



PFGM -Team Travelling The Green Lanes of England/Wales/Ireland

October 2013 was **Fr. Peter McGrath's** last trip to England & Wales. I was privileged to be travelling with Fr. Peter spreading the Spirit of the Passionist Family Group Movement. I remember Fr. Peter's favourite song at this time 'Bread and Fishes' by Alan Bell. It is the story of Jesus' Family travelling the green lanes of England. It could also be Fr Peter's story.....

*We're traveling to Glaston down England's green lanes
To hear of men's troubles, to hear of men's pains.
We travel the wide world over land, over sea,
To tell all the people how they can be free.*

I cannot count how many times I have heard that Fr. Peter, in his down to earth way, helped free people. He spent most of his life spreading the Gospel message of Jesus, "To Love one Another".



He did this by promoting his beloved Family Groups.

Fr Pat Munroe from, Our Lady's and The Apostles at Stockport, said in a Parish Newsletter, "I feel that Fr. Peter has been instrumental in lighting a flame of faith and love that will burn brightly and not be extinguished by the dampening clouds of pessimism or cynicism. The charisma (gift) of the Passionist Order to which he belongs, is that of making incarnate the passionate love of the risen Christ in wounded hearts where an increasing number of people feel isolated and long for a true experience of community where the dream becomes the reality."

Four years later, with the team from the Intl. PFGM office (**Barbara & Bob Lunnon, Gwen & Russell Winterscheidt**) I returned to England, Wales and Ireland to continue the support and love to our brothers and sisters in the Family Groups. This newsletter is a joint attempt to capture the spirit and heart of our Family Group Trip.

Our first gathering was held on the 5th May 2017 at **Fr Pat Munroe's** presbytery at **Our Lady's and The Apostles at Stockport**. In true Family Group style Fr Pat started with a prayer and then began a sharing of the many little miracles that have occurred in the groups. The Leaders spoke of the diversity in the groups. One group, with more senior members, meets each Wednesday morning at the presbytery. Another gathers after the Sunday Mass to attend to their garden in the church ground for tea and coffee. This group has

found the garden a wonderful way to involve both the children and adults. Hazel, the Parish Coordinator, and Fr. Pat and many more dedicated people have nurtured as well as encouraged and supported their Family Groups.

On the 6th May, we, were privileged to attend the **Inaugural National Family Group Mass of the Family Groups in England and Wales**, at the **Cathedral Church of Our Lady Immaculate and St Thomas of Canterbury in Northampton**.



The Mass was led by the **Bishop of Northampton, Rev Peter Doyle**. In his homily, Bishop Peter recognised Fr Peter McGrath. He also acknowledged the letter he had received from the **Australian Passionist Provincial Fr Tom McDonough**. In his letter to Bishop Peter, Fr Tom offered congratulations on the life and growth of the Family Groups in England and Wales, from the seeds planted over twenty years ago in so many dioceses and parishes.

Family Groups from all over England and Wales were in attendance and after the Mass, in true Family Group tradition, there was a shared lunch in the Cathedral grounds (yes, the sun was shining down on us).



Many representatives of Family Groups spoke of the benefits in their parish. Their messages were similar to the feedback we so often hear from our Family Groups in Australia and elsewhere. We also spoke about our own experiences and passed on our best wishes from all Family Groups in Australia.

Back on the road we headed to Cardiff and caught up for a night out with the Aussie Coordinators from **Caerphilly. Stephen and Tracey Hoy** were in Family Groups in Australia and moved to Caerphilly. They were instrumental in starting the Family Groups at St Helen's under the guidance of Fr. John Kelly

Next stop was east of London to **St Mary's and The Church of the Holy Family, Ipswich – East Anglia**. What a welcome from our dear friends **John and Penny Cassidy** who opened their home to the four Aussies. We attended a Leaders meeting with **Carolyn and John Doherty** (Co-ordinators) plus the Leaders from this vibrant Parish in Ipswich. We gathered around the table and shared many experiences of their Family Groups.

Over the weekend the Aussies spoke at most of the Parish Masses. **Fr John Warrington, Parish Priest**, was most welcoming and spoke highly of the Family Groups in his parish. This Parish at Ipswich, highlighted to each of us, the richness of having, the Parish Priest, Coordinators and Leaders all working together. Communication at each level, regular Leader's Meetings, meetings between Parish Priest and Coordinators and feedback to the members of the individual groups is vital.



On Sunday afternoon, we all gathered for an afternoon tea. What a wonderful way to hear the stories of the people's experience of their Family Group. Such a confirmation that Family Groups are alive and meeting the needs of their members.

Our next stop took us over the Irish Sea to Dublin. Family Groups were started at **Mt Argus** by **Fr. Peter McGrath and Mary Ingham** in 1999. When Fr. Peter and Gwen returned in 2001 **Fr Frank Keevins** and Coordinators **Yvonne and Hugh Gray** were doing a mammoth job.

We returned in 2017 not knowing what to expect. We had a WOW experience – there are 6 wonderful people Coordinating the Family Groups at Mount Argus. The four Aussies were reminded that we can learn so much from cross pollinating. We found this on the notice board and were blown away.

The Final Judgement Family Group Style

1. I was hungry for company and you talked to me.
2. I was obnoxious and you tolerated me.
3. I was a stranger and you welcomed me into a Family Group.
4. I was feeling overwhelmed by the stresses of child raising and you shared and supported I was seriously ill and you rallied around me. Through the illness our Family Group was brought closer together.
5. I had a baby and you brought a casserole to our home

On the weekend of June 3rd & 4th, Russel and I returned to **St Joseph's at Bromley England**. Family Groups began there in 2015 by an enthusiastic team from Kensington and Ipswich Family Groups with John and Penny Cassidy at the helm. There is no doubt that St Joseph's is a warm and welcoming parish with many young families coming to Mass. The Passionist Family Groups have assisted in bringing people together and building a sense of belonging and knowing one another. Many people have indicated that they want to be part of the Family Groups in the future. The new Coordinator **Gina Clark, Fr Tom McHugh, Deacon Barry and Julia Mellish** and **Lolly** are all working towards re energising the St Joseph's Family Groups. We were grateful for the hospitality and love extended to us during this weekend.



The words in the chorus from the song *Bread and Fishes* will be a reminder to us of our time travelling the green lanes of England, Wales and Ireland.

*With the wind in the willows, and the birds in the sky
There's a bright sun to warm us, wherever we lie.
We have bread and fishes and a jug of red wine
To share on our journey with all of mankind.*

With love,
Gwen Winterscheidt, on behalf of



The Aussie Family Group Travelling Team

June 2017