

# Family Groups



**PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT**

*A Ministry of the Passionists*

**AUTUMN 2023**

To our Passionist Family Group Family...

In his Ash Wednesday homily, Pope Francis said that the Lenten period is "the favourable time" for returning to what is essential and true, and to be reconciled with God and each other. As we come to the end of Holy Week and prepare to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, we begin that time by remembering the Last Supper which, as Pope Francis says "reminds us of the life and work of Jesus, and it marks us as people of his new covenant." The meal serves as a taste of what is to come—a taste of true life. As members of a Family Group, we celebrate this true life every time we gather as family, when we share stories, share our life's journey, and welcome each other into our hearts and homes. In doing this we imitate the early Christian communities of whom it was said "see how they love one another", and we live out the aims and goals of the Family Group movement which this year will celebrate 50 years of doing just that. May we always strive to be faithful to those aims and goals which are to:

- *share & celebrate life & faith*
- *support one another (especially in times of need)*
- *reaching out to & including others*
- *build community / extended family*
- *show example to children of what it is to be followers of Christ*

*Wishing you all a happy, blessed and hopeful Easter - Jesus is Alive!*

Blessings

Frances, Trish, Roger, Russell, Celine, Mary, Tina and Fr Brian CP

## Happy Easter!

He is risen.  
Alleluia!



*Celebrating*

*50 years*

*in 2023*

## VISIT TO FAMILY GROUPS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA - MARCH 2023

In recent times, we have been trying to reconnect with the wider Family Group Movement in South Australia and decided to do so in person. Tim and I spent four days there recently and had the opportunity to connect with many Family Group people. We met with the local clergy from Adelaide Cathedral, Murray Bridge, Gawler, Kapunda (Northern Light parish) and Emmaus Parish, as well as with the coordinators/leaders from some of those parishes.



On Sunday, the 26th of March we attended Mass at St. Paul of the Cross Monastery Parish in Glen Osmond followed by a meeting with leaders from various parishes. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect, share experiences and hear of what the Family Groups are doing in each of those parishes.



We were struck with the strength of Family Groups in South Australia and how they continue to achieve the aims and goals of the Movement by putting faith into practice and welcoming everyone. Some of these Family Groups have now been gathering for the best part of 30 years.

Northern Light Parish SA



We acknowledge apologies from other PFGM coordinators/leaders who were unable to attend that gathering but who shared, by phone, details about how the groups are going in their parish. We were able to confirm that there are 21 active Family Groups in South Australia and possibly others with which we will pursue reconnection.

The trip was very worthwhile, and most encouraging in reassuring us that the Movement is alive and well in SA.

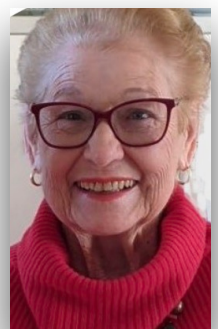
Tina Minichilli (National Coordinator)

Leader and new member at St Paul's SA

### **Vale: Marie Therese Egar - Mother of the PFGM's Northern Team's Celine Bowman**



Marie Egar died peacefully on February 3, 2023 at her home in Adelaide. Her death was sudden and a shock to her family. Marie was mother to four daughters including our Northern PFGM Leader, Celine Bowman. Celine (reading) and her sisters shared the delivery of their mother's eulogy at a Requiem Mass celebrated by their uncle, Passionist Priest Fr Tony Egar. The funeral took place at Our Lady of the Sorrows Church, Henley Beach SA. Celine's parents, Marie and John, were among the first Family Group members in the Glen Osmond Parish.



*\*We hold in our prayers Celine's family, the Page family and all those who are grieving the loss of loved ones in recent times.*

## Beautiful Ballarat - Victoria

On a fine summer evening, a Ballarat Family Group gathered for their 2023 Year's Planning meeting over a picnic dinner under the trees. This pleasant venue was beside a sports oval opposite the building site of the new home of PFGM coordinators, Marica & Mick Hingston. Once settled in, they will be able to enjoy many local cricket and football matches and they have gained unlimited space for their grandchildren to play!



