

# International Family Group Day

This has been an annual Celebration in our parish since May 2000. But this year will be different as we cannot gather for the 20<sup>th</sup> International Day.

However, we can reflect, remember past celebrations and look forward to 2021.

You may wonder how this Annual celebration come about?

The Family Group Movement was founded back in 1972 at St. Anthony in the Fields when Fr. Peter McGrath cp was appointed to Pastor the tiny church where some 30 people gathered for the Sunday Eucharist. By 1973 over a thousand were attending. Each of our 3 churches in the Frenchs Forest parish now enjoy Family Groups.



As the word spread, many parishes around Australia also started Family Groups. By the early 90's there were over 240 parishes with approximately 1800 Family Groups. It had even become International when the Groups spread to New Zealand, USA, England, Scotland and Ireland.

The suggestion of a special International day for Family Groups came from members in London and our very first celebration was on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2000. To honour the Movement on this day, the Pastor at the time, Fr Tom McDonough cp, had special commemorative medallions sent to each of the Family Group parishes.



During and after the International Year of the Family in 1994, Family Groups grew from the needs of the parishes and at its peak there were over 420 parishes world-wide. Within our own Parish, St. Anthony's is recognized at the 'birthplace' of the Passionist Family Groups.

In 1998 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference of the Family Group Movement, the then Bishop of Broken Bay, David Walker, wrote to the Founder:

*The Kingdom of God is the reign of God in the hearts of people. It is very traditional to speak about the family in terms of church: it is a faith community which passes on that faith to its members and nurtures them in it. What your Groups are doing is at the very heart of the preaching the Gospel in our society today.*

*As the Bishop of Broken Bay, which can be said to the home of the Family Group Movement, I would like to express my personal gratitude for what has been achieved by the Movement. Be assure of my prayers for the success of your conference."*

Our three church communities have much to be grateful for and to celebrate. This annual celebration can help foster and build our broader community of the Frenchs Forest Parish. Though the celebrations must be different this year, may we reflect on the blessings we have received as we live the Gospel message to: **"Love one Another"**

