

# Family Groups



**PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT**

*A Ministry of the Passionists*

**SPRING 2023**

To our Passionist Family Group Family: *Greetings from the National Coordinating Team*

Sadly, since our Winter Newsletter we have experienced the loss of many loved ones and members of our Passionist Family. On a personal level, I (Tina) have had a family member, my father, enter eternal life as has Celine Bowman's mum, Marie. We have also been saddened by the passing of Marg Casey, one of our New South Wales coordinators, and former Victorian director Maree Metcalfe. Sadly, after a long illness, Fr Brian Gleeson whose Gospel reflections have been appreciated by many, especially during Covid lockdowns, also passed away recently. There may be members of your own Family Groups who have entered eternal life in recent times.

However, Spring reminds us of new life and the opportunity to reflect and accept that there is a time for everything. Our Passionist Family Group motto is *A Family for All*. In our Family Group prayer we pray: *May we continue to recognise and learn that the gospel is lived in community, so that we give with compassion and generosity, and receive with humility. May those who have belonged for many years be encouraged to continue belonging to their Family Group. May our parishes be enriched and strengthened by our commitment to one another.*

50 years

The support, love and prayers that we receive from our Family Group when we are in need demonstrate how we continue to live the values of the Family Group Movement. As many of our members are ageing or unwell, let us remember to nurture them, have a listening ear and keep them connected to our Passionist Family Group. Just a reminder: God never retires anyone!

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



*To Spring by Michael Leunig*

*Thank God. At last! Spring is coming.  
I can hear the bees inside me humming.  
The mind becomes a flower bed.  
A nest is being built inside my head.  
The spirit rises from its tomb.  
The weary soul is coming into bloom.  
We've made it through. We will survive.  
The soil is sweet and love is still alive.  
The bell of happiness is ringing.  
A little bird inside your heart is singing.*

**PFGM Celebrating  
50 years  
in 2023**

We welcome stories and photos from our Family Groups across Australia by email 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)



# Celebrating our 50 Years Anniversary in 2023

## Victoria: St Paul Apostle Parish, Endeavour Hills



In mid-August, the members of the four Passionist Family Groups celebrated the PFGM's 50th anniversary. Each of the Groups was allocated to one of the Parish's four weekend Masses and their members actively participated in various roles before enjoying a cuppa and light snacks afterwards. Coordinator, Val Rodrigues said, "We were unable to get too many good photos of the crowd as it seems everyone was way too invested in the moment." Val also said that there was considerable interest shown and that they hope to start up a new Family Group soon.



## NSW: Jesus the Good Shepherd, East Lake Macquarie Parish

On May 7th, this year we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the PFGM and 32 years of Family Groups at our Parish. We started with eight groups at St Francis Xavier, Belmont in February 1991. We had 12-15 families and well over 150 children participated. It was wonderful, there was much excitement among parishioners as so many people got to know one another.

Our groups had planning meetings at the beginning of each year to decide on functions and activities. At least once a year, all the groups came together for a function or activity. In our first year, it was an 'It's a Knockout (Parish) Picnic,' where all the groups joined in the fun of playing games against each other. We had 9 groups, one for each family group and a 9th group for any parishioners who had not joined a group. Each group had a colour and everyone in that group wore a shirt in their colour. So, ball games such as tunnel ball, overhead ball, egg and spoon races, three legged races, tug-of-wars and lots of others. It was great.

All the groups looked forward to having their weekend away once and sometimes twice a year and we enjoyed many different venues.

Our Progressive Dinners were very popular and lasted for about 8 years. We usually had anywhere up to 100 people participating, with other parishioners coming as well as Family Group members. Every time we had a function the whole Parish was invited.

The Parish seemed to come alive socially as more people were able to put names to the familiar faces they had only seen as other parishioners/strangers. People started to congregate, talking to one another after Mass, instead of walking out the door and going straight home.

Unfortunately, as what has happened in our Parish churches in this day and age, attendance at Mass is not what it used to be. We only have two groups now. We did have four groups left but attendance was dropping because of people moving away or dying, so we merged them into two groups. Most of our Family Groups have aged, but we still enjoy each other's company. We don't have any children in our groups now, our children have all grown up, moved away, married and have children of their own. The spark is still there for a lot of them and they are practising what they learnt from their days in Family Groups and have groups of friends who get together with their children now.

