

Sacred Heart Parish, Koorinal



**The heart of
parish life is
community, a
sense of
family.**

Where did Passionist Family Groups come from?

The first Family Group formed in Terrey Hills Parish, Sydney, in 1973. Under the leadership of Passionist Fr Peter McGrath, this very small Parish gradually grew, and with it so did the Family Groups. Marg and Paul Casey together with Maree and John McCausland having heard about the inclusive and supportive aims from various relatives approached Fr Plunkett in 1985 to commence the Family Group Movement in Wagga Wagga. Fr Wilf Plunkett showed great foresight. He supported them all to attend a Workshop at Terry Hills.

Originally, there were eight Family Groups formed within the Parish. Now only Four groups (with about 140 members) remain to contribute to the Life and Liturgy of the Parish. Frs Bernie, John and Jomer were enthusiastic and supported the Aims and Motto of Family Groups.

The Movement has spread to over 400 parishes in 20 Australian dioceses (including parishes in 3 Anglican dioceses). The Passionist Family Group Movement has also spread to U.S.A, U.K, NZ, Ireland, Scotland, Wales.

Is it Social or Religious?

Jesus would have found this a strange distinction, but some people ask the question. When we learn to accept others who are different from us, and when we offer welcome, love and care and enjoy doing it, then God is right there in the middle of it. Many people believe that faith is 'caught' rather than 'taught' and there is a lot of 'faith-catching' in Family Groups.

What is their Appeal?

The major attraction is simplicity and lack of organisational structure. Single people, especially divorced and widowed people, find it welcoming and non-threatening. Partners or non-church goers feel welcome. People feel they are actually living their faith, so church-going comes to mean something entirely different, and it is an involvement for a couple or a family to share together.

Can anyone join?

The simple answer is YES. Anyone and Everyone!
The Family Group motto is "A Family For All".

What is a Passionist Family Group?

Each group has somewhere around 12 families plus single people. In forming the groups, we try to match children of a similar age and a cross section of adults and children so that it resembles an extended family. Each group is encouraged to develop its own flavour while remaining a part of the Parish extension of the Family Group Movement.

What do Groups do?

The emphasis is on building relationships, so the groups are about "being", rather than "doing". Each group is encouraged to get together once a month, sometimes with the children and at other times only with the adults.

These gatherings allow people to get to know one another, and then in natural ways, group members begin to create bonds with others. With the building of bonds comes the opportunity to form friendships, have fun, extend acceptance and support, and quite simply and joyfully, experience Christian life with others. The emphasis is on low-cost enjoyment and allowing everyone to feel a part of the "family".

How can Passionist Family Groups help Sacred Heart Koorinal Parish?

The networking of families has a positive effect on liturgy because more people know each other and more of them are keen to become involved in the life of the parish community.

Many pastoral needs such as serving morning tea after Mass, people visiting one another, or helping each other in practical ways during special times of need, build community life and help people understand what belonging to a church really means.

Family Groups do a great deal to support and encourage the life of the family as well as provide an important sense of family belonging for the many who have lost it through death or marriage breakdown.

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