

# Family Groups



## PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT

*A Ministry of the Passionists*

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2020

### From the National Coordinating Team...

You are in our thoughts!

And we pray that each of you is safe and well.

We hope you are managing to cope with the increasing restrictions on our Family Group Movement within our communities which are, nonetheless, imposed for our own wellbeing.

This newsletter comes to you as we celebrate Holy Week and it will, no doubt, be an Easter like no other.

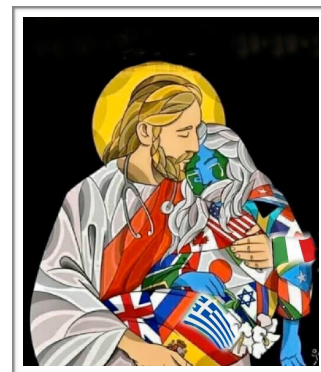
In the present circumstances, we are obliged to practise our Faith largely in private due to coronavirus.

We do, however, have the benefit of modern technology which, while no substitute for in-person contact, enables us to communicate both in sight and sound very effectively.

In this edition, amongst other things, we have endeavoured to pass on suggestions for communication which will ensure that no one is isolated, particularly those who live by themselves, are infirm or elderly. Further, we are interested in your stories of how you are managing and the innovative practices that you and your Groups have adopted so as you may all stay in touch and support each other.

Blessings and take care,

***Frances and Michael, Mary and Dennis, Gwen and Russell and Brian***



*Jesus Healer*



## Easter Greetings

*May the blessings of the risen Christ  
descend upon you, upon your family  
and your whole parish.*

*Wishing you a blessed Easter*



## Wiggles and Warblers of Warners Bay



There are lots of anecdotes about the wonderful and eventful times experienced in our Passionist Family Groups. This one comes from Julie and John Collins, leaders of a group at Warners Bay in the Maitland Newcastle Diocese.

Earlier this year, they had their Family Group weekend away, something they have enjoyed for 28 years. Some of their children, who grew up in that Group, have returned to share in their weekend.

This year, seventeen grandchildren of the Family Group's members were there: their ages ranged from seven down to one, including six one-year-old babies.

Everyone looks forward to their Saturday night sing-along and they join in with enthusiasm. John, a guitarist in a band and, who also plays at their parish's evening Mass each week, now has to start their sing-along with Wiggles songs before the little ones are put to bed. Then, the 'real' singing begins!

*A Family Group from Warners Bay enjoys their annual weekend away*



## Ballarat Cathedral, Victoria Mick Takes the Cake!

The birthday girl at a recent Family Group celebration in Ballarat was treated to a surprise rendition of Happy Birthday led by Coordinator, Mick Hingston, in the cake. They were accompanied by a fellow member playing his piano accordion.





## Ideas for Staying in Touch While in Isolation

### Use your Family Group's contact list for this one:

This does not stop you from contacting any other members of your FG but it will ensure that you concentrate on checking-in with the person/s immediately below you on your Group's contact list during April and then the next person/persons during May and so on, for as long as is needed.

This is the process:

1. Starting in **April**, you are asked to make contact by phone, preferably, or by email, SMS/text messages, internet (FaceTime, Skype, ZOOM) with the person/s directly underneath your name on your FG list,
2. In **May**, you are asked to keep in contact with the person/s next in line (i.e. second) under your name on that list.
3. In **June**, you will make contact with the third person/s under your name on the list .....and so on, for as long as we are required to remain in isolation.

### 5 Points for Families in Isolation, from Fr Brian:

#### 1. Play some games

Board games will help pass the time, allow conversation, help everyone deal with competition and co-operation and pass the time **together**

#### 2. Write some prayers

These are new times for everyone. What are the biggest issues other people are going through? Can we think of five? (e.g. Homeless, elderly and shut in, refugees, children, unemployed) Can we write a prayer for each of those five?

#### 3. Restless children

How do we use our energy when we can't go outside and do the usual things? Kids! What ideas have you got? Let's make a kit for other kids who are stuck inside. What are 5 things they can do with their time?

#### 4. Let's have some time without TV or ipad and get to know about each other

Start off with Mum and Dad. We're going to ask you 5 things about yourself we might not know the answer to, like 'Where did you first meet?' Then you can ask us five questions about us you don't know.

#### 5. People I admire

There are some real challenges for us with COVID - 19.

Let's decide on ten people we would invite to dinner at our house because we admire how they overcame struggles in their life or times. Who would we choose?

### Tuesday night - Pasta night

One family whose various members live in different homes and used to gather for a meal on one night each week, now do this 'remotely':

1. Each 'family/unit eats their meal at 7pm in their own home
2. At 8pm they have a Skype/Zoom session



### St Joseph's, Hobart Parish Family Group

**Friday, March 27** - Coordinator Michael Ball wrote:

On Sunday morning, instead of after-Mass coffee at the bookshop, we are going to attempt something new for us - *Coffee via Zoom* (from home), where as many of us as possible will attempt to link together via video conferencing. We are not sure whether the software will cope with a large number of participants but it will be fun trying and will at least generate contact through the many phone calls while a bunch of amateurs try to link together.