We had a lovely celebration in our Parish at Jesus the Good Shepherd on Sunday 7th May, with Mass at 9:00am followed by morning tea in our Parish Hall. Fr Gerard our PP spoke very well about Family Groups at the beginning of Mass, during the Homily and at the end of Mass. We had approximately 60 people attend our Morning tea, (there were more at the Mass who didn't come over to the hall).

*John and Pauline McGrath – Maitland Newcastle Coordinators and Jesus the Good Shepherd co ordinators  
Leaders Greg and Jenny Small and Bruce and Rosetta Kimber*



## Queensland: 25 years of PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUPS IN NOOSA AND MORE TO COME!

- by Fr Jason Middleton PP (Noosa District Catholic Parish)

After much planning, preparation, and the dedication of many generous people, the PFGM began in the Noosa Parish on August 18, 1998 and many new Family Groups were formed.



The Parish has held a couple of renewals along the journey and continued to live, grow and change in a cyclical ebb and flow of life and death. With our special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary milestone in mind, we offered everyone in our parish community and schools the opportunity to connect in a Family Group. We had a very positive response to this new invitation and now we have a couple of new groups and the rejuvenation of other groups.

How wonderful it was to gather on Sunday August 20 this year with

a large group of ongoing and new Family Group members to celebrate our 25th Anniversary. It is exciting to note that the family spirit of our parish is alive and well. As our Parish Vision attests, we seek to be a "Family of diverse communities, united as one in faith, leading others to encounter Christ". Family Groups are one such way we can achieve this.



Family Groups provide people a safe and welcoming place to be known, loved, and supported, within the hospitality and faith of our parish community - an extended family. I thank all those who have been so faithful in keeping the 'family spirit' alive in our Parish. Thank you also to everyone who made the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration so special, with much food to partake of and joy to share. Finally, our parish owes a debt of gratitude to Celine Bowman and Russell Winterscheidt of the Northern PFGM National Team for their amazing support and facilitation of this renewal process. Thank you!

### Victoria: TEMPLESTOWE celebrates 30 YEARS

On Sunday, July 30, the Passionist Family Group Movement's members in the Parish Community at St Kevin's church in Templestowe enjoyed a delightful morning tea after Mass to celebrate the Family Group Movement's 30th Anniversary in that Parish. Pictured is Coordinator, Cathy Hardinge, with the celebratory cake.



### \* Vale Brian Gleeson CP, 7/9/2023



*Many PFGM members will be familiar with the always engaging and perceptive reflections on the Sunday Gospels penned by Fr Brian. They were especially appreciated during those Covid locked-down days when attending Sunday Mass was not possible.*

*In his homily at Fr Brian's funeral, fellow Passionist and former classmate, Tom McDonough CP recalled: 'Brian was interested in everything and everyone - a meal with him was usually a complete interrogation of your life since he last saw you. Brian had a finely tuned sense of what is right and wrong, appropriate and worthwhile. He loved to travel, loved music and the arts, he was knowledgeable about so much. But he was always, always interested in 'You'.'*

### \*Vale Fr Rob Egar, 18/9/2023

Fr Rob - uncle of Celine Bowman, our PFGM Northern Team Coordinator & brother of Passionist priest, Tony Egar CP  
*Fr Rob was a wonderful priest of the Adelaide Archdiocese and served as Vicar General for five years. He ministered in Croydon, Brighton, Morphett Vale, Salisbury, Glenelg and Seacombe Garden parishes. Rob was well-known and loved by the Passionists and renowned for standing by the outsider. Niece Celine recalls: 'Uncle Rob was a train nut and family slide nights, after his overseas trips, were all churches and trains!'*



September was a busy month for the development of two new FAMILY GROUPS at **Our Lady of the Rosary Parish KELLYVILLE** in the north western hills area of Parramatta Diocese.

