

Family Groups

**PASSIONIST
FAMILY GROUP
MOVEMENT**



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A Ministry of the Passionists

SUMMER 2025/2026

Christmas Message - Passionist Family Group Movement

As we approach the joy of Christmas we pause to give thanks for the commitment and care shown by our Passionist Family Group members throughout the year. Your kindness in looking after one another whether through shared celebrations, quiet support or simply being present has been a true reflection of the spirit of our movement.

We also would like to remember those members who have passed away during the year. Their lives and contributions remain part of our story and we hold them and their families in our prayers.

Our National Conference this year reminded us of the importance of nurturing. Nurturing our faith, our friendships and our communities. It was a time of renewal and encouragement and we are grateful to all who participated and helped make it such a meaningful gathering.

Looking ahead to 2026, we want to continue the focus on nurturing. Together, we will keep building a community where everyone feels welcomed, valued and supported.

Wishing you and your families a Christmas filled with peace and joy. May 2026 be a year of good health.

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



Noosa District Parish - Queensland

How warm welcomes are growing our Parish Family in a diverse parish with churches and their communities located from the hinterland to the beaches across the Noosa district

Recently, as part of our Parish's Discipleship Pathway Vision, we've been leaning into what it truly means to be a *Welcoming Community*. A key part of that focus has been growing and supporting faithful *young families*. But like many others, we found ourselves asking: *Why aren't more new families joining our Family Groups?*

We'd done all the right things — or so we thought. We advertised in the bulletin (even added lovely photos!), made announcements at Mass, and even had our Parish Priest personally encourage participation. But somehow, it still wasn't quite working.

So, we stepped back and asked ourselves a new question: ***What does it look like through the eyes of someone new?*** Someone walking in for the first time — maybe juggling toddlers — possibly unsure if this is a place where they'd belong. And we realised that while our efforts were visible, they weren't personal enough.

That's when we partnered with one of our greatest assets: Beryl, our warm-hearted Greeter. If you've ever walked through our church doors on a Sunday morning, chances are you've been welcomed by Beryl. She doesn't just say hello — she remembers names, notices new faces, and brings joy to that simple moment of arrival.

We asked Beryl if she could think of any young families who might be open to joining a Family Group. Without hesitation, she gave us four or five names — people she'd chatted with or smiled at regularly but hadn't had time for long conversations with. So, we made a plan.

Each Sunday, we positioned ourselves near Beryl so she could introduce us when the time was right. If there was time, she'd ask someone if they were open to having a chat about Family Groups — or simply introduce them to us after Mass or at morning tea. We'd then follow up, sharing not just the details, but the *blessings* these groups had brought to our own lives. And with that simple, personal invitation: *Come and see* — things began to change.

In just 3 or 4 weeks, we personally invited 9 families — and 7 of them said yes on the spot! As the word spread and more connections formed, our group grew to 9 young families, with only one family not continuing past the first step. Not a bad start!

At our most recent Family Group event, we asked some of the newer members two simple questions. Their answers were thoughtful and, honestly, very telling.

1. Had you considered joining before, and what held you back?

"We saw the notices at church but just never followed through."

"We weren't sure if there'd be other families like ours, or how big the commitment was."

2. What made you say yes, this time?

"Talking to someone helped. It eased our concerns."

"Getting a personal invite — just being asked to 'come along' — made it easy."

"Seeing other families with kids joining in made it feel fun and familiar."

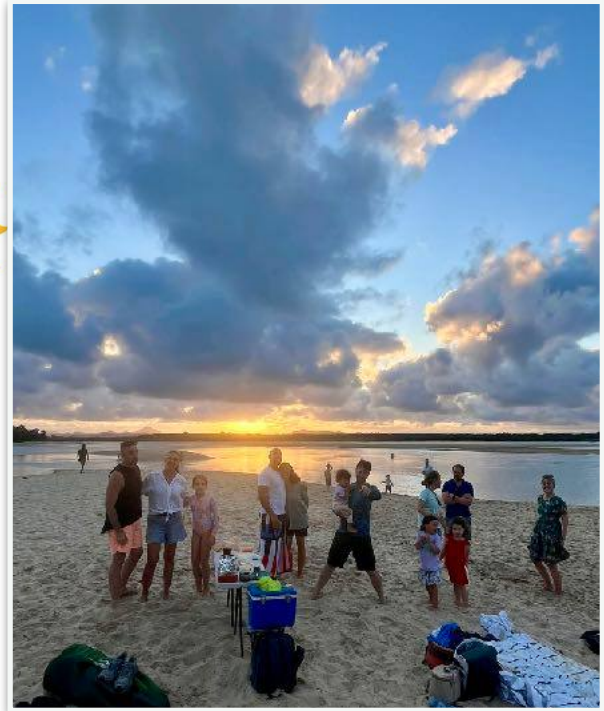
It all started with a warm welcome. With learning names. With noticing.

