrated how in the early church people's homes were the churches, how this has changed over time though the need for small communities where people know and care for one another has remained. The day concluded with a shared lunch and a deepening commitment to further build their Parish communities.

Elizabeth and Dennis Farrar (PFGM Coordinators, Parramatta Diocese)

A Bequest to the PFGM

Recently, a generous bequest was made to our Movement from the Will of a grateful couple, Glad and John Conroy who had been Family Group members at Terrey Hills Parish in NSW. Their daughter, Amanda Conroy and her siblings, Lisa, Paul and Gregory provided this information about their experience at Terry Hills:

Conroy Family Memories of Terry Hills Parish

John and Glad Conroy and their four young children joined the Terry Hills parish community in the mid-1970s. Fr Peter McGrath had a non-traditional, down to earth approach to liturgy and life in general which attracted our family among many.

Sr Leonie's pastoral outreach and Fr Kev Bates' musical influence brought the community together liturgically and socially.

It was uplifting as a teenager to sing, 'Love one another as I have loved you' and 'Welcome to all who pass by here...', even if Dad sang embarrassingly at full voice. The younger children looked forward to 'Lolly Sunday' and sitting on the steps of the altar, with Father Peter welcoming all the children to join him in the Mass!

The Christmas Masses became stuff of legend: families on picnic blankets under the stars, with the live nativity, including baby Jesus (as a girl or boy), and even a donkey!

Fr Peter's example of living out a faith for others which was focused on community and outreach influenced us deeply. He invited many social justice leaders of their time to speak at Mass and join the community – Fred Hollows and Fr Chris Riley among others.

Lisa, the eldest Conroy child, welcomed Fr Peter to Calwell, ACT, to begin Family Groups in the 90's in what was then 'nappy valley' in Canberra!

The legacy of our family's involvement in the Passionist Parish of Terry Hills is very special for us and is an abiding connection to our parents' values.



John & Glad Conroy

Combined Family Groups' Activity at Endeavour Hills, Victoria - June 2019

In June, Members of the various Family Groups in the St Paul the Apostle Parish gathered for a special combined art program when they participated in *The Diversity Wall Project* funded by the City of Casey. This Project brings together members of the local community to explore the concept of belonging.

Using the Passionist Family Groups' motto, "A Family for All", the members reflected on what we brought to our Family Groups and swirled paints of many colours in trays of water. Rebekah, the facilitator artist, reminded us that, as individuals, we came together to form Family Groups, therefore blending our gifts and personalities – becoming One Community. As she spoke, she ran picks through the colours to reveal a beautiful marbled mix - representative of our One Family. Soon, we donned gloves and enthusiastically dipped our tiles into the water bath to transfer the marbling patterns for preservation. Our artwork was to be displayed in the Gathering Space of our church while others have become treasured keepsakes at home.

- Val Rodrigues, PFGM Coordinator, Endeavour Hills



A Family Group from the Donvale Parish in metropolitan Melbourne enjoyed a steam train trip from Castlemaine to Maldon in country Victoria in August.



Photos supplied by Judy Brophy, co- coordinator, Donvale

*** We have 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



Pope Francis greeting Fr Brian in October 2018

What a Family Group can learn from the Camino

A week ago Tracey completed seven hundred kilometres of the Camino. When I asked if she had done it alone, she said "Yes; however you never do it alone".

When I asked about the kind of people she met along the way, it was a small litany of people who spoke with her in a similar way.

"None of them engaged in the small talk that we usually get caught up in".

"Most of them asked simple but incredibly profound questions that either invited me to share quite deeply or to reflect more fully".

"Many of them freely shared about themselves; they often began by sharing why they were doing the Camino".

"A professor volunteered that he had not undertaken the Camino for any spiritual search, but to test whether he could spend the time on his own, walk the distance he had decided on and face the questions that might arise". He admitted he was challenged by each of these, but mostly by the questions and he spoke with Tracey about some of those questions.

I commented to Tracey, "You met quite a few people". Tracey replied, "Yes, but most importantly, I met myself".

I reflected later that Tracey's experience was similar to those with whom I shared a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 2012. We were not interested in mundane or shallow conversation. We had a daily prayer that included the refrain, "May I remember that I am a pilgrim and not a tourist".

Sadly, many people today live their life as 'tourists' and never open themselves to an experience such as Tracey had on the Camino. Most of us who have worked at promoting and supporting the Passionist Family Group Movement have hoped we could facilitate members moving from being tourists with one another to being pilgrims because a healthy Family Group can be like the people Tracey met on the Camino.

Unfortunately as we age it is easy to slip into a 'comfort' stage that no longer challenges us to grow or to share our real self, let alone to meet our real self. Married couples can become so comfortable that they no longer ask the simple but profound questions of one another and they fail to listen to the answers to those questions with a sense that this sharing is sacred.

Why can't our Passionist Family Groups set out on a Camino of their hearts, by not just having monthly activities, but by consciously seeking to do together whatever will help a true sense of family to develop, so that they can trust each other more, share with each other more, enjoy time with each other more, and together discover the benefits of living life as pilgrims and not just tourists?

Brian Traynor CP



Websites: National Team - www.pfgm.org
Southern Team www.pfgmovement.org.au

DIARY

OCTOBER

5 - 6 Maleny, Qld *Ray Sanchez CP*

18 Knox/Waverley Cluster, Vic

21 -22 Lindisfarne & Hobart Tas Visit

24 - 25 Burleigh Heads Qld

Ray Sanchez CP

NOVEMBER

10 Southern Team Meeting
Holy Cross Templestowe

10 - 11 Newcastle Maitland

Ray Sanchez CP

12 - 13 Broken Bay Diocese

Ray Sanchez CP

14 - 15 Sydney Archdiocese

Ray Sanchez CP

16 - 17 Woollongong Diocese

Ray Sanchez CP

**Every time you
smile at
someone,
it is an action of
love, a gift to
that person, a
beautiful thing.**

-Mother Teresa

Best wishes from the National Team:

Dennis & Mary Morris - Central
Gwen & Russell Winterscheidt - Northern
Frances & Michael Sullivan - Southern