

# Family Groups

PASSIONIST  
FAMILY GROUP  
MOVEMENT



PASSIONIST FAMILY GROUP MOVEMENT

*A Ministry of the Passionists*

WINTER 2026

*To our Passionist Family Group Family...*

Our Movement continues to celebrate the anniversaries of Family Groups and their enduring presence: 25 years, 30 years, 40 years and beyond. Each day, these groups live and breathe the ministry, offering a powerful and living example of what true nurturing has always been.

Having had the privilege to share in Parish celebrations of late PFGM members, one hears the many stories of members nurturing one another thus keeping the spirit of the Movement alive and strong. Winter, a quieter time of year, reminds us that nurturing is not always loud or visible at times. It is the quiet, steady work of preserving wisdom, strengthening relationships and preparing the ground for what is yet to come.

Simply keeping in touch can be a simple but meaningful way to maintain connections: sharing a cuppa, making a phone call or checking in with one another — small acts that carry great warmth during the colder months. *May we never forget that every human life is a gift from God.* Through our words, our actions, and our prayers, may we help build a world where every person is welcomed, supported, and cherished in “A Family for All”.

Thank you for your ongoing work at being “Family” to each other.

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

## **A Blessing for Nurturing**

*May you see your body as a well where water needs to be replenished.*

*May you learn how to balance your self-needs with the needs of others so that you can live in harmony with the world.*

*May you take the time to notice and nurture what your inner wisdom is asking of you.*

*May you find a place in nature where you can be in silence and hear your Creator in the trees, the birds, the wind, and the earth.*

*May you care for all of creation in gratitude, humility, and respect.*

— Kaki Grubbs, Spiritual Literacy Certificates Program, 2024 Cohort

*Did you know...*

*...that the oldest Catholic church in Australia is St John the Evangelist Catholic Church, located in Richmond, Tasmania? Perhaps you have visited it?*

*Built from coursed sandstone, it opened on December 31, 1837.*

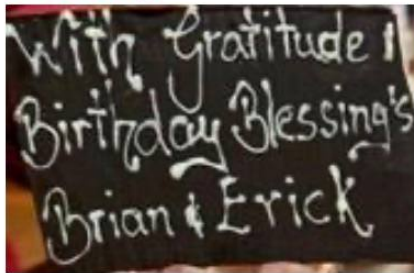
*It the oldest existing **and continuously used** Catholic church in the country.*



## Happy 'O' Birthday Brian!

Below is an excerpt from the Holy Cross in Templestowe, Victoria Newsletter #334 on July 10th. We all join in wishing Brian the very best of health and happiness for his significant birthday and into the future. We thank him sincerely for his unfailing support of the Passionist Family Group Movement and its members. Brian wrote:

### Birthday



It was going to be a quiet birthday, but Erick (with kind intentions) shared the news that I was turning 80 last Saturday. It was wonderful having four of my siblings here for a few days and the acknowledgement at Mass last Sunday was very warm and humbling.

Thank you to everyone who extended greetings personal, by card or email. The community and family shared a meal on Friday night and that was very nice. Erick and I shared a cake made for us. After all that I am a bit behind in my work!



## B R I A N ,

## B L O G

I have had the opportunity to introduce Passionist Family Groups to many parishes. No one can be sure what percentage of those who have joined, truly understand the aims and goals of the Movement, let alone the true potential of any Family Group. For some members the Family Group became 'just social', and while that is certainly better than nothing, it is a long way short of what we hope for those who join.

Back in 1988 we started more deliberately to refer to the groups as Passionist Family Groups. We saw our spirituality as critical to people appreciating the 'God of the Ordinary,' as our New Zealand friend, John Kleinsman wrote about in 2016. Through the simple bonding of people mostly unknown to one another, into a new family, much of Jesus' message comes alive. Peter McGrath used to say about the PFGM, '*Strangers become friends, and these friends become family*'.