## BLACKTOWN - New South Wales

**Proud and active contributors to Parish and their local community**

These days the HARMONY FAMILY GROUP meets once a month mainly for a social meal together.. Most of the group are in their 70's or older and they have been meeting now for just over 30 years as a Family Group.



But as the picture shows they take their place seriously in the life of their Mary Queen of the Family Parish, Blacktown and have made, and still make, a strong contribution there. Shown at a recent Sunday Mass Morning Tea prepared and served by them, are some of the group members flanked by Elizabeth and Dennis Farrar (Parramatta Diocesan Coordinators of PFGM). They are Valerie McKinnon; Pauline Chappius, Terry Barnes, Liz Barnes, Cora de Vos, Manuel de Jesus, and Maria de Jesus.

The group members are proud of their contribution to Parish life. The original Family Group members saw the need to develop a Social Justice group in the Parish and led the call to develop one which still exists, currently working on their recycling program. Then the need to feed the hungry saw the development of two activities which still operate. *Mary's Pantry and Café* operates on Mondays while *Mary's Kitchen* has a cuppa and lunch offerings on Wednesdays. Members help collect food supplies from supermarkets Aldi and Woolies and local bakeries. A storage room has been made available at the rear of the church complex as *Mary's Café* extends its support to the Jesuit *House of Welcome* and the Uniting Church's *Hands and Feet* charity.

Two Family Groups exist in Blacktown Parish both reflecting the trends in migration over the years The Harmony Group above consists of largely Anglo and European migrants who moved to Blacktown 30 years ago while the other Family Group consists of more recent migrants from African, Asian and Middle Eastern Catholic families. Blacktown is a growing vibrant community in the Parramatta Diocese.

## Ideas for celebrating a PFGM anniversary with your Parish

- Articles in Parish newsletters – stories from members
- Acknowledgement & announcement from the pulpit in preceding weeks
- Morning tea after Mass or other parish celebration, e.g. picnic, joint Family Groups' gathering

### During Mass:

- Entrance – Family Groups or representatives join entry procession with relevant FG symbols to be displayed at altar.
- Display FG banners in church.
- FG included in Homily.
- Renewal of commitment ceremony for FG members & leaders
- FG member speaks to congregation of their FG experience after communion.
- PowerPoint presentation after communion – photos and stories
- Congregation joins in with FG prayer.

### After Mass:

- FG members provide a morning tea.
- FG member hands out brochures as people are leaving.
- Have enrolment forms handy – invite people to indicate if they are interested in joining.

## Celebrating the PFGM's 50th Anniversary in your Parish

### **50th Anniversary Celebration Video**

A video has been created that can be played as part of your celebration Mass or at any other celebration related to the PFGM's 50th Anniversary.

The video displays a collection of photos from across the Movement's years backed by a lively song, *'Hearts On Fire'* by Michael Mangan. The video runs for just four minutes.

A link to the video can be found on our website [www.pfgm.org](http://www.pfgm.org) by looking under RESOURCES OR find it on YouTube using this link: <https://youtu.be/-K-pf0TCVvI>

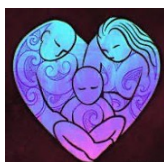
After a very brief welcome/introduction the video can 'speak for itself'. This could be supported with the availability of PFGM brochures and enrolment forms and access to a few Family Group members to chat to those who would like to ask questions about Family Groups in your parish.

## From the South Australian PFGM Archives:



*PFGM Founder, Fr Peter McGrath (Centre) at a Family Group event in Gawler, South Australia in 1994.*

## What can we do?



We know the definition of 'family' has been understood differently throughout history and among different cultures. A family is much more than Mum, Dad and children and many cultures invite others to "be part of the family". In New Zealand, Whānau is the Māori language word for the basic extended family group. Whānau can be multi-layered, flexible and dynamic.

This same reality applies very much to the Passionist Family Groups as ageing has become more real and the number of children and younger families has lessened. The 'ideal' of *grandparent to baby* making up a typical Family Group is no longer the norm and just like any normal family, members relocate and some pass to an eternal reward. As a result, many 'normal' groups are made up today of single or unwell members who have 'travelled' together for thirty or more years. They are a family and many of them have new needs.



