

# Family Groups

PASSIONIST  
FAMILY GROUP  
MOVEMENT



PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT

*A Ministry of the Passionists*

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2023

*Celebrating*

50 years

1973 - 2023

On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May this year our Movement celebrated the birth of Family Groups at St Anthony in the Fields, Terrey Hills. I, Tina, had the privilege of attending the **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary** celebration at Terrey Hills and I congratulate all the organisers, helpers and participants on a very successful celebration. The occasion was marked by stunning weather, delicious eats, friends reconnecting, and stories being shared. It really was a community eagerly chatting with each other in a place WHERE ALL BELONG.

We congratulate and thank Mary & Leo Ingham and Barbara & Bob Lunnon for their dedication, devotion, commitment, drive and passion over the past 50 years. They picked up on the vision of Fr Peter McGrath CP to create the opportunity for people to make connections and enable a sense of belonging to their parish community. The warmth, welcome and sense of community we experienced at St Anthony's in May is a testament to the ministry of Family Groups there and in so many parishes.

We also acknowledge and thank all of those Family Groups around Australia who have celebrated this milestone in conjunction with Terrey Hills. This celebration, and many other significant milestone celebrations in Australia and New Zealand, have re-energised the spirit of the Movement and confirmed that the PFGM motto "A Family for All" continues to flourish in parishes throughout both countries and in other countries around the world.

- Tina, Trish, Roger, Russell, Celine, Mary, Frances & Fr Brian CP

On Monday, May 1st, **Provincial Fr Tom McDonough** wrote to all Passionist Family Group members:

*Dear sisters, brothers and friends in the Passionist Family,*

***Congratulations to the Passionist Family Groups - 50 years old***

*This coming Saturday, at St Anthony in the Fields, many will be gathering to celebrate the Golden Jubilee. At a Mass led by Monsignor David Ranson, we will give thanks for the vision of Fr Peter McGrath and the pioneers who began a parish project that spread like wildfire into an international movement. We give thanks for the many Passionist religious and the many 'missionaries' who went out tirelessly all over Australia, New Zealand, England, Ireland and USA to build communities of love. And we give thanks for the many, many parishes who 'caught' the message.*

***...and on that very special day on May 6, 2023:***

At the PFGM's 50th Anniversary Celebration Mass held at the founding parish at Terrey Hills, the principal celebrant, **Monsignor David Ranson**, used this apt and interesting analogy to begin his homily:

*'In Tolkein's 'Lord of the Rings', one of the main characters says, "We shouldn't have been here at all if we'd known more about it before we started. But I suppose it's often that way... I wonder what sort of tale we've fallen into?"*

*'Today we celebrate one of the great stories into which we have fallen: the story of the Passionist Family Group Movement, now fifty years in the telling. It is a story of simple beginnings but one of wide significance, indeed, one of the most significant movements in the Church in Australia, in the renewal occasioned by the Vatican Council some sixty years ago. We come together today to give thanks for this gift - for ourselves, yes, but also for the whole Church, to treasure the memories and to commit ourselves anew to this important apostolate.'*



# Where it all began...

## St Anthony in the Fields, Terrey Hills NSW - May 6, 2022

Mass was celebrated with a packed church. The Vicar General of the diocese, Fr David Ranson, was the principal celebrant. But present were the current Parish Administrator Fr Shuje, Fr Josh the previous PP for 7 years, Fr Stan, an assistant for number of years. And from the Passionists: Brian Traynor, Tony Egar, Kevin Dance, Lex Keys, Ron Davoren, Giltus Mathias, Paul Kien and myself. Present also was Tina Minichilli, National Coordinator of the PFGM Australia, and Paul Traynor, National Coordinator of the PFGM New Zealand.

Fr David began by saying it felt like a great reunion which it was. David went with the typical "St Anthony's style and flow", and seemed to enjoy it. There were lots of memories and laughter. Fr David, was the Chair of the organising team for the Plenary Council last year and he said as he began his homily that, "The Passionist Family Groups were one of the most significant movements in the Catholic Church since the Vatican Council". High praise indeed!!!

