

History of the Family Group Movement

In 1972, Father Peter McGrath CP was appointed to the tiny parish of St Anthony in the Fields, Terrey Hills, an outer suburb of Sydney. Then only 30 people gathered for the Sunday Eucharist. The congregation grew and by 1973 over 1000 people were attending.

Faced with this expansion, Father Peter formed Family Groups to preserve the original community spirit where people knew each other by name and shared each other's joys and sorrows.

The Family Group Movement, though started in the Catholic church, has now bridged the gap and is ecumenical, being in Anglican, Uniting and Baptist churches. Family Groups are now in over 400 parishes in Australia, New Zealand, USA, UK and Ireland.

In all countries it is seen to be a relevant way for all of us to build Christian community and prepare for the future.

www.pfgm.org

Text courtesy of the Family Groups Movement



Everybody's Welcome aims to facilitate the growth of parish communities where everybody is made to feel welcome, known and loved, where differences are evidently understood and accommodated so far as possible within liturgical and pastoral practices and where local networks of family support and assistance are strong.

The Passionist Family Group Movement is one of a range of strategies adopted or developed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to support the aims of Everybody's Welcome.

If you'd like to pilot Family Groups or simply receive more information about Everybody's Welcome and the resources available to support parishes in becoming more welcoming, more friendly and more family-sensitive, please contact: The Marriage and Family Life Project Office Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX Email: Elizabeth.Davies@cbcew.org.uk

www.everybodyswelcome.org.uk

Passionist Family Group Movement

...a family for all...



By joining a Family Group you will experience acceptance, love, care and support from other human beings. The Gospel message comes alive: 'Love one another as I have loved you'

What are Family Groups?

Have you ever wished that you knew the people you see at church better or could be involved more in parish life? Maybe you've longed for your children to experience what it means to *really belong* to the Christian community?

Most of us find it difficult meeting new people. A parish can be a daunting place to get to know anyone on a deeper level, with so many coming and going within such a short time on Sundays. But Family Groups can help. By joining a group you immediately have opportunities to meet and get to know just a few other families. And once you know them, you'll feel much less alone in that time after Mass. A Family Group is a great way of helping to break down the barriers—especially if you find it difficult to talk with people you hardly know.

What's The Aim of a Group?

It's very simple. Families group together and aim to get to know each other. They try to support each other's joys and sorrows. They involve their children in this Christian sharing, directly, if possible, or indirectly by their example. "Love one another as I have loved you."

Who Will Be In My Family Group?

A Family Group is made up of 10-15 families with a cross section of ages, including some children of the same age—like an extended family. Anyone and everyone is welcome to join, from grandparents to babies. There is room for non-Church attending spouses, one-

parent families and single people, elderly or young.

What Happens in a Family Group?

A group gathers once a month for a meal, a drink or a social etc to enjoy being with one another and gradually to develop supportive relationships. Some gatherings are just for the adults (to give parents of young children a bit of breathing space); while others include children.

Highlights in a Family Group's calendar are a home Eucharist, a weekend away, special anniversaries etc. The groups work together to build the parish community by sharing experiences. This is the way Family Groups live the Faith in the everyday circumstances of their lives.

How Committed Do I Need To Be?

A Family Group is just like a family. The bonds that develop the feelings of belonging create a sense of responsibility for one another. As in any family there is sometimes the need for extra effort. You will get from Family Groups what you put into Family Groups.

What Can I Give To A Family Group?

Yourself. You can give your friendship, support and time to other members of your group. You just have to be yourself. You can sit down and talk, share and listen with others. What you do doesn't really matter. It is **YOU** that matters. Friendships develop and the sense of belonging creates a sense of concern for each other.

What if I'm Single Or Divorced?

Family Groups provide an extended family for all who wish to belong: church-going or not, young or elderly, married, single, separated or divorced. There is a giving and receiving by all members of the group to each other. Everyone has so much to offer.

Do We Have To Be "Holy"?

You just have to be yourself. Many non-Church attenders have found belonging to a Family Group is a great way to become involved in the faith life of their family. Family Groups provide a non-threatening environment for non-Church going partners and friends.

What If I've Already Got Enough Friends?

Well, maybe a group needs you! And if you do have many friends, you don't have to lose them to belong to a Family Group.

Have you ever thought what it is like for the people who are not like you and who don't have many friends? Could it be that they don't stay after Mass because they really don't know anyone to talk to? What if we could create a network where everybody knew at least 10 families? Wouldn't that improve the atmosphere of the parish?