

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 168

5th May 2023

Greetings,

90 x 3



We had a most enjoyable lunch on Tuesday to acknowledge the 90th birthday of three generous and talented men who have been members of our Friday 'A Team' Joining with their spouses, other past and present 'A Team' members. Denis Travers founded the team which originally consisted of Gerald Wright (Denis' uncle) and his friend Vin Molloy. They were joined soon after by Stan Wells. Noel Spinks (who was present on Tuesday) joined as did John Chubb, John Stretch, Graham Newcombe, Ed Porad and Frank Van den Boom.

Gerald is now 95 five. Jack Brolly (March), Vin Molly (April) and Neville Hackett (May 14th) have reached to 90 mark. We extend sincere Congratulations and best wishes! In acknowledging these three men, we also wanted to thank all our 'A' Team members (past and present) for their wonderful assistance to us: Stan, Noel, John Chubb, John Stretch, Graham, Ed and Frank.

The support from partners is vital, so we acknowledge and thank them too, as we did on Tuesday. There are some honorary members – Bruno who is overseas who was well represented by Cathy, Peter Norman who does so much to assist with maintenance of our grounds, and Vince Celestino who rearranges the grounds so generously with his heavy equipment. We also had Maree Butler, Mayrose and Rose present, who have overseen the Centre and our finances, and Kevin Hennessy who contributed so much to Holy Cross in his eight years as leader of the community.



Every now and then, it is important to also acknowledge the many people who support us in other ways including continual generous financial support. There are as well, the ladies who arrange the flowers each week, Carmen Zammit who cleans the altar linen, Shirley Barnes who cooks voluntarily for us twice a week, Teresa Lim who often does the same on a Saturday night, our liturgy ministers, our Companions and 'Come Away Team', Lien Thai who is a member of our Province Formation Commission and provides support for our Vietnamese brothers and Sr Brigid who continues to support us in a number of ways including the wonderful Prayers of Intercession each week.

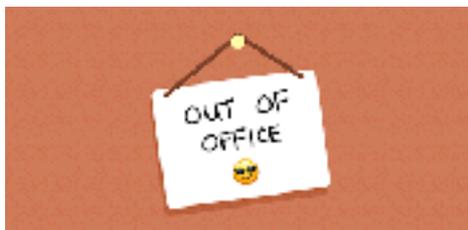


Last week our own Passionist [David Wilke](#) stepped out at age 95 to attend an old boys luncheon in Adelaide. He certainly looks the part!

Rose's trip

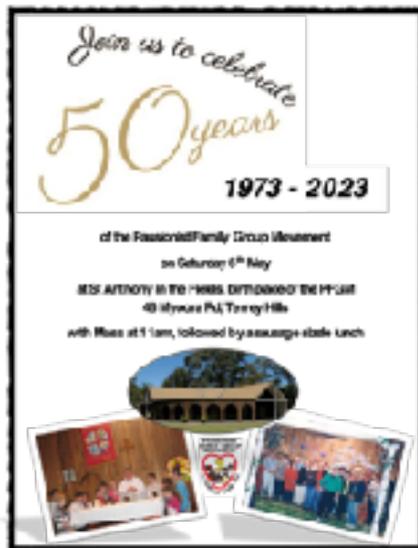
Our business manager, [Rose](#), is heading to Japan this weekend to begin a three week hike on the Kumano Kodo trail which is a UNESCO World Heritage site. On this trail there are shrines that people have visited for thousands of years. Rose has been practising to prepare for what is a obviously beautiful but steep at times and challenging walk. It is sure to be a very special trip for her.

Holiday



From next weekend I will begin a holiday for almost a month. The first thing will be to take a break from emails and switch off for a while. You will be in good hands while I am away. Erick is going to do a 'smaller' version of the newsletter, although I have written something for the next two weeks related to the Passionist Family Groups.