And then — the most powerful thing of all — a personal invitation. A notice in the newsletter is helpful. A pulpit announcement might pique curiosity. ***But neither is an invitation unless it's personal.***

We've learned that the path to building a truly welcoming, vibrant parish family isn't paved with flyers and features — it's paved with relationships. So, next time you see a young family at the back of the church or grabbing a cuppa at morning tea — say hello. Learn their names. And maybe, just maybe, invite them to something that could bless their lives, just as it has blessed yours.

- Shana Tucker, Ministry Lead - Noosa District Parish

N00SA District Parish's Newest Family Group



Family Group Service - Port Macquarie Uniting Church, New South Wales

Leanne and Shane Hyland were honoured to attend The Uniting Church Port Macquarie's annual Family Group Service on Sunday, 26 October 2025 to celebrate and gave thanks for the vibrant Family Groups within that community. They extended their sincere thanks to Carolyn Willoughby for the warm welcome and an invitation to share a few words and to connect with members of this flourishing community.

The service, filled with prayer, music, and contributions from each Family Group, created a beautiful atmosphere of unity, gratitude and shared mission.

Beautiful words shared by Marlene:

Even though I attended church weekly, I still felt I was on the periphery, with the Shepherd and main flock some distance away, shrouded in mist, not quite clear and defined. That's how I felt for the next 35 years.

After joining the Uniting Church, the mist dispersed and everything became clear again. We were welcomed back into the flock and within a short time, we were asked to join the Fisherfolk Family Group. It felt like we had found our family again. For those who have not yet joined a Family Group, I urge you to do so. It's a wonderful way to share in fellowship with one another each month as we enjoy our group activities.



While there is love and care, there is life and hope

It is nine years since Rita's husband has recognised her. Even so, twice every day she has visited and sat with him over all those years. Could there be a more profound expression of love and devotion?

When I learned about Rita I could only think, this is not only love in action – it is hope in action.

The issues that we hear about constantly through various forms of media today, seem devoid of hope and more seriously, they drown out marvellous and inspiring stories of hope and devotion.

This can also apply to our Passionist Family Groups. A well opinionated priest offered the view a few years ago that "Family Groups have had their day". The truth is, Rita does not think her husband Mario has had his day, and I don't think Family Groups have had their day.

While ever there is love and care, there is life and hope. It can't be denied that , generally, we lack the presence of a young generation, but we have people who have been family to one another for twenty, thirty, forty years and more. These women and men who were once strangers to one another, have invested themselves in the friendship and care of one another, and for them, it is not all over! If, slowed down by ageing and not as attractive for company to a busy younger generation, we can still gather albeit in less spectacular ways than in years past. We can like Rita, be true signs of hope, who reflect gospel love – a family for all!

- Brian Traynor CP

Christ The King Celebration: Parish Day, St Agnes Parish, Port Macquarie NSW



On November 23, Port Macquarie Family Groups joined in their St Agnes' Parish Community Day held at St Joseph's Regional College in celebration of Christ the King. Over 900 people attended. Family Groups hosted games of Bocce, Mölkky, and other fun activities for people of all ages to enjoy.

Leanne and Shane Hyland had the opportunity to speak about Family Groups, inviting parishioners to ask questions, connect, and consider joining this wonderful movement. It was a joyful day filled with faith, food, fun, and friendship – a beautiful reminder of the strength and warmth of our parish community.



St Francis Xavier Parish, Montmorency Celebrates 30 years - Victoria*

On a cool and drizzly early Sunday morning on November 13, many members of our six Family Groups gathered to celebrate Mass and give thanks for the friendship and joys that the Passionist Family Group Movement has given us over many years.

Thirty years ago, our groups were filled with families of young and teenage children where events included exciting day trips here and there and an annual weekend Camp where the children, especially, had a wonderful time together.

These days, we still gather, older and usually child-free, but enjoy our times together. Over the years, we have welcomed many new parishioners into a Family Group and, as a result, we have made new friends.

We thank Fr Peter Matheson for supporting and encouraging us in setting up Family Groups 30 years ago and our current PP, Fr Michael Sierakowski, for his ongoing support.

