

# Family Groups

PASSIONIST  
FAMILY GROUP  
MOVEMENT



*A Ministry of the Passionists*

**AUTUMN 2024**

To our Passionist Family Group Family...

We hope that you all enjoyed a blessed Easter.

As we move forward, let us keep the Easter message simple with a focus on renewal and hope and let us carry it with us every day. Be kind, stay connected, remain optimistic and be resilient.

May we be reminded of the message that the founder of our Family Group Movement often stated: "At all levels of the Family Group Movement the emphasis is on love and support. Family Groups do not take away the difficulties of life, but give us the strength and courage to live as followers of Christ" - *Peter McGrath CP*

We would like to thank you for the continued support of your Parish community through the PFGM.

Blessings

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



\* 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 so please send in photos of your events!

\* 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)

*Many of us in Family Groups are likely old enough to remember the Latin Mass, including the prayers leading into the Consecration. One exhortation is 'Sursum corda!', in English 'Lift up your hearts!'. Arguably, it is an encouragement to feel emotionally and spiritually uplifted. The generic Preface that follows includes the words: 'In Him you have been pleased to renew all things, giving us all a share in his fullness.'*

*I want to give some width to the word 'renew' and tie it in with being emotionally and spiritually uplifted.*

*As we get older, we often can easily agree with the remark, 'My get up and go has all got up and gone!' However, I suggest that we need to consider renewal in all aspects of our lives on an almost daily basis, including renewing our get up and go, our motivation to get more out of life.*

*To make the most of our lives, to be uplifted, we sometimes need to try things that are exhilarating, that produce a burst of adrenalin; the 'hey, that was different' experience. There are some people who look for extreme levels of excitement through activities such as bungee jumping or skydiving. Also, it seems that many people today need constant stimulation, as shown through so many being addicted to internet related devices. In such a world, we all need time to go apart and rest awhile (Mark 6:1). However, the Gospel says 'awhile', not the rest of our lives. So, there is a balance between always being in the fast lane and never leaving the garage.*

*My late wife, the effervescent Margaret, in February of 2023, six months before she died from the rare neuroendocrine cancer with which she had been diagnosed six years before, proposed that our family go abseiling as part of a weekend away at Stanwell Tops. We all did, including the children from eight years up. In memory of Margaret, we did it again in February this year. There is a spiritual element to abseiling. You need to make an act of faith. When you lean out backwards into nothingness, you have to trust that this rope is going to do the job, that you will keep calm and let the rope keep passing through your gloved hand at the right speed while you coordinate that with walking backwards down the wall (the more skilled do a series of jumps), and that the person at the top with the safety rope knows what they are doing. (I have included a photo of me abseiling in February just after my 80th birthday.)*

*I am not proposing that abseiling be on the agenda for family group activities. However, and I realise that there are considerable physical and insurance limitations on what we older people can do, I think that it may be beneficial emotionally, and arguably spiritually also, to undertake occasionally some activity that we know in our heads will not kill us, but which we are not so sure about in our hearts.*

*I think a combination of heights and nature can produce a sensation of awe. I experienced this when I first saw the Grand Canyon, the Niagara Falls, and flying over the Andes on a moonlit night from Buenos Aires to Santiago. Words like majesty, power, and surreal, respectively, applied to the experience of each. Viewing a sunset from the top of the Sydney Harbour Bridge was another experience that lifted me a little out of this world. We cannot all be world travellers, and perhaps nor should we be. However, it may be possible to schedule into a Family Group program events that literally lift us up, such as a cliff top walk in a NSW region such as Kiama, or a tree-top walk such as at the Illawarra Fly, or some coastal walks in the Sydney region. Also, visiting lookouts can literally and metaphorically expand our horizons. Every Australian state has an abundance of coastal cliffs and mountain peaks from whose heights we can experience a sense of wonder and reverence.*

*In case you think that the above are a little too safe to get any adrenalin pumping, a word of caution. One of our closest friends, whose birthday was the same day and month as Margaret's, tragically, fell to her death just a few years ago after tripping while take a photo from a cliff edge.*

*With that caveat, **sursum corda**. Be confident and be exhilarated.*

*(The Sursum corda -Latin for "Lift up your hearts" or literally, "Upwards hearts", is the opening dialogue to the Preface of the Eucharistic Prayer or Anaphora in Christian liturgies.)*



## Sydney Archdiocese: Looking back at 2023..... a year of celebration!



In May last year, in the Sydney Archdiocese, parishes with Family Groups acknowledged the 50th Anniversary of the Passionist Family Group Movement in many ways: with Masses, gatherings and promotion of the Family Groups. Another two parishes celebrated their anniversary of formation: St Brigid's, Marrickville, 30 years and St Mary's, Concord, 32 years.