Passionist Family Groups – 50 years



As mentioned last week, the PFG is celebrating 50 years this Sunday in Sydney. What began as a small parish initiative in St Anthony's in the Fields, Terrey Hills grew into an amazingly dynamic Movement that has contributed to life of hundreds of parishes, especially in Australia and New Zealand, but also in the US and UK.

[St Brigid's, Marrickville](#) is celebrating their 30th anniversary of PFG's on Sunday May 7th.

Last week I mentioned that I would include something further in the newsletter. The best place to begin is to explore how the vision of PFG's is so much aligned to the vision of Jesus, and how it expresses so strongly the community aspect of the Passionist charism and our 'down-to-earth' spirituality. When someone asks, 'Who can join a Family Group?' the answer is 'anyone.' Just as Jesus preached and practiced an all-inclusive community, the PFGM has the motto 'A Family for All'. For this week, the article below written some years ago by John Kleinsman offers a clear insight into the PFGM.

God of the Ordinary: Spirituality of Passionist Family Groups

"Elijah was told, 'Go out and stand on the mountain before Yahweh.' For at that moment Yahweh was going by. A mighty hurricane split the mountains and shattered the rocks . but Yahweh was not in the hurricane. And after the hurricane, an earthquake. But Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, fire. But Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire, a tiny whispering sound. And when Elijah heard this, he covered his face with his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then the voice of Yahweh came to him ." (1Kings 19: 11-13)



The surprise in this story is not that Elijah encounters God, but the way he encounters God. The Israelites typically expected God's revelation in the spectacular; through the marvellous, even frightening elements of nature such as mighty winds, earthquakes, lightning and fire. So we can understand, therefore, Elijah's disappointment and concern when the Lord was neither in the mighty winds, nor the earthquakes, nor the fire. Moreover, we can imagine Elijah's surprise when the Lord appears in a tiny whispering sound. The might and power of

God almighty in a tiny whisper? Not at all expected. Too unspectacular. Too ordinary. How easily he could have missed it!

How might this story apply to us and to Family Groups? Well, where do you expect to find God? Ask any Catholic, indeed any Christian, about the traditional ways in which they expect to encounter God. It's my guess that they will all say pretty much the same things: when we gather for liturgy, in our times of personal and group prayer/sharing, or when we study the scriptures. It's true we do experience God in these places and at these times. These dimensions always have been and always will be key to our Christian identity. But Elijah's God and our God is not bound by religious systems or by traditional expectations. Our God is a God of surprises, a God of the unexpected and above all, a God of the ordinary.

The focus of Passionist Family Groups is that we do indeed encounter God and experience God-moments outside the four walls of our churches and beyond the sacred spaces where we spend time in prayer. The spirituality of Family Groups is based around the reality that we encounter



God in the ordinary; in the ordinariness of our daily lives and in the ordinariness of our social relationships. In other words, our relationships with one another - the social - are recognised as a space to meet God - the social is capable of revealing the divine. Sadly, it seems many people find this hard to believe.



We seem more comfortable in separating the social and the spiritual! Perhaps, like Elijah and the Israelites of his time, we have very strong expectations about meeting God only in certain ways. This difficulty of believing that God can be encountered in the ordinary is something Kerry and I experience all the time. Above all it is found in the (very mistaken) understanding that Family Groups, because they seem to focus around social activities, are "just social." We believe however it is only people who fail to recognise God

can be in the ordinary who can possibly have such an understanding.

The notion that God can be encountered in the people around us is a fundamental principle of the Family Group Movement. This logic is also expressed by Jesus in the New Testament many times, most notably in the well-known passage from Matthew's Gospel: "As long as you do it to the least of your brothers or sisters you do it to me." (Mt 25: 40).

Sometimes the need of a person close to us is to



receive practical support by way of meals or other means. Sometimes the response called for is simply to get alongside and listen. Sometimes there is a need for us to grieve with others. Sometimes it is a need to celebrate important milestones such as anniversaries, births or baptisms.