Brian Norman and Bob Lunnon were the MC's. Mary Ingham and Barbara Lunnon gave a wonderful potted and illustrated history of the Passionist Family Groups. We remembered Fr Peter McGrath in a special way. We then watched a video greeting from Fr Joachim and the 'Hearts on Fire' Jubilee video prepared by the Aussie PFGM National Coordinating Team.

We then adjourned to the garden, the edge of the recultivated "Sacred Forest". to plant a Jubilee Tree. And then we joined in a long sausage sizzle lunch.

- Fr Tom McDonough CP, Provincial



## St Brigid's, Marrickville NSW - May 7, 2022

The next day, on Sunday May 7, many of us met again for an all-Passionist celebration of the 50th Jubilee, but also the 30th Jubilee of the PFGM in the Marrickville Parish.

Just as Saturday was in the typical, laid-back St Anthony's style, intimate and cosy with banter and chat back and forth from the congregation and the priests up front, Sunday was what St Brigid's does best, with the big music, the big sanctuary, candles and banners and a marquee beside the church for luncheon. Other PFGM groups from parishes not celebrating the Jubilee also came to join the Mass, including members from Terrey Hills in the photo below.

I led the Mass and Fr Kevin gave a great homily full of reminiscences, reflection, lessons learned, love shared, loved ones departed. Fr Kevin was PP when the PFGM began at St Brigid's.

After the Mass, Mary and Barbara repeated their history for the gathered, mostly St Brigid's PFGM members and Paul Cloran, who with Yvonne Kearsey were the founding parish coordinators.

- Fr Tom McDonough CP, Provincial

*"The constant that I continue to reflect on is that after 50 years, PFG people, at Terrey Hills and all over Australia and NZ, are still supporting, laughing, caring, reaching out and being family to others. While many are older, they are so enthusiastic about their group and community. So, let's continue to be open and invite others in - as the gospel reiterates the challenge to: 'Go out and make disciples.' Service, compassion and openness to others are paramount."*

*Words of Paul Traynor, New Zealand PFGM Coordinator, who attended the celebrations at Terrey Hills*





**St Columba's Parish Ballarat North in Victoria** celebrated, on May 21, both the 50th and our 35th Anniversaries of Family Groups at Mass and, afterwards, lunch with a good turn up at both. At the Mass, the Anniversaries were acknowledged at the beginning and in the Prayers of the Faithful. The congregation was encouraged to take part in praying the Passionist Family Group prayer.

Afterwards, we had a relaxed lunch at the Ballarat Golf Club: members of the Family Groups brought along photo albums which allowed for some lovely reminiscing. We had about 55 people present out of a possible 100 which was a great turn out.

We have had a couple of enquiries about joining A Family Group and two of our groups are quite happy to take on new members.

- Kay Beggs, Coordinator



### **Sacred Heart, BOOVAL Parish in Queensland - celebration on May 21**



"On a perfect, sunny SE Qld autumn morning, I joined Sacred Heart, Booval to celebrate the Passionist Family Groups' 33rd anniversary for Booval, 40 years in Qld and 50 years since Family Groups began. The welcome was warm from Fr Thomas and the community. I was particularly moved to meet Bonnie Mulroney who, with husband, Kevin, had been the very first *coordinators*, and to catch up with old friends, especially Desolie King, the source of much information and history of FGs in Booval. Desolie, who is "not able to do much or get out" made a mighty effort to join us for Mass and morning tea. There were leaders, past leaders and FG members there and some shared with me how this connection has carried them - in good times and bad - bringing love, joy and belonging to their experience of Church."

- Celine Bowman Coordinator, PFGM Northern Team

### **St Kevin's, KENNINGTON in Victoria - celebration on May 3**

Kennington's several Passionist Family Groups shared a 50th Anniversary Dinner at the Farmers Arms Hotel on May 3, 2023. Unfortunately, many members were away travelling at that time.