Fingers crossed that the many links will come together - at the same time!!

**Sunday, March 29** - We have just finished our first *Zoom with Coffee* Family Group session. It was very successful and we had 14 families online with Fr Peter and Fr Justin from St Joseph's as well. We will have another again next Sunday.

### Central Team Gathering – 4 – 6 February 2020

Diocesan Coordinators from the Central Team gathered for some time together and a little work at the Christian Brothers holiday residence at Stanwell Park, south of Sydney. The residence provided an ideal setting as it is very peaceful; it fronts the beach and is replete with wild elk grazing on the front lawn.

We gathered on the first afternoon and then joined the parish community of St Joseph's at Bulli for evening Mass celebrated by Father Pat Vaughan, a school mate of Dennis Farrar. After Mass Father Pat joined us for dinner at a local club. At dinner, we raised our glasses in a toast to Annette Guterres who was awarded an OAM in the Australia Day Awards for her services to Bomber Command.

Morning prayer on Wednesday was led by Marg and Paul Casey after which we tackled our comprehensive agenda which addressed the state of the Family Group Movement in each diocese and how each of us is managing, the planned National Team Meeting (now deferred due to COVID-19) and finances and more. We were all pleasantly surprised that we worked through the agenda without too much effort. The day concluded with pre-dinner drinks and a BBQ.

The following morning (Thursday) included a walk to a nearby café for morning tea which brought to conclusion a fruitful time together. In the true spirit of Passionist Family Groups, we had enjoyed a 'family' get-together and even did a bit of work!

*Dennis & Mary Morris, Central Team*



*The Central Team at St Joseph's, Bulli. with Fr Pat Vaughan, an old school mate of Dennis Farrar's. The Team L to R: Dennis Morris, Elizabeth Farrar, Mary Morris, John McGrath, Marg Casey, Annette Guterres, Paul Casey, Tony Guterres, Pauline McGrath, Dennis Farrar.*

### Our Lady Help of Christians Parish Wendouree Family Groups' 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, March 15, 2020



Our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration was very good, although a little subdued given the current world-wide situation in which we live. With this in mind, we decided to make the celebration a simple, in-house parish event. This included the usual Sunday Mass celebration, where the Prayers of the Faithful included petitions for the Family Groups while Family Group members were involved in the various ministries.

Prior to the final hymn, I spoke a little about the history of Family Groups and then the four Family Group leaders, Tony & Pauline, Margaret & Geoff, together with Sandra and myself, cut the Anniversary cake accompanied by enthusiastic singing of Happy Birthday led by our PP, Fr. Marcello.

We had invited the whole parish to share in a hospitality cuppa in the church foyer after Mass. Some parishioners took Family Group brochures and expression of interest forms, so we hope that interest translates into memberships.

After the church activities, we relocated to the Wallace Hotel for Sunday lunch with about forty people there. Most stayed for around two or more hours, making it a very successful and social anniversary occasion.

*-by Vin Dillon - Coordinator*



## What floats your Family Group's boat?

At recent Southern Cluster meetings of FG coordinators, we reflected on questions about how well our Family Groups are 'sailing'. We imagined each group as one boat within the parish 'fleet' and asked about the state of those boats: whether they are all sailing in the same direction, how they are affected by the weather and how their captains are feeling.

*(This reflection was prompted by Fr Brian as preparation by regional coordinators for the Nation Coordinating Team's annual weekend in late March which, unfortunately, was cancelled.)*

The diagrams and reflections were revealing and a few are listed here:

- \* "Boat 3 is making steady progress with limited ports of call. The crew are restricted by the physical capabilities of their happy crew and are skippered by a single captain."
- \* *"We have a row-boat, paddling along and in need of repair; four sailboats that are smooth-sailing on calm seas; a high-powered and comfortable cruiser. All are generally heading to the same port, milling around the entrance. Some choppy waves. Harbour master is well in control; generally fair weather. The Fleet's captains are a bit weary having held the position for 28 years. There is no apparent lieutenant ready to assume the role."*
- \* "Generally, all vessels are proceeding in the same direction guided by what the crew of each boat wants to achieve. Some vessels have struggled to maintain momentum due to decreasing numbers and/or willingness to participate. The vessels that are well-maintained and used frequently are sailing well."
- \* *"Three boats: 1. Oldest, slowest, semi-retired, happy tub. 2. The happy, busy, active, inclusive, gastronomic, speedboat. 3. The comfy cruiser: artistic, scientific, experiencing some occupational challenges. Three diverse groups... no great desire to be seen as parish...self-contained."*
- \* "Large cruise ships being replaced by smaller boats as groups lose members - death, migration to other areas or divorce."
- \* *"Some boats 'rusting' as no time for maintenance (Members have many other commitments in parish and out of parish)"*
- \* Our cluster doesn't have to fight headwinds. i.e. priests opposed to FGs blowing against its fleet - however priests are over-worked and unable to be a tailwind giving energy and speed to ships by blowing them along....
- \* *Few new boats joining the fleet - as RC schools decreasing in size, few attending Mass, can't promote in state schools so hard to find new members. Some older vessels taking on occasional new passengers.*

**Given the current restrictions on our 'sailing' together, how are your boat's crew members who normally sail together, keeping in contact with each other?**



The happy crew of one Family Group's houseboat adventure - Glen Waverley North Parish, Victoria

## A TIME FOR RECONNECTING

When the Passionist Family Groups began in England, we learned that many of the homes were too small for families to gather. When we spoke about the idea of PFG's beginning in the Philippines (which they didn't) we learned that families were far too large to gather in homes and there were few places where a number of groups from the one parish could get together.