So many groups have been together for forty years. They have seen change, growth, loss and so much more – together! Passionist Family group members do not simply connect with one another, or study a scripture or theology programme together as some parishes promote. You belong in a Family Group, no matter who you are or where you come from. This is what Jesus created – groups in which outsiders could find a place, a human and spiritual home that includes everyone; everyone; everyone.

May we continue to offer that belonging by keenly assuring others that they can find a place with us. A true loving family does not stagnate, content in its membership. It welcomes the next generation, the migrants, the people of other faiths or those of no faith.

***We seek to create "A Family For All".***

*Jesus' request is something to remember when we gather with our Family Group members:*

*'Listen, anyone who has ears!'*

*We know from experience that listening, deep listening, changes our minds and hearts.*

*15th Sunday of the Year 2026*

## A Man of Family, People and the Soil: Remembering Ron McAuliffe

- Contributed by Paul Casey

*July 29, 2026 will be the first anniversary of the death of Family Group stalwart Ron McAuliffe, who 'rode shotgun', as it were, in helping his wife, Margaret, with various Family Group roles from the time that they moved from their Tumbarumba farm to Wagga in 1991. They became leaders of the McAuliffe FG in Koorringal's Sacred Heart Parish (Wagga) in 1993 and took over coordinating the ten FGs in the Sacred Heart parish when my late wife, Margaret, and I moved to Callala Bay in 2004. Margaret McAuliffe is currently the Coordinator of the five Sacred Heart Family Groups, with about 30 in each group.*

Ron and Margaret McAuliffe perhaps were always meant to be together. Although Ron's parents lived on a farm just outside Tumbarumba (a small town located on the western edge of the Snowy Mountains and the Eastern edge of the Riverina about 120 km from Wagga - on a clear day, you can see Mount Kosciuszko) For Ron's birth, his mother travelled down the mountains to Bega on the far south coast of NSW to where her sister lived. Ron was born and baptised in Bega. His name is one below the name of Margaret's brother Tim in the baptismal register at Saint Patrick's Church in Bega, with Margaret's name some ten lines down further. Coincidentally, Ron and Margaret were born in the same room of the maternity hospital which was opposite Saint Patrick's Church. Further, Margaret's brother and his wife now own the old maternity home. Frequently over the years, Ron and Margaret, together with Tim and his wife, would sit in the same room in which they were all born, enjoying many a delightful dinner party.

In 1961, Margaret won the Miss Illawarra section of the Miss Australia contest, eventually won by Tanya Verstack. Margaret told me that when she and the rest of the girls saw Tanya at the finals they realised, from that moment on, that they should forget about winning and just focus on enjoying themselves!

The 1962, Goulburn Catholic Colleges' reunion saw Ron and Margaret becoming good friends. Margaret became an air hostess with Ansett and was moved to Brisbane. Ron, rightly, decided that he should move to Brisbane also. They became engaged in June 1963 and, after returning, respectively, to the McAuliffe Tumbarumba farm and Bega, they were eventually married at Saint Patrick's Church, Bega, on May 16, 1964. They then lived on their Tumbarumba farm, 'Tyrone', for twenty-eight years, where they raised seven children.

Ron was a great admirer of Fr Peter McGrath and loved the concept of Family Groups. He prized Peter's enthusiasm for bringing people together and his recognition of the importance of supporting each other in our daily lives, life being very much about caring.

In his working life, Ron was a great advocate of regenerative farming. Soil was life, in contrast to dirt. (There is a FG story to be drawn from that.) The McAuliffe's home in Wagga had a beautiful garden, in which both Ron and Margaret took great pride. After later moving to The Grange Retirement Village, they again established an attractive but smaller garden.

Margaret has sent to me a summary of The Four Agreements that guided Ron and about which you can find out more details of each on the internet. They are: "Be impeccable with your word"; "Do not take anything personally"; "Do not make assumptions"; and "Always do your best". My memory of Ron's rules is that the overarching Rule Number One was, "Never take it personally!"

Ron was a very popular member of the McAuliffe FG, having such a good sense of humour and being so gentlemanly in assisting others.