In July 2024, we look forward to our own joy-filled 30th Jubilee to celebrate our many interesting, historical and caring Family Group events.

- Liesbeth Van Emmerick





### St Thomas the Apostle, Kambah - Australian Capital Territory

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the PFGM was acknowledged at St Thomas' Kambah on Sunday 21 May 2023. There was a lunch at the Labor Club in Stirling where 36 people attended to celebrate the occasion. We were fortunate to have our Parish Priest, Father Praveen Paul, attend with us. The lunch was enjoyed by all who attended and it was good that multiple groups celebrated together. Family Groups commenced in the Canberra- Goulburn Archdiocese at St Thomas the Apostle Parish in 1985. Today there are seven active groups in the Parish. Family Groups provide, and have provided, a source of friendship, celebration and comfort for many people over the years. We look forward to the success of Family Groups well into the future. **-Matt and Elizabeth Moroney**

### Our Lady of the Pines, Donvale - Victoria

Kevin & Cathy Winterburn cut the Anniversary Cake at their Parish's celebration on May 5. On August 30, 1985, the Donvale Parish was the first Victorian Parish to embrace the Movement.



### Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Hampden (Mortlake & Terang combined), -Victoria



L to R: Tony & Trish Wynd (Coordinators), Terry McDonald, Rita Pasque, Mona Timms, Carmel Orford, Wilma McDonald

### Burleigh Heads Parish, Gold Coast - Queensland

On Sunday May 7 the Passionist Family Groups celebrated 25 years in the Gold Coast and 50 years of the Movement with a wonderful Mass and renewal of commitment followed by morning tea in the Community Hall at Mary Mother of Mercy Church. We have three groups and had several people interested in joining us on the day.

**\*Rosemary Hanley, PFGM Coordinator**

*\*Rosemary is on the right in the cake photo*



### Sacred Heart Parish, Koorungal - NSW

On a very cold morning, Fr Bradley Rafter celebrated our special PFGM Anniversary Mass with the singing led by the FG choir. At the well-attended morning tea after, Manuel Donebus, Parish Council Chair, spoke glowingly of the PFGM lauding its positive effect. Many PFGM members related their very positive and fun experiences over the last, almost 40 years. MC, Doug Sutton, related



the PFGM's history in the Wagga diocese: how Marg & Paul Casey with Maree & John Causland learned about the inclusive and positive aims of the PFGM thus influencing Fr Wilf Plunkett OAM to start-up groups at Koorungal with 600 people joining!





### **Sacred Heart Parish Diamond Creek - VICTORIA**

-the second Victorian  
parish to join the Movement in 1985



### **St Thomas Aquinas Parish Springwood - NSW**



Pictured is Fran Beekman, a group leader of one of the six groups in the Parish around twenty years ago. Quite a few former members came along to renew acquaintances.

A picture display and extracts from old parish Family Group newsletters were available, helping all to recall some of the fun occasions from previous years.

- Denis & Elizabeth Farrar (Parramatta Diocese)

### **St Mary's Cathedral Parish SALE - VICTORIA**

Libby Bynes, one of the Sale Family Group members, made and decorated the anniversary cake. Here she is cutting the celebration cake with Fr Frances PP.



### **St Matthew's and St Vincent de Paul Parish, South Belconnen - ACT**

The parish celebrated the 50th Anniversary on Saturday, May 6th at the Vigil Mass. As an amalgamated parish, we have nine Passionist Family Groups as both previous parishes had active Family Groups.

At the Mass, Fr Simon Falk PP, welcomed all past and present members acknowledging the important role they had played over 35 years. He shared a prayer that encompassed the underpinning aims of the Family Groups and highlighted the role that the Movement has played in the lives of both the Parish, parishioners and that of the wider Church. At the conclusion of Mass, Fr Simon gave a special blessing.

Mass was followed by a social get-together, providing the opportunity for members to mingle with other parishioners and also to view photos from over the years.