One sub-group that we would do well to pay attention to, are those who have lost a spouse or partner. Often aged themselves now, they find life lonely; more so since COVID-19. The majority of these people are women.

Recently, I asked a woman how she was managing life without her husband of over fifty-years. Her first words were about loneliness. She mentioned that this had been particularly strong when she resigned from work earlier this year. She came home to an empty home. "If John had been there, he'd have given me a kiss and hug; maybe some flowers, and he probably would have said, 'Let's go out for a meal'. Instead, I was home alone – very alone".

**"Loneliness is a killer. It leaves us vulnerable to isolation; and eventually, death."**

Within our Passionist Family Groups there are hundreds of people, mostly women, who are having a similar experience. One parish that has PFG's decided to create groups for single seniors, and they have had a very positive response from PFG members. Many seniors appreciate the opportunity to share their experiences and stories and if their children do not live locally, this can become a rare

opportunity for them. Many benefit from being able to share their experience of grief and loneliness. Who is better placed to provide opportunities for this than fellow Family Group members, or even those in a different PFG within the parish?

***Fun and fellowship are integral to belonging to a Passionist Family Group; so is an empathic listening ear. I recommend that each parish with PFG's give consideration to how we can help respond to the great challenge of ageing loneliness of PFG members.***

- Brian Traynor CP

### ***An answer to, 'What are Family Groups?'***

Being a part of a Passionist Family Group provides ***a way to meet and get to know other parishioners***. Whether parishioners are married, single, divorced, young or old, Catholic, non-Catholic, everyone is welcome. **The motto is: "A family for all". Everyone and anyone is welcome** to be a member of a group.

The activities of a family group aim to be ***able to socialise together*** and include such activities as shared meals, "outings" and any other activity that combines common interests, fun and food!

As the members of a group get to know one another they can begin to ***support each other in times of both need (a bereavement) and celebration (a birthday or anniversary)***. Because "connecting" becomes part of a group, members of the group begin to feel they are part of an extended family.

Passionist Family Groups are not prayer groups, nor are they discussion groups. The emphasis is on ***allowing people to put the Gospel into practice through mutual care and support for each other within the group.***

- Fr Peter Head sm, PP Parish of Christchurch South NZ (an excerpt)

## Vale Mike Page: 3/11/1947 to 17/12/ 2022

by Maree & Bernard Metcalfe



Mike Page and his wife Mary settled in Warrnambool, Victoria in 1973. Mike was a newish GP and Mary a physiotherapist. There they raised their family, with its joys and sorrows, and became active members of the parish community at Our Lady Help of Christians (OLHC) in East Warrnambool.

The **Passionist Family Group Movement (PFGM)** was introduced at OLHC in 1987, the seventh parish to set up groups in Victoria. The PFGM immediately put down deep roots there. However, the first parish coordinators moved away from Warrnambool shortly afterwards, so Mary and Mike were then asked to take on that role.

In those early years, with just a few PFGM parishes, coordinators traveled to Holy Cross at Templestowe to meet with the Passionist director and coordinators from the other parishes, to support each other and as word spread, to look after many new requests to start the PFGM. With their group leaders, they also travelled to Templestowe for leader formation weekends. However, these formation gatherings

quickly became regional as the number of parishes grew rapidly, with occasional 'mega' events in Melbourne.

The 1980s and 1990s in Victoria were the years of steady growth for the PFGM with more and more parishes joining in, with significant support from the priests of the Ballarat diocese. The usual pattern was for parish coordinators from established parishes to visit the new parishes, first to speak at Masses to inform and invite people to join, and a month later to return to support them as they joined their new Family Group.