*- A life fully lived: A man of family, the people, and the soil. RIP Ron.*



**Ron & Margaret McAuliffe with Marg & Paul Casey (some time ago)**



## 40th Anniversary of Family Groups - at the Monastery, South Australia

On 14<sup>th</sup> June, Family Group members in the Parish of St Paul of the Cross (The Monastery) gathered to celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It was a happy day and wonderful celebration, beginning with 10.30am Mass, followed by a catered lunch in the Monastery Conference and Function Centre.

Fr Denis Travers travelled from Sydney to celebrate Mass with us. Fr Denis was the parish priest when Family Groups were introduced to South Australia, and his enthusiasm and ongoing encouragement and involvement provided a strong base for the establishment and development of groups within the parish. The gathered members were appreciative and delighted to have him there to mark the occasion. His homily reflected on the effective simplicity of gathering regularly in friendship and support to allow for Jesus's message of "love one another" to be put into practice. The groups were also joined by Fr Tom McDonaugh, currently parish priest at the Monastery, Fr Jeffrey Foale and Tina Minichilli representing the National Family Group Movement.

The groups that formed in 1986 were disparate in terms of age and make-up, including families, couples, and single people. Most were families with children ranging from babies to teenagers and young adults, as well as grandparents. After forty years, the profile of the groups has changed: many of the older members of the original groups have died; the children of those groups are now adults with their own families; the introduction of new people to the groups; some groups ceasing to exist and new groups beginning. Original members are now forty years older and that is reflected in the types of gatherings the groups now hold: where once there were hikes, picnics and weekends away with large groups of families, now people are more likely to meet for lunches in each other's homes or visits to the cinema and a coffee or lunch catch-up. There have always been phone calls to check on each other's well-being. A few years ago, after a campaign for new members again while Fr Denis was parish priest, we welcomed a new group composed of young families, many from overseas, to the mix. There are now nine groups of various sizes going strongly in the parish, the largest group has twenty-two members.

*Ann and Darryl Alfred, the Parish Family Group Coordinators welcomed the almost 90 members who sat at nine large round tables for the delicious lunch. Members of the newest and youngest group cut the spectacular celebration cake. There was a buzz in the air and a most convivial and joyful atmosphere, with people happy to see each other and mark the occasion. Many were part of the original groups, others had joined since: the newest group, with school-aged children, provided a welcome change in age profile!*

*Everyone present was glad of the opportunity to catch up with each other to celebrate Family Groups, which have been and are a meaningful and important part of our lives.*

*Ann Alfred Coordinator( & her husband Daryl)*

*Passionist Family Group members enjoying their 40th Anniversary celebration*



## *Celebrations at Ss Peter & Paul Parish, East Doncaster - Victoria*

On Sunday 28th June, the Parish of Saints Peter and Paul in Doncaster East, Melbourne celebrated the 40th Anniversary of Family Groups in their parish.

The Mass focused on the Parish's Feast Day as well as the dedication/consecration of the church's new altar. Bishop Nguyen gave a special blessing to the Family Group members present.

The Mass was a very special occasion, celebrated by Bishop Thinh Nguyen with Fr Toan Nguyen, the parish priest, together with Fr Kevin Dillon, assistant priest and several other priests including Fr Brian Traynor and JD from the Passionists as well as Fr John (previous Parish Priest at the East Doncaster Parish).

The Mass was followed by a lunch with singing and music entertainment in the parish hall.



## *R.I.P. - Helen Glatzel, Mill Park, Victoria*

A large number of relatives, friends and fellow parishioners attended the Funeral Mass for Helen Glatzel who passed away on June 29. She is survived by her husband, Alfons. Together, they were Parish Family Group Coordinators for many years.

When speaking at Helen's Requiem Mass, Helen's three children told of her travel to Papua New Guinea as a newly qualified teacher and working there for some time. It was in PNG that Helen met her future husband, Alfons. Her children also spoke of Helen's dedication to her children, grandchildren and, of course, Alfons. Once the children were older and at school, Helen went back to teaching and also taught English to migrants.