**St Kevin's Parish, Templestowe - VICTORIA toasting the PFGM**



## The Passionist Fort Community, Oxley - QUEENSLAND

It was very special Mass on May 7 celebrating our Family Groups and anniversaries: National 50<sup>th</sup>, Queensland 40<sup>th</sup>, Fort Community – almost 35<sup>th</sup> and our latest group “coming of age” – 21<sup>st</sup>. There were lots of photos, reminiscing, cake, brekky and chats. Thanks Celine and others for putting it all together. We have a very special community. There was an informative history on Family Groups and a thought-provoking homily (as always) by Fr Ray Sanchez.

– Barbara Bulley



Celine Bowman, Northern Team Coordinator, cuts the celebration cake.



Celebrant, Fr Ray Sanchez CP



## St Agnes' Parish, Port Macquarie - NSW

*Leanne Hyland wrote:*

“On Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May, our Parish celebrated at Mass our 35 Years of Family Groups. Many members gathered to renew our commitment, remember the past, celebrate the Eucharist and enjoy a birthday morning tea after. Passionist Family Groups began in our parish in May 1988 with 22 groups! *Elaine & Ted Hallam* were our original coordinators and did an amazing job of launching and establishing the groups. We thanked our many coordinators and leaders for all their leadership, time, support and effort over the years. Also, we thank each of our members, past and present, for joining and committing to the purpose and aims of the Movement and for the friendship, support and fun we have had and continue to have, together.”

## St Mary's Parish, Greensborough -VICTORIA

Our 50th Anniversary celebrations, held on May 27th and 28th, went very well. Our PP, Fr Steve Rigo, allowed us to play the PFGM slide presentation at all of our four Masses. I arranged for different Family Group members to introduce this at each Mass and Fr Steve suggested we add a few of our own photos which we did.

After the 10am Mass on the Sunday we hosted a morning tea which was well attended. We had put the invitation into our Church bulletins each week before this event - 4 weeks in total. I'm happy to say we have signed up two new couples and hope to have more.

– Pauline Prendergast, PFGM coordinator

## Our Lady Help of Christians, Warrnambool East - VICTORIA





## St. Francis Xavier Parish, Montmorency - VICTORIA

On June 4 and 5, our \*SFX Parish celebrated both the 50th Anniversary of the PFGM and the 28th Anniversary of our six active SFX Family Groups. We acknowledge and thank our PP, Fr Michael Sierakowski, for offering time for us to speak about Family Groups at each Mass at both SFX Montmorency and at our neighbouring Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham Parish\*. The presentation was received well at both. Also enjoyed, at both churches, were the morning tea celebrations after the Sunday morning Masses.

*\* From July 1st, these parishes have combined and are to be known as RISEN CHRIST Parish.*

*- Joan & David Muller, Coordinators*



*Above left: Morning tea at Eltham  
Left: Initiator of the Movement at SFX, Vinka Heagerty, with the celebration cake*

*Above right: Coordinators: David & Joan Muller at Montmorency*

## St Therese Parish, West Wollongong - NEW SOUTH WALES



**Fr Duane Fernandez PP cutting the celebration cake with Rae Parker**

On Sunday, May 7, we celebrated the Eucharist with Fr Duane and his congregation at West Wollongong. Representatives came from Ulladulla, Kiama, Culburra, Albion Park, and W. Wollongong. The Liturgy was moving, joyful and the singing was also very special. After Mass we adjourned to the Parish Centre, where we enjoyed morning tea provided by FG members, including a special cake that I had made for the occasion. We met many of the original groups in W. Wollongong where Rae/Neil had started the group in the late 1990s.

Fr Duane was most grateful for commencement of Family Groups in West Wollongong. Many people spoke about the importance of PFGM in their lives and Parish, giving them a sense of belonging in the Church. It was a wonderful occasion, to celebrate and to see again many people we have met over many, many years. In fact, PFGM is about building relationships, friendship-based spirituality, and deepening faith through this connection. One particularly wonderful reconnection was with Mary Haigh (previously Lowe) who is now 93 and a 'real stalwart' of the Movement in Surf Beach in the Bateman's Bay Parish and commenced the PFGM there many, many years ago. The Movement continued there for 27 years.