Photo: Original member and a Family Group Leader, Vinka Heagerty, cuts the celebration cake





30th Anniversary of Passionist Family Groups in Daylesford, Victoria

Coordinators Denise and Des Leonard were the first Parish Coordinators when three Passionist Family Groups started up at St. Peter's Parish, Daylesford in 1995. After Denise resigned, Hilary Cummings and Sandra Whiffin took over. There are now two Family Groups who gather in the parish.

The Family Group members celebrated their 30th Anniversary of Passionist Family Groups with the Parish community on Sunday, 16th November, 2025 with Mass and, afterwards, they enjoyed a sausage sizzle and a celebratory mud cake.

Our Priest, Father Marcello, joined us in this celebration. A very enjoyable day was had by all.

- Hilary & Sandra



Claire & Frank Ledda

Sacred Heart Parish, Diamond Creek in Victoria celebrates 40 Years

Sacred Heart Parish in Diamond Creek, 23 km north-east of Melbourne, was the second Victorian parish to embrace the Passionist Family Group Movement. There is one large, happy group there, led by Claire and Frank Ledda.

PP Fr Steve Rigo celebrated the Mass which also included the confirmation of three young people. The large gathering of Family Group people and parishioners enjoyed a cuppa and tasty treats after Mass. Pictured on the left is an altar cloth made by the children of the Diamond Creek Family Groups in the 1990s. Pictured right are Leader, Claire Ledda with Tina Minichilli, our National PFGM Leader.



Diamond Creek Family Group members and guests including National PFGM Leader, Tina Minichilli, Tim Horlock who helped set up the Parish's original Family Groups and Trish & Roger Gurney, the Southern Team Leaders. Claire and Frank, together with members Kerry & Frank Micallef, made the Sacred Heart Diamond Creek Family Group's banner many years ago. Kerry commented that, 'It is a lovely, lovely Family Group.'

Risen Christ Parish (Eltham & Montmorency) - Victoria



Some of the members of the Heagerty Family Group enjoyed lunch at the new home of members Geoff and Mary who are now living by the sea in Mornington, far away from their Family Group parish in Montmorency. However, they keep in touch. The Group has been together for 30 years.

- Family Group Leaders' Christmas Party



Left: Dorothy Earl recently celebrated her 90th birthday.

Right: Family Group Leaders' Christmas Party. Dorothy was their leader for over 30 years!



St Joseph's, Hobart TASMANIA

In Hobart, St Joseph's Passionist Family Group members celebrated their 25th anniversary on Saturday 29th November. They celebrated with Mass in the home of Coordinators, Judithe and Dennis Lanham. The Mass was celebrated by Fr Peter Addicoat (pictured on the left). Frs Dominic Samamba and Justin Durai Raj were present at the celebrations also. The Mass was followed, in typical FG style, with a delicious shared lunch. We were very grateful to be able to be present for this special occasion.

-Trish & Roger Gurney: VicTas PFGM Coordinators



We invite and welcome contributions to our Passionist Family Group Movement Newsletter.

Please send your news/articles and photos to the editor at: pfgm.victas@gmail.com

A copy of this Newsletter and previous PFGM Newsletters can be found on our website: www.pfgm.org

St Thomas the Apostle Parish Kambah ACT - a wonderful 40 years Celebration

On October 19, 2025 the St Thomas the Apostle, Kambah Family Groups celebrated our 40th Anniversary. Currently, we have six groups with around sixty families and singles, many of whom have been members for all of those 40 years.

We had the blessing of Father Praveen Paul who, in the previous few months, spoke at Masses reminding parishioners of what Family Groups are and of our upcoming anniversary celebration. We welcomed new members and, on the day, we were blessed with 70 parishioners and friends attending our lunchtime celebration which was wonderful! The local Tuggs Ukelele Group, of which six members have been longtime Family Group members, provided lively musical entertainment. Many thanks go to those who have volunteered as Family Group Coordinators and those who have kept Family Groups going over the years with nurturing, compassion, endless caring and valued friendships.

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A 'play' on words!

- Dad, are we pyromaniacs? Yes, we arson.
- What do you call a pig with laryngitis? Disgruntled.
- Why do bees stay in their hives during winter? Swarm.
- She was only a moonshiner's daughter, but I miss her still.
- Just so everyone is clear, I'm going to put my glasses on.
- A commander walks into a bar and orders everyone around.
- I lost my job as a stage designer. I left without making a scene.
- How much did the pirate pay to get his ears pierced? A buccaneer.
- I once worked at a cheap pizza shop to get by. I kneaded the dough.
- Never buy flowers from a monk. Only you can prevent florist friars.
- Why is it unwise to share your secrets with a clock? Well, time will tell.
- Why is 'dark' spelled with a k and not c? Because you can't "c" in the dark.



Happy Christmas!