Concord celebrated in October, the month in which the groups formed in 1991 while the Marrickville Celebration was in May. Both parishes celebrated with a Mass followed by a gathering afterwards with delicious food and conversation. (Sounds familiar to all

Family Group members!) Before Concord's Lunch, which was attended by Family Group people and other parishioners, information on the history of the Parish's groups was shared and the 50th Anniversary video that was made for the PFGM's 50th Anniversary was shown: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-K-pf0TCVvI>



Both celebrations were very special events in the life of the parishes. The challenge for Co-ordinators across the Archdiocese is to ensure Family Groups continue to flourish in their parishes. They all are very aware of the potential for further growth with the support of Parish Priests. There is no better way for a parish to build a strong Faith-sharing community!  
- Annette Guterres



## PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUPS IN THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF CHRISTCHURCH SOUTH - New Zealand

-by former PP, Fr Peter Head sm



Being a part of a Passionist Family Group provides **a way to meet and get to know other parishioners**. We have to be honest and say that we, as Catholics, are not known for the way we greet each other and get to know each other by name.

One of the many positive aspects of a Passionist Family Group is that **those in a group can range in age from elderly to a baby**. 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 **enable members 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" is becoming 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**.

## Passionist Family Group Houses and Jesus' Visits

# B R I A N' S B L O G

*In the early days of Passionist Family Groups and for many years, people shared outdoor picnics. Restaurant meals were rare as we emphasised 'low cost or no cost'. PFG members gathered in each other's homes, either as part of an entire 'Family Group' function or as subgroups of friends. Since COVID and, also, affected by the ageing of group members, home gatherings or invitations are happening far less, which is unfortunate.*

*I was thinking about this recently both in the light of Jesus sharing meals 'in the open', and by the sea (like Passionist Family Groups do) and especially in people's homes. In particular, I reflected on Jesus visiting a house in the pagan city of Tyre where, we are told, he went into a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. (Mk 7:24) He must have been well known to the house owners, that he could apparently let himself in, yet he was 80 kilometres from home!*

*I began thinking about the houses we know that Jesus visited. Of course we don't know them all, but we know some of them and the circumstances of his visits:*

- When Jesus' family and his disciples were invited to a wedding party in Cana, Jesus restored the happiness of the occasion after they had run out of wine.
  - Upon leaving the synagogue one sabbath, Jesus visited Peter's house in Capernaum, when he heard that Peter's mother-in-law was unwell. She recovered and began to serve the guests.
  - Jesus accepted an invitation to visit another house in Capernaum and, while he was there, some men lowered their friend through the roof and asked Jesus to cure him which, of course, Jesus did.
  - Jesus accepted an invitation from Matthew to visit his house, This aroused the anger of some Pharisees because Matthew was a tax-collector. Jesus addressed these religious leaders by saying he had not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners! Matthew became a disciple.
  - Jesus visited the house of Simon, where a woman arrived and washed Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair. Only a prostitute would let down her hair in the culture of the time. Jesus famously said: *Those who are forgiven much, love much.*
  - Jairus, the synagogue official, invited Jesus to go to his house to cure his unwell daughter. In fact, the young girl had died, but while in the house, Jesus raised her and asked the people to give her some food.
  - It seems Jesus visited the house of Martha and Mary frequently. It is likely that their brother Lazarus lived with them. The Gospels record three times that Jesus 'loved the family'. On the best-known occasion recorded in the Gospel, Jesus praised Mary for listening like a disciple, unlike her sister Martha who was distracted and worried by entertaining.
  - Zacchaeus was another tax-collector who invited Jesus to visit his house. This was a gesture of solidarity with a public outsider. Many in the crowd criticised Jesus for his poor judgment but that visit turned Zacchaeus' life around.
  - The visit to the house of Caiaphas was quite different to other house visits. This was an involuntary visit, forced on Jesus. In this house, Jesus was judged and condemned. Houses are sometimes the source of tension and even violence; maybe even a potential visitor is shut out, but never, we hope, is Jesus rejected (as stranger, family or friend).
  - Jesus gathered his disciples for a farewell meal at the Cenacle in Jerusalem. We don't know whose house this was, but since Jesus' instructions were, "Tell him the master needs it, scholars suggest it belonged to a Jerusalem based disciple. During this meal, Jesus washed his disciples' feet as a slave would have done and gave those present his bread as a communion of remembrance.
  - Two downcast disciples who left Jerusalem after Jesus' death, encountered the risen Jesus on their journey and when they came to a house in Emmaus, presumably belonging to one of them, they pressed Jesus to stay and share a meal, and during that meal Jesus took the bread, blessed and broke it, and then their eyes were opened to his presence.
  - After Jesus' death some of the disciples gathered in a house in Jerusalem with the doors shut! It was here that Jesus appeared and assured the disciples that his Spirit was within and among them. So these visits to houses were always strong acts of fellowship and often they involved healing. Outsiders were visited, as were friends.
- Maybe some reflection on who is, or is not invited, to your house (as an individual or as a PFG member) can be an occasion for rethinking. Maybe Jesus is knocking on the door or waiting to be invited in.*