*- Marg Casey*

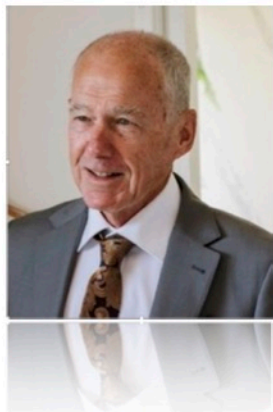


*Marg Casey & Mary Haigh*

*Editor's note: As this Newsletter 'goes to press', we pass on the sad news that Marg Casey who is pictured above, has been treated for cancer over a number of recent years and is now receiving palliative care at home supported by her husband Paul and family. Please keep them all in your prayers.*



## *Rest in Peace - Denis Bergin (May 14, 1947 - June 2, 2023)*



It was with much sadness that we lost a true friend in Denis Bergin on June 2 this year.

In 1985, Denis, together with his wife, Jeanelle and their family, joined one of the first Passionist Family Groups to be formed outside of Sydney at the Catholic Parish of St Mary Magdelene in the Brisbane suburb of Bardon. Jeanelle and Denis were instrumental in assisting many parishes to establish Family Groups throughout Queensland and Northern NSW. Denis and Jeanelle were always available to visit parishes and provide much needed support to assist Family Groups. Denis was a softly-spoken, gentle man who always listened more than he spoke. When Denis did offer some advice, it was always with a gentle and loving heart. Denis will be sorely missed.



*\*We hold in our prayers all our loved ones and friends who have passed away recently.*

### *Thankyou Fr Tom McDonough CP*

At the recent 30th Provincial Chapter of the Passionists in Sydney, a new Provincial Superior, was elected - Fr Denis Travers CP. Wholeheartedly we thank Fr Tom (pictured), the Passionists' Provincial over the last 11 years, for his help in bringing the disparate Passionist Family Groups across the states of Australia together as one through the formation of a National Coordinating Team in 2017. Since then, he has worked closely with and supported our first National Coordinator, Dennis Morris and, more recently, with our current National Coordinator, Tina Minichilli. We wish Fr Tom well in his next role.



## *Celebration*

Following the 50 years celebration of the beginning of Passionist Family Groups in Terrey Hills, Sydney in 1973, there have been all sorts of PFG celebrations in parishes throughout Australia and New Zealand. Some of these have been to mark milestones, e.g. 25, 35 or 40 years together, others just to celebrate belonging to the PFGM.

Celebrations are important. There is a cartoon of two monks reading through ancient archives when one discovers a rule from the Order's long past. He shouts to the others, "The word is celebrate, not celibate!"

One dictionary definition of the word celebration is to 'assemble in order to honour someone or something'. Some families and cultures celebrate, with great enthusiasm, any significant occasion that acknowledges who they are and what they are because of one another. In celebrating an individual's birthday, a family acknowledges the value of that person not just in her/his right, but their value to the family. In this way, an important event in the life of one member, becomes an important event for everyone.

On a PFG formation weekend some years ago, a man asked, "How many of you go to see a sporting event involving one of the children in your Family Group?". He added, that by doing this, "You are celebrating the reality that you and this child belong to the same family, and this is what family members do". Attending an event to show your interest and support for someone else, celebrates the reality of a special bond between you.

It is not surprising that these recent parish PFG celebrations have re-energised many groups and reminded members of their special and important bond. Let's keep celebrating within our own PFG, so that we better appreciate and acknowledge the value of our relationships.

*-Brian CP*

*Editor's note: A huge thank you to all the PFGM Parish Coordinators from across Australia who have shared their celebration stories and photos. We know that there are parishes who have planned to hold their celebrations on a future date to better suit their needs and we look forward to receiving their stories and photos by email at: [pfgm.victas@gmail.com](mailto:pfgm.victas@gmail.com)*

**PFGM Celebrating 50 years in 2023**

**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)