*This was a busy and exciting period in the PFGM story. The willingness of so many people to travel and to spend time in other parishes inviting people to join a group, reflects how treasured the PFGM had become. Mike and Mary Page helped most of the parishes in the south-west and the Geelong area to get started on their journey and gave support even as far as Gippsland.*

When we were invited to join the state-wide group of coordinators around 1994, we met the Pages and other 'State Team' members for the first time. We were amazed and delighted by the collective joy and enthusiasm shared by this group of people. Many became friends for life. This was a group of people, then led by Tim Horlock, who shared their experiences and encouraged and affirmed each other — Frank and Maureen Walsh, Jan and Adrian Mullaly, Mike and Mary Page, Patrick and Angela Sawyer and others like Terry and Val Carrigg who joined in.

Mike was a key figure in this group, with his flashing smile and practical can-do attitude. He loved to share stories — especially about secret fishing spots and King George whiting — as well as laughter and red wine. When the Pages came to Melbourne for a weekend meeting, Mike always dug into his cellar, to pull out a few dusty old bottles so we could 'test them out' once we finished our discussions and planning. A couple went down the sink, but most did not! 'Pagey' was deeply immersed in the 'Bool: a life member of the Warrnambool Football Club after many years as Club Doctor and, through his obstetrics work, the shepherd of many infants as they came into the world. The last infant he delivered was the child of parents he had delivered more than 20 years earlier.

At the time of Mike's funeral, Mary was deeply moved by the number of messages she received from PFGM connections they had made over many years. The Passionist Family Group Movement will always remain in his debt and continues to give prayerful thanks for the work and vibrant life of Michael Raymond Page. We wish every blessing for Mary, their children and grandchildren.

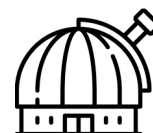


# Great Ideas for Your Family Group Gatherings

Thank you to Kerry Keating of Tamworth South NSW for these ideas.

**NOTE: Some outings are geographically specific but will inspire ideas for your own area.**

- Family Group Mass followed by morning tea or lunch.
- Choral Society Concert, then afternoon tea.
- Movies followed by coffee.
- Seniors guided tour of Art Gallery, including back rooms, followed by afternoon tea.
- Croquet - a member plays regularly and organised use of grounds and gave us basic instruction. Lunch at bowling club.
- Talk by exercise physiologist on Active Aging, before a unhealthy, but yummy, afternoon tea.
- Train trip to Quirindi (about 1 hour \$2.50) on Market Day. Lunch at quirky cafe.
- Hired bus trip to Gunnedah (about 1 hour) to Rural Museum where we had lunch, silo art and art gallery.
- Observatory & Science Centre (daytime): fantastic displays, observe the sun through telescope.
- Power Station Museum (Tamworth was the first city to have electric street lighting) especially popular with the men, and the displays of electric household appliances through the years brought back memories for all.



## \* Ideas for Outings suitable for Family Groups Mixed Ages & children

- Afternoon walk (coastal, river, bush) followed by a pub meal
- River ferry ride and picnic at New Farm Park
- Bush walk and picnic
- Themed share plate dinner e.g. Mexican, Irish
- BBQ or shared dinner in homes
- Car Rally/Amazing Race culminating in a picnic/BBQ
- Brunch park-picnic and walk
- Barefoot bowls or mini-golf & meal
- Home Mass & meal
- Botanical Gardens – explore and afternoon tea
- Beach trip/evening Fish'n'chips
- Bush BBQ
- Bake afternoon followed by bake sale at Mass
- Tennis afternoon
- Swim & BBQ at the local pool
- Games night
- Movie night – home movie data projector, popcorn etc.
- Christmas in July shared meal with novelty Secret Santa game
- Shared dessert night/chocolate tasting
- Wine tasting
- High Tea
- Bingo or Trivia and a meal
- Old Fashioned Sports Day – ball games and silly races!



\* Contributions to our National Newsletter are welcome, especially news of your Family Group events that you and your members have enjoyed. Photos always complement a good story!

\* Please send contributions to the editor, Frances, at [pfgm.victas@gmail.com](mailto:pfgm.victas@gmail.com)

**For more about the Passionist Family Group Movement:**

Website (Australia): [www.pfgm.org](http://www.pfgm.org)

Website (New Zealand): [www.passionistfamily.org.nz](http://www.passionistfamily.org.nz)