It is the second time, Family Groups have launched in the Parish. Two groups that formed about 38 years ago are still meeting monthly. One group Leader, Norma Evans, has given good support to new time Parish FG Coordinator, Phil Nickol. Two **new** groups have been formed with a good mix of ages and they are about to have their first outings.



As Parramatta Diocesan Promoters of Family Groups, we have visited Kellyville quite a few times over the past year speaking at Masses encouraging Parishioners to “give the Family Groups a go” and assisting with the launch of the groups in sign up Sunday. New Parish priest, Fr Chris Shorrocks (OFM Conv) grew up in Dulwich Hill near St Brigid’s Marrickville, the home of our Province Centre, so he is familiar with the Passionists and is supportive.

This Month, **Christ the King Parish, North Rocks** Parish Council will be meeting to discuss how to launch the Family Group concept in their Parish. Former PP, Fr Ian McGinnity, was deeply moved by the practical and emotional support offered by his sister’s Family Group when her husband died suddenly some time ago. He initiated a discussion with the Parish Council this year and some older members of the Parish council fondly remembered the original Family Groups in the parish from the 1990’s.

The parish of **St John’s, Riverstone** is in one of the fastest growing localities in Sydney’s west. The parish has been boosted recently with the acquisition of a disused Convent nearby and have committed to build a new Parish centre and larger CHURCH and has the vision to develop their community links too. Deacon Michael Tan will be the coordinator of Family Groups and he has developed a strong support team of parishioners who are meeting in January to further develop their plans to make sure all feel personally welcomed and engaged despite the large anticipated congregation.

Other Parramatta parishes expressing interest in FG development are **St Bernadette’s Lalor Park**, and **Good Shepherd Parish, Plumpton**.

**CENTRAL TEAM CATCH UP: New South Wales/Canberra:** Dioceses of Broken Bay, Canberra & Goulburn, Maitland Newcastle, Parramatta, Sydney, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong.

Our Central Team met in early July at Stanwell Park on the picturesque NSW South Coast for some renewal of spirit and friendship and to discuss how we can support the many Passionist Family Groups in the Dioceses of Broken Bay, Canberra & Goulburn, Maitland Newcastle, Parramatta, Sydney, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong. Ten Diocesan Coordinators gathered and were most appreciative that National Coordinator, Tina Minichilli and Tim Horlock were able to join the group. It was a self-catered affair, which gave us all a lovely variety of culinary delights and a good selection of wines. The formal section was underlined by using some words of the late Bishop Geoffrey Robinson from his book *Travels in Sacred Places: The Song of Jesus*. These words traced the Song during the Church’s life and into the life of Bishop Geoffrey and his invitation to let that same Song which we have received sing in our hearts.

This gave those present a basis to assess the situation and functioning of the many Family Groups in their care. All believed that the Movement is greatly appreciated by the members and whilst the profile of members is predominately that of older people, this is a Movement that has served its membership very well and is continuing to do so.

We were excited to hear about renewed interest in the Movement in the Parramatta Diocese and affirmed our commitment to keep responding to support the PFGM membership.

Sadly this was the last time we were to gather with Margaret Casey. We have greatly benefitted from Marg’s wisdom, friendship, vision, encouragement and the fun she brought to the team. May she now rest in the peace of her Lord.

- Mary Morris



Tina, Marg, Paul, Pauline, John, Elizabeth





## BRIAN'S BLOG:

# Mission or Maintenance?

Back in 1973, Michael Winter wrote a book with that title. The book invited reflection, for dioceses and parishes, about which of these options (Mission or Maintenance) was, or should be, their major priority.

It was a post Vatican 2 question because the focus within the Church had been radically altered by the Council from inward looking, to Pope John 23<sup>rd</sup>'s call, "Let us open the windows and doors and let some fresh air come in." During his pontificate Pope Francis has called us to go further - to the (existential) peripheries, wherever people are marginalised and do not belong.

For a long time, the focus on maintenance continued as a priority in most parishes because different points of view about liturgy, theology, clerical and laity roles, etc. were more intent on 'getting it right', than remembering the purpose. Jesus' command was to, "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news". How many pastoral councils had that as a first item on their monthly agenda? Often an overfilled gutter or changing the altar servers' dress received greater focus.