Always there is the need to converse with, understand, accept and love in real, concrete, and ordinary ways. This is what Family Groups are all about. The gatherings in which we share food and drink and play games are the vehicle whereby we build relationships of trust so we can get close enough to people to recognise their needs.

Finding God in their Little Whispers

Let's face it, we all know that as a rule people don't stand up and announce to the world their need for support and help. We prefer to suffer in silence.

At best we are prepared to 'whisper' to those we feel care about us. We will only pick up God's voice in the tiny whisperings of persons when we are able to get close enough to them. Surely, in a time when more and more Catholics seem to be practising their faith "outside the four walls of our churches" there is a greater need than ever to promote movements and structures which recognise we encounter God in a multitude of ways.



- How well do you know the people in our parish community?
- Who are the people in your community who are lonely, suffering or needing support in some way? The fact you don't know of any does not mean that they are not there!
- How are we reaching out to those on the "margins" - to those who do not attend weekly Eucharist?
- Have you thought about getting involved in a Passionist Family Group?
- If you are already involved, are you hearing God in the tiny whisperings?

John and his wife Kerry have long been in leadership roles in the PFGM and John holds a doctorate in moral theology and is based in Wellington New Zealand. He has Director of the Nathaniel Centre for bioethics since 2010 and has been a member of the Province Formation Commission since 200.

The Nathaniel website is: <http://www.nathaniel.org.nz/>

Representation in Sydney



Tina Minichill, as Australian National Coordinator for the PFGM will be present next weekend as will my brother Paul,

who is New Zealand National Coordinator. I came across this photo (left) by accident. Paul and I were a couple of years younger when the photo was taken!

Michael Mangan

Songwriter Michael Mangan (who is a Brisbane PFG) has given permission for his song 'Hearts on Fire' to be used for this 50th celebration. If you belong to a PFG, get a few of your group members together and enjoy this. Some people have already adapted the photos to their own parish PFG's.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-K-pf0TCVvl>

Whale of a time

If you want to get a glimpse of what it is like to spend time together, establish and build relationships and enjoy the talents, fellowship and fun of people you did not originally choose to become your family, but who have now create wonderful harmony and the power of true unity.....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=RKYiTw-dRUU>

A different kind of art done with great patience

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?>

[v=_bqi2qY918M&pp=ygUOVHlwZXdyZXdlbnRlcjBhcnQ%3D](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=_bqi2qY918M&pp=ygUOVHlwZXdyZXdlbnRlcjBhcnQ%3D)

The voice that says, "at the roundabout..."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOLRWJVlsey>

Phil Drew – recovering



There are a lot of prayers being offered for Phil who suffered a serious stroke three weeks ago. Phil has been a long time member of the Passionist family and always will be close to us. Although he is unable to speak yet, he is gradually regaining some comprehension, motor skills and strength.

Phil has always been nothing if determined. This will serve him well as he tackles the tasks that are necessary. His wife Anne, will be a pillar of strength for him.

Mayrose 'big day'

Mayrose will celebrate a zero birthday next Friday on **May 12th**. Perhaps Erick will have a pic to add in next week's newsletter. Congratulations Mayrose and thank you