**- Brian Traynor CP**



## *'Yarning by the Yarra': Wood Family Group, Montmorency - Victoria*



Our Family Group has been together since the PFGM came to St Francis Xavier, Montmorency Parish over 30 years ago. Together, we have been through so much and seen many changes in that time. There has been much joy and laughter and our share of tears. Our own children have moved on to raising children of their own and, sadly, some of the Parish's previous leaders and members have been farewelled to God. These days, it seems that our most popular activity involves a chance to gather over a simple meal or cup of coffee. Here we are, on the verandah of a members' home overlooking our beautiful Yarra River and enjoying unseasonal autumn warmth. How blest are we! As one member said, so simply and accurately:

*"... a lovely group of people that we would never have known if it wasn't for Family Groups."*

- Gerard and Marie Wood

## **Archbishop Comensoli's Patrick Oration - March 2024**



The Melbourne Archbishop's Oration is delivered each year to celebrate the feast day of the Archdiocese's patron, Saint Patrick. The oration is an opportunity for the Archbishop to speak to the wider community and to present a pathway forward for the Catholic Church in Melbourne.

Michael and Frances Sullivan, leaders of the PFGM Southern Team, were privileged to attend this year's Oration and to mingle with distinguished guests including politicians and representatives of civic, religious and other community leaders over a light meal before the Oration. They enjoyed chatting with, among others, Archdiocesan seminarians, Bishop Bychok from the Ukrainian Greek Eparchy and Mrs Joy Freier, wife of the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne.

In his Oration, Archbishop Comensoli said that he is often struck by those making their way each Thursday "through the doors of St Patrick's to gaze on Christ" at the *Six30 Holy Hour*. Each week, about 160 mostly young people attend, "making their way to a spiritual doorway on to the love of Christ among them." He has also wondered about those who walk past the Cathedral's doors on a Thursday evening but don't come in: "Do they know they are welcome to enter?"

## **Ballarat Cluster of PFGM Parishes:**

### **Cluster Meeting of Coordinators - February 2024**

Annually, usually early in the year, the PFGM Parish Coordinators in the Ballarat Cluster of Parishes, meet together with Southern Team members to catch up and share how things are going in the Family Groups in their care. Unfortunately, the drop in the number of available priests to service all the parishes in the Ballarat Diocese is becoming a significant challenge at this time.



L to R: Vin Dillon (Wendouree), Frances Sullivan (Southern Team), Sandra Whiffen (Daylesford), Michael Sullivan (Southern Team), Philip & Anne Porter (Sebastopol), Irene Martin (Creswick)

*By the time we remembered to take this photo, some attendees had left: Mick Hingston (Ballarat Cathedral), Kaye & Tony Beggs (Ballarat North)!*

## A Farewell Reflection- Jo McDade: Passionist Youth Team

-Denis Travers CP, Provincial

Jo McDade has been part of the Passionists since she was seven when her family belonged to the Passionist Family Groups in Ballina, NSW where she grew up. She remembers fondly the Christmas parties, social gatherings and country music nights. There were people at Mass that she recognised as part of her Family Group.