It seems to me we need to address this same question to our Passionist Family Groups. Are we mostly focused inwardly, on maintenance, or are we focused on mission. If our conversations are only about 'Where will we gather for our next monthly get together?', or "We're getting too old to get together very often", then we are missing the gospel call and opportunity to reach out to and include others who are seeking belonging. It is wonderful if we have created strong bonds in our individual Family Groups but we have other aims – to build community in the parish and to live and love like the early Christians. It is true many of us are ageing, but that does not have to stop us from including others. *If we always do what we've always done, we will always get what we have always got.*

We are celebrating 50 years of the PFGM this year. I suggest we be brave enough to ask ourselves and others, whether we have become more focused on maintenance than mission. Having asked that question we might then ask how Jesus might speak to us, on the one hand reassuring us about the good we are doing but, on the other hand, challenging us about what more we could do.

- Brian Traynor CP

## Holy Spirit Province 30th Provincial Chapter, July 2023

The Passionists' Provincial Chapter Meeting was held in Sydney in July with the Superior General, Fr Joachim Rego CP in attendance. Voting for the various roles of responsibility was an important part of the gathering. Below is a photo of the Passionists elected to these roles on the new Provincial Council.



L to R: Fr John Auram CP, Fr Brendan Connell CP, Fr Denis Travers\* CP, Fr Joachim Rego CP- Superior General, Fr Chris Monaghan CP, Fr John Baptist Trinh Công Tuê CP \* Fr Denis Travers is the new Provincial of Holy Spirit Province.

Holy Spirit Province Logo



The Holy Spirit Province's website is:  
[www.passionists.com](http://www.passionists.com)

**DID YOU KNOW....** that we have an active Passionist Family Group in Western Australia in the Our Lady of the Assumption Parish of Dianella in suburban Perth ? Recently, Southern Team Coordinators, Michael and Frances Sullivan, who were transiting through Perth, were privileged to enjoy dinner with a number of their members including Coordinator, Helen Hille, at the home of Judy and Ian McLean along with several of their Family Group members. After years of electronic correspondence it was great to make this personal contact and to meet Helen whose husband, Graham, passed away last year.



## St Mary's Parish Warwick, Queensland: 20th Anniversary - by Marguerite Walsh

On August 13, we celebrated 20 years of the Passionist Family Group Movement in our parish. With Mass at 11am, four Family Groups assembled as we sang and prayed in thanksgiving for all the blessings this Movement has brought to our church community. After, we enjoyed a BBQ lunch, sweets and some glorious touches of spring weather! We could not have asked for a more meaningful day, especially seeing a lovely mix of young and old, all shared with our supportive priests, Fr Franco Filippetto and Fr Terry Hickling.

At the time of writing this article, I was listening to 'The God Minute' with such a great message pertinent to our faith and Family Group. When St Paul prayed, 'May the Lord increase in you and make you overflow with love for one another', it suggests that we strive to make more space for God in our lives, to open up our hearts and our busy schedules to let God expand within us.

If you are involved in a Family Group, you will understand what it does to us and for us (and others), in the most subtle way. Belonging to a Family Group is one of the most powerful ways to form deeper connections with those in our church community. So let us make space for God by forever welcoming others to share in what this great Movement has to offer!



## St Joseph's Warrnambool, Victoria- by Jane Thompson



Once a year, the Sunday Masses at St Joseph's are used to celebrate and give thanks for the PFGM within our part of the broader *Star of the Sea Parish*. This usually features slide shows of events, members addressing the congregation and refreshments after Mass.

As a way of raising the profile of the groups in the parish on a more regular basis, we instigated serving morning tea after Mass once a month. The morning teas have been well received and have assisted in recruiting some new members.

We have farewelled group co-leaders, Jill Murnane and Sr Maree Mansbridge, who are retiring after 31 years. They were members with a group of elderly ladies all of whom were no longer able to run a group. Individual members have all been warmly invited to join other groups.

The consensus of the group leaders was to not hold a major event to celebrate 50 years of PFGM as we had had our own major celebration the previous year. Each group decided to acknowledge the 50 years during one of their own outings. Our young assistant priest, who has brought a lot of energy to his role, believes that the PFGM may be able to fill a need in one or two of the congregations in our now expanded parish, *Star of the Sea*.