Deacon John Qi and his parents

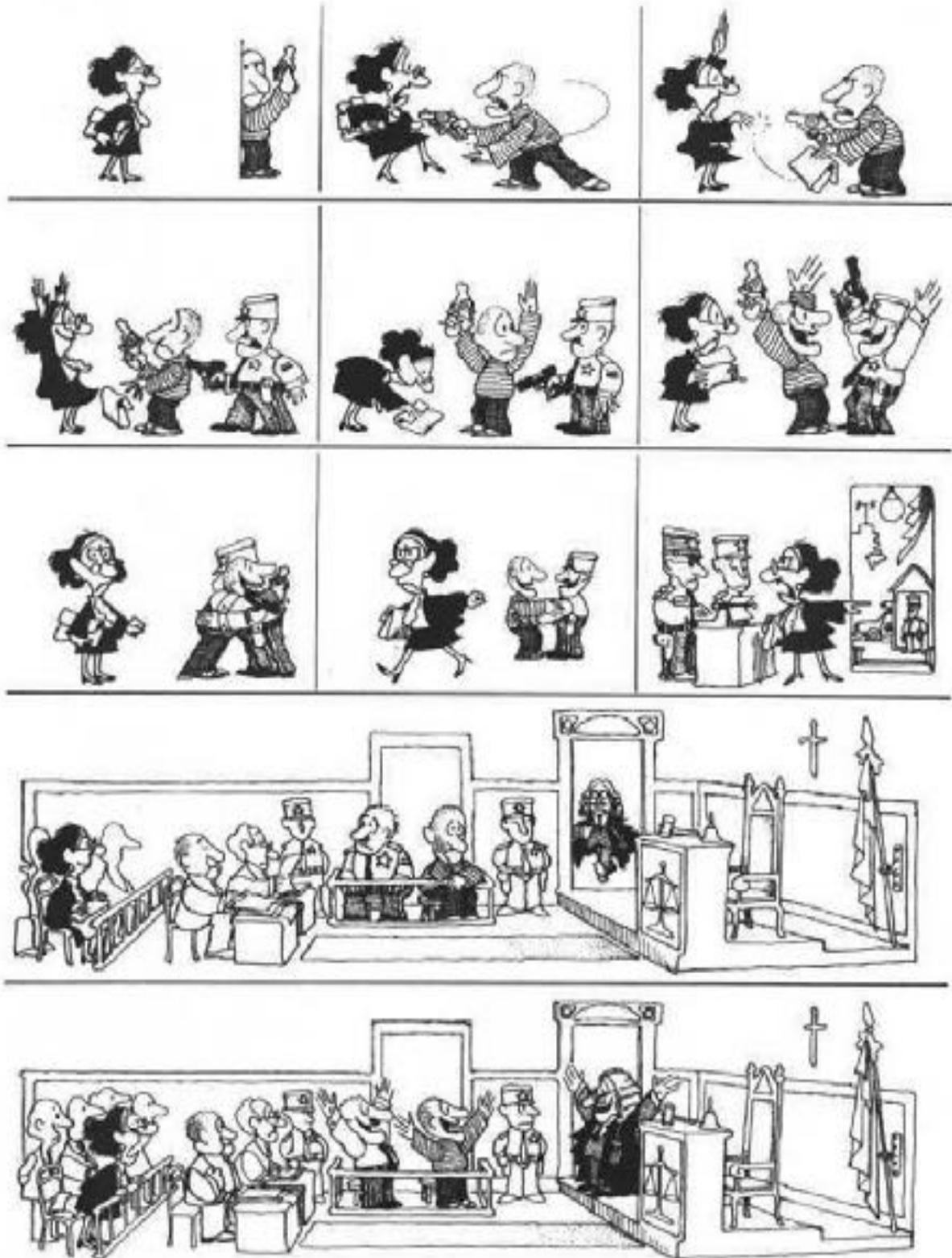






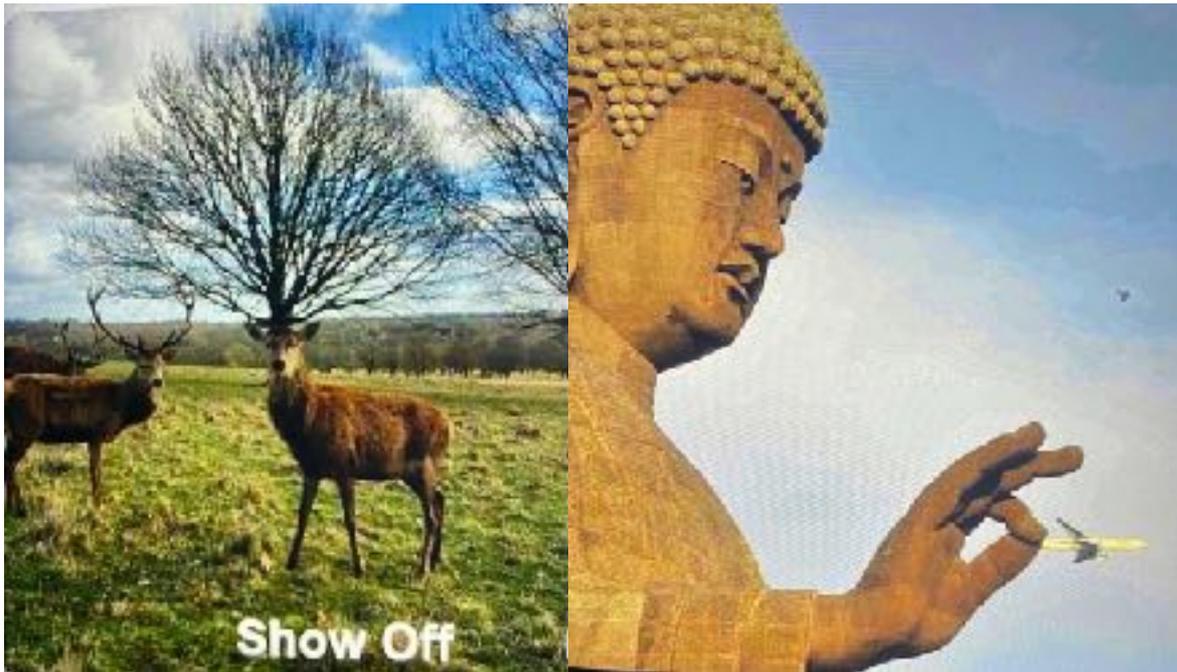
Note that John's mum has an ice-cream!





Important to have friends . . .

Humour



A man took his pig to the vet with a sore leg. The verdict was hamstring trouble!

Mary took tongue sandwiches to the fete - they went very quickly. There was no need for ads - they spoke for themselves

A verbal contract is not worth the paper it is not written on



Humour



Patient to the dentist: "I've broken another tooth,"

Dentist, "Stop eating stone fruit and rock melon

Those who think they know everything, upset those of us who do.

Don't think you are going to pull the wool over my eyes with your yarns.

I dreamt I was marooned on a desert island with six lovely ladies. I was one of them.

Prayers

Ted Hallam has now entered palliative care

Pam Storey remains in hospital with sustained pain.

Gerry Bond is to have delicate vascular surgery next Wednesday

Phil Drew is recovering slowly from a stroke

Agnes Mumburi (Pastor's mother) has pneumonia and has not responded yet to treatment

We pray for Canadian born Bud Thompson who died peacefully on Monday morning. We also remember those whose anniversaries are around this time, and their the loved ones: especially, **John Ryan** brother of Di Baker (5th May), Angelina Pertocco, **Rose Zammit** mother of Maree Bartoli (11th May)



We remember those other people in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially Maree Bartoli, Bronwyn Burke, Gerald & Margaret Wright, Michael O'Callaghan, Lynda Chin, Cathy Petrocco's sister, Marissa, John Lazzari, Alexander Lim, Maeve and John Reardon, Peter Owen, Des Grisell, Helen McLean, Greg Agosta, Errol Lovett, Peter DeMarzi, Chris O'Toole, Angelo Vigilante, Pam Gartland, Jim Monaghan, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Peter McNamara, Marg Casey, Mary Hackett, Patricia

Keeghan, Anne Jenkins, Jerome, Mary and Kate Dunn.

The **Mass link** will be sent on Saturday, by Chris.

Brian