When we met with group coordinators and asked how their PFG's were going, we often heard them talk about the monthly get-togethers. When we heard about the nature of some PFG monthly activities we learned they had become restaurant dinners or nights at the movies, justified some said, 'because of our age'.

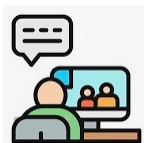
In the end, a PFG does not need to have any monthly activities, because the aim of the Movement is primarily not to 'get together', **but to become a family**, and to do that, a number of ingredients are required. Everyone knows what they are, or knows what they are not, because we all belong to a family.

**We know that families need love and communication.**



In facing this current challenge, we are already hearing of many creative ways individual PFG's are reconnecting. Phone trees have been reactivated; a fortnightly wine and nibbles hour by Zoom; a quiz night preceded by information sent by email; reflections, encouragement and humour passed around. The possibilities are endless. COVID-19 will challenge us and we need each other more than ever.

**Let's rise to the challenge and reconnect!**



- Brian Traynor CP

## Loving One Another - in today's world

Recently we were asked what things the family unit could do to ensure we get through this time. Things like the importance of prayer, how to enjoy quality time together, advice for those with restless children, and general tips on how to get along when you're stuck together for two or more weeks or more? This also begged the question what about our Family Groups? Each day brings new restrictions and we seem to be heading more and more into self-isolation! Below are some thoughts on how we can still support each other. We also encourage you to check out our face book page where you may like to add your ideas.

### A Message from Fr Tom

Fr Tom McDonough, the Passionist Provincial, has asked that our communities and our Passionist Family Group Movement find creative ways to assist the elderly, the needy, our members and neighbours in self isolation.

How about a phone call, some shopping, a meal dropped in ( while this is still possible).

And, of course, a prayer, or better still some couple prayer and family prayer together, especially now Sunday masses will be radically affected. Let's make the home a real place where, as Jesus promised, if two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in the midst of them. You don't have to leave Jesus behind at the local Church.

### Turn off the TV and I-Pads!

Let us take time to get to know each other. Some questions could be.....

- What are 3 things about yourself we might not know?
  - Mum and Dad, grandparents, where did you meet?
  - What was your best Christmas, Why?
  - What is your earliest memory?
- The list is endless

We have had the privilege of attending the Passionist Family Group Youth Camps over the last 20 years. Without fail we hear how much the young people appreciate being heard and being able to share their story.

**Children need to know, from parents and caregivers, that they are ok and being cared for during this time.**

Help them discuss their own concerns and ask their questions. A family meal could be a time to pray for each other, Pray for people they know going through difficult times, Pray for people in the world.



We are often privileged to share a meal with our grandchildren, mealtime is a time they are asked to share what they are grateful for and a concern or challenge they faced during the day. We experience this time as a prayer as each child shares their experience.

### Spend time with our children

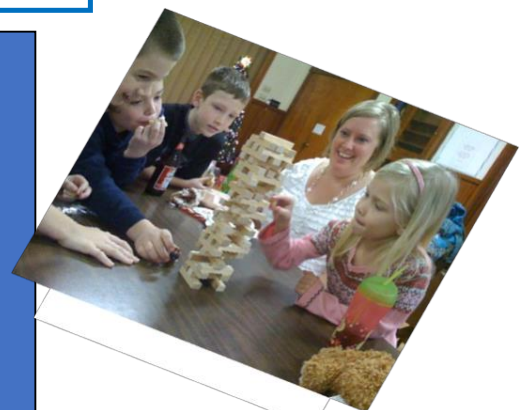
Play some games - Board games will help pass the time, allow conversation, help everyone deal with competition and co-operation and pass the time together.

**During this time, more than ever, we do have the opportunity to live out the aims of the Passionist Family Group Movement.**

- Phone call, especially to those home alone



- Take a meal or do the shopping for someone who is in isolation. We can always leave the meal at the front door to stay safe ourselves.
- Now, more than ever, to find out who in our Family Group needs support and care, especially in these times.
- While we are not be able to meet as a large group, this can be the opportunity to catch up through social media – messenger, zoom etc.



Compiled by Gwen Winterscheidt, Northern Team



# Jesus is Alive!



# Prayer during times of a Pandemic

May we who are merely inconvenienced

Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors

Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home

Remember those who must choose between  
preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for  
our children when their schools close

Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips

Remember those who have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money  
in the tumult of the economic market

Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home

Remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country,

Let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically

Wrap our arms around each other,

Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace  
of God to our neighbors.

Amen.

- with thanks to Gwen Winterscheidt