***Margaret Ethel Casey (1944 -7/8/2023)***



Everyone is unique, but some people are more unique than others. Margaret, who died 7<sup>th</sup> August, fell into the latter category. She was always highly aware of the importance of community and education for the individual and society. She utilised her distinctive personality and endless energy to help develop community at the grass roots level through her long-time promotion of the Passionist Family Group

Movement in Wagga Wagga, the Riverina, and parts of Victoria. She also drew on her wide education and teaching skills to improve the lives of people of all ages, especially at the Wagga Wagga campus of TAFE.

Margaret was gifted with openness to life, confidence, warmth, optimism, a quick wit, and great energy. She was as colourful in her dress as she was in her disposition, people often stopping her in public places to remark on her uplifting appearance, in clothes that usually she had either made herself or bought from an op shop.

In 1985, Margaret, with the support of the late Maree McCausland and the late Fr Wilf Plunkett, was instrumental in introducing the Passionist Family Group Movement into Koorringal's Sacred Heart parish in Wagga Wagga. Margaret then assisted in establishing Family Groups throughout the Riverina, parts of Victoria, and more recently at Culburra Beach. With her idiosyncratic style, she was the ideal leader to implement its philosophy of 'Come as you are', of making the stranger welcome, and of demonstrating inclusiveness for all. Margaret's involvement in Family Groups was typical of her efforts to promote community through the many groups to which she belonged.

In 2017, Margaret was diagnosed with the rare neuroendocrine cancer. She moved into a world of hospitals, chemotherapy, radiation, clinical trials and numerous other treatments. She accepted her lot with grace and courage. She still continued her normal activities: Long walks on the beach with their dog, swimming in the ocean all year round, tai chi, yoga, and meditation, in addition to joining her children and grandchildren in the high-thrill activities of gigantic water slides at an adventure park and abseiling.

At Margaret's funeral at West Wollongong, attended by some 300 people, many from Wagga Wagga, her daughter Aletheia proposed in her eulogy for Margaret that words from Julia Baird's *Phosphorescence* were especially apt: 'Every now and then you actually do encounter someone who glows; someone who radiates goodness and seems to effortlessly inhabit a kind of joy ... These people are simultaneously soothing and magnetic.' Such a person was Margaret Casey.

*- Paul Casey*

***Maree Margaret Metcalfe 22/1/1946 -19/7/2023***



Maree passed away suddenly at home on 19 July, and her funeral mass was held at Holy Cross Retreat, Templestowe, on 29 July 2023.

In 2019 Maree had written two half-pages on what she would like to happen when she died. Her three daughters found them after her death, and her wishes had a strong Passionist Family Group focus. First, she

wanted to be buried from the chapel at Holy Cross, her 'sacred place', a place she had known and loved for over 50 years.

She also wanted Tim Horlock, former director of PFGM in Victoria, as the funeral director and to have her friend and wedding celebrant, Brian Traynor CP, leading the liturgy. Unbeknown to her, she had a bonus which would have made her quite proud — the presence of Kathryn McKinlay, daughter of former key PFGM State Team members, Val and Terry Carrigg (Montmorency). Kathryn had recently been elected head of Speech Pathology Australia, a role Maree herself held nearly 50 years ago, at the start of her married life with Bernard.

And Maree wanted Family to be at the centre of her celebration, which it was, both the Metcalfe and Bick families, and the PFGM family which was so well represented. Other aspects of Maree's rich life were well represented too, especially her link to the Sion sisters who educated her at Box Hill from Prep, building on the faith handed on by her parents and inculcating in her a love of France and languages, as well as the sciences.

Maree was always a person of action, with a capital A, and came to leadership through service, whether it was in speech pathology, Nursing Mothers, school groups, parish pastoral support, working with asylum seekers, or in her PFGM roles for over 20 years.

May she now Rest in Peace.

*- Bernard Metcalfe*



*Please hold in your prayers all who have lost loved ones and especially these men, Paul and Bernard, who have farewelled their wives so recently.*