When Jo was a teenager, Ray Sanchez CP ran a retreat at Woodlawn for teenagers... this was extremely formative in Jo's faith and sparked some thought about youth ministry. Years later, she realised that this priest was the same Fr Ray who had invited her onto the Passionists' Youth Retreat Team with her then boyfriend and future husband, Tim. A year later, Jo left the team to plan her wedding. Her fiancé, Tim, stayed on the team for another six years, running the start-of-year retreats for the Team. Jo looked after the catering, thus connecting with the Team in an informal way. While having three small children, Jo and Tim would be in the background and supporting Ray as he led the team.



In 2012, Jo accepted the invitation to take on to the role of part-time Project Officer. Appointed by Tom McDonough CP and supported by Passionists Ray Sanchez and Kevin Hennessy, Jo would gather many young people together for small to large-scale gatherings. Jo organised the Passionists' involvement in the Australian Catholic Youth Festivals in Melbourne, Perth and South Australia. Jo says, "There was one time when there were 350 young people in a small room for a games workshop! There was also the sight of Passionist beachballs kicked and thrown all over the place by a group of 5000 young people (a great promo tactic for the Passionist Youth Retreat Team!) and Kevin adds, "Let's not forget the noisy hand clappers where everyone would say, 'Oh that's the Passionists!'"

In 2018, Jo and Tim (and their 4 children) took over leadership from Fr Ray in running the Retreat Team. Jo notes that she was paid to do this; Tim was "the free support" and that "the guidance and support of Fr Ray and Tim meant that I thrived in this role." The Team was small but grew in faith and competence. "As Ace worked some magic on our branding and website, the team slowly started to grow in retreats. In 2018 there were 22 retreats, in 2020 we had 27 retreats, in 2022 we had 80 retreats whilst employing a full timer, Tom Warren, who was instrumental in team-leading and retreat facilitation. In 2023, we completed 91 retreats whilst this year it's looking at 103 retreats and counting."

Jo stepped into Team Manager in 2022 which meant that she could put systems in place that allowed a structure to help with the growth and sustainability of the Team. "Retreats are at a high quality. The team culture is thriving. The collaboration makes the Passionist Youth Retreat Team a success, not just in Queensland but all throughout Australia (WA, Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales and now South Australia). It's thanks to the vision and backing of the Passionists at the latest Chapter and to the dedication of Tim and the family and the support to Jo. This team is a success story that, as Passionists, we all can be proud of."



### Jo's Farewell:

L to R- Brian Traynor CP, Jo, Kevin Hennessy CP, Gwen Winterscheidt, Luke Bulley CP, Denis Travers CP

Jo concluded by saying, "I am extremely proud of my time here. I cannot thank the Passionists enough for helping to shape me as a woman in the church who gets stuff done and has vision but also the freedom and trust you have given me to do it. I am grateful for the relationships and connections formed, the young people I have met along the journey and the places I feel are my second home: The Fort-Brisbane, Holy Cross, Templestowe -Victoria. I remember one of my first gatherings at Templestowe where there was a dinner and the guys were sharing many speeches and jokes about each other and I thought to myself, "This is community, this is home... this I love, I wanna be here!" And I have and will always be. Now, it's time to choose I different path for a while. So while this is goodbye to Team Manager, it will never be goodbye to the Passionists."

## Vale: Margaret Mangan of St Kevin's, Templestowe Parish in Victoria

Margaret passed away on March 15, 2024, the last member of her family as her only sister pre-deceased her. Throughout her life, while working as a teacher and ultimately, a school principal, and in retirement, Margaret took a very active role in her parish. Margaret was the enthusiastic and caring leader of the 'Mangan Family Group', for about 20 years. Margaret travelled extensively but during the isolation of Covid times, Margaret enjoyed observing and recording activities of the various birds that visited her garden. Templestowe Parish FG Coordinator, Cathy Hardinge, commented that Margaret was a keen and very committed Leader of her Family Group, organising monthly functions and keeping in touch with all the members. Margaret will be greatly missed.

Margaret Mangan

26 May 1940 - 15 March 2024