Helen was very involved in her Parish, being part of various groups and helping with cake sales, etc. to fund-raise. Helen faced life's challenges head-on. For example, getting the children off to school in uniforms and with stationery on the day after their house burnt down! This dire event did not prevent her from having a meal ready for them that night and insisting they still do their homework- they had hoped for a few days reprieve!



*\*This is the spirit of Family Groups - We have heard that a Family Group member's son felt confident of, and grateful for, the support that his mother's Parish Family Group showed to his mother in her illness. He was aware that his parents were part of an 'extended family' where the members look out for each other.*



## Happy Birthday Mary!

Mary Ingham, a member of the very first Passionist Family Group, celebrated her 90th Birthday on May 12.

Mary and Leo Ingham of NSW, were members of the very first Passionist Family Group which started in 1973 at St Anthony in the Fields Church, NSW. Subsequently, Mary worked closely with Fr. Peter McGrath cp and a dedicated lay team to establish the PFGM in over 100 parishes in NSW and later in a number of Australia's states. Internationally she was there to assist in England, Ireland and Scotland. Mary was a lay Director of the Movement for many years. Mary always felt her mission in life was to help others in the church get to know one another: fulfilling the Gospel message to "love one another". She and Leo are very caring and active in their own Family Group at St. Anthony in the Fields, Terrey Hills- the parish where it all began 53 years ago.

Mary and Leo are also Passionist Benefactors.



### A 220<sup>th</sup> Birthday!!!

Mary's birthday was part of a celebration of milestone birthdays that was held after Mass in the kitchen at St Anthony in the Fields on Sunday 3rd May.

There were three very special birthdays: Mary Ingham turned 90, Christiane Jobst-Baumann celebrated her 70th birthday, and Deborah Simms a very youthful 60th. These three wonderful ladies have each contributed enormously to the St Anthony's community over many years and continue to do so with generosity, dedication and spirit.

A large crowd gathered to celebrate the occasion. The kitchen was filled with the usual St Anthony's warmth — delicious cakes and biscuits, colourful decorations, laughter and plenty of good cheer. It was a joyful celebration and a fitting tribute to three much-loved members of our community.

-Ted Spooner

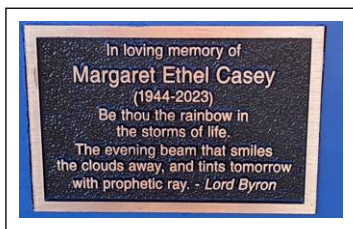


## A Memorial for Marg Casey...Callala Bay, NSW ...from her husband, Paul

The photos show the placement of a memorial bench and plaque for Margaret Casey, Family Group leader for almost forty years, who died in August 2023. (It is very hard to believe it was three years ago. Time can have little meaning.) The bench is on a frequently used pathway on the headland between Callala Bay and Callala Beach and looks out across Jervis Bay to its far distant entrance. Margaret and I swam and walked in this area for some twenty years. You would sometimes see rainbows over the Jervis Bay entrance after a storm, dolphins swimming near you, and the full moon rising over the bay. The complex process of getting Council approval for the bench (at my cost) took several years, with many people giving support to my application. The bench is a place for rest and quiet meditation on the things that Margaret stood for: Lifting up our hearts and finding the threads of a rainbow in our

daily lives. The bench is on a popular pathway, overlooking Jervis Bay on the headland between Callala Bay and Beach where Marg and I swam and walked for twenty years. Sometimes, we would see rainbows after a storm, dolphins swimming nearby and a full moon rising over the bay. It provides a place for rest and quiet meditation on the things that Margaret stood up for: Lifting up our hearts and finding the threads of rainbow in our lives. From Lord Byron, the plaque reads:

*'Be thou the rainbow in the storms of life  
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away,  
and tints tomorrow with prophetic ray.'*



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

**Please send your News/articles and photos to the editor at:**

[pfgm.victas@gmail.com](mailto:pfgm.victas@gmail.com)

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**can be found on our website: [www.pfgm.org](http://www.pfgm.org)**