

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 173

9th June 2023

Greetings,



It would be nice to say “I’m back”, but the truth is that I was, and now I’ve gone again (yesterday) to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Passionist Family Groups in New Zealand. There will be special; celebrations over two weekends.

It will be quite special to celebrate in Paeroa which is about 100 kilometres south-east of Auckland this weekend. Steve McGarry and I conducted a mission there in 1979. It was a special experience for a number of reasons including that I met some wonderful couples who have become great friends. It was from that time until 1988 that Lynn Hill began to hound me about “What about these Family Groups?” Maggie (from Ballarat) and Charlie Gribble have been leaders of a PFG in Paeroa all 35 years. They just need to work a bit harder at having fun!



We established the PFGM in Paeroa and in East Coast Bays parish (Auckland) within a week of each other back in 1988, and within eight years there were 100 parishes involved throughout New Zealand. I’ve been blessed to be able to have such a rich ministry with PFG’s in New Zealand for all of these 35 years.

Denis Bergin



Denis and his wife **Jeanelle** are known well to many people associated with Holy Cross and beyond. I first met in 1985 when they were PFG leaders expecting their fifth child, in Bardon parish, Brisbane. They participated in Passionist Institutes and coordinated the Passionist Companions for a while on Oxley, Brisbane. They were also part of the Queensland PFGM Coordinating team. Denis has suffered greatly over the past 15 months and having passed away on June 2nd, Denis is now at peace. It has been a difficult time for Jeanelle, their family and friends. The



wonderful care provided to Denis from Russell Winterscheidt has been inspirational. Rest in peace, Denis.

Bud Thompson



Bud passed away on April 30th. His funeral was delayed until a week ago.

Bud and his wife Carol (both Canadian) started coming to Holy Cross several years ago and became popular members of the 'backrow crowd'. Bud will be missed.

Gerald Wright



Gerald Wright, aged 96, died **peacefully on May 27th**. Gerald requested a simple liturgy for his funeral, and his wish was respected by his nephew, Denis Travers who celebrated the funeral Mass on Monday this week. There was an excellent turn out of Gerald's extended family. Gerald and Vin Molloy were founding members of the Holy Cross 'A' Team and he and Margaret were married for 72 years!

Phi our newest driver



On Monday this week, our brother **Phi** passed his driving licence test, after many months of patient instruction from Peter Norman and Joe Senzo. We are very grateful to Peter and Joe for



the many generous hours of sitting in the passenger seat hoping they and the learner will return to Holy Cross alive and in one piece. They have also been instructing JD (Joseph Dominic) who has his test next week.

'Come Away' days at Holy Cross

Our next Come Away Day will be held on Tuesday 13 June. The theme of the day is "*Seeking and Finding.*" The day's program provides opportunities for prayer, reflection and fellowship in the peaceful grounds and facilities at Holy Cross. All are welcome. BYO lunch. You are invited to contribute financially to the day according to your means, with a suggested donation of \$25 per person as a guide. Registration is from 9.30am. The day concludes at 2pm with a celebration of the Eucharist. For further details contact Frank Burke burke.frank942@yahoo.com.au

PFG's

The story of St Paul and the Passionist Family Groups continues this week, as the above mentioned celebrations take place in New Zealand.

Paul's churches and Passionist Family Groups (Part 3)



Paul's first trial was adjourned and he spent two years in custody with visitors granted free access. A newly appointed procurator finally heard the case. Following an appearance before King Herod Agrippa who found him undeserving of imprisonment, Paul was sent on to Rome. He knew from Aquila and Priscilla the relationship between Judaism and Christianity was the principal danger to unity of the church in Rome. He had given great thought to this and he wrote a long letter to the Romans which had been despatched through a deaconess named Phoebe.

On route to Rome, Paul was allowed to disembark and visit friends where the ship stopped at places Paul knew. Fierce winds wrecked the ship off Malta, but everyone reached safety. The governor of the island extended the group his hospitality for three months before they set off in the spring. Paul was allowed to spend a week with the Christians in Puteoli two hundred and fifty kilometres from Rome.



On arriving in Rome he spent at least two years in lodgings where he was able to welcome people and promote the gospel. Since nothing is recorded after this, it seems that Luke, the writer of Acts saw Paul's work accomplished in bringing his vision to the church in Rome. During this time either he or a disciple wrote his 'captivity' letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon).

This reasonably detailed description of Paul's travels and activities, highlights that as he travelled throughout the Mediterranean, Christian communities sprang up, consolidated and multiplied. In preaching the message of Jesus that bound men and women to one another and to God, he led his converts into a personal relationship with one another.



For Paul, to embrace the gospel was to enter into community. He used the word ekklesia sixty times in his letters and it was his favourite way of referring to his communities. Ecclesia was commonly used to refer to meetings or assemblies of

people. When he referred to his Christian assemblies (ekklesia) or churches, Paul always referred to a local church or to churches in a local area (eg "the churches in Asia" (1 Cor:16-19). He understood all these churches as having a unity. Paul would have called a Family Group 'the ekklesia'.



It seems that 'the church' in Ephesus met in the house of Paul's co-workers, Aquila and Priscilla (1 Cor 16:19). Paul mentions (1 Cor 14:23) that "the whole church (in Corinth) came together". This suggests that this didn't always happen and that the people usually came together in smaller groups. Unlike Paul's other letters, the letter to the Romans is not addressed to 'the church'. This suggests

that the Christians in Rome did not have an identity yet as a 'church'. Guild membership was strong in Rome, so domestic and common work groups as well as house-churches existed but did not come together as one church. That different types of churches existed is evident, because they were founded by different apostles or missionaries. Paul did not visit and work among churches that had been founded by others, except on his final 'visit' to Rome.

It was customary for groups of the time to rely on patrons, to financially support them. From Paul's writings it is clear that this was the case for the early Christians who met in homes. It was to be 300 years before special buildings were constructed for Christian gatherings. Even then, they were modelled on the type of room into which guests were received, in the typical Roman and Greek household which limited attendance to about thirty people.



Presumably, the house churches in Paul's communities were even smaller than this. Sometimes, when a household converted, some members would have made their decision to maintain family 'solidarity'. This resulted in there being different levels of commitment within families and communities. There were some groups formed in households headed by non-Christians. Converts were joined to an existing household and it is clear that there were different households within the one city. Paul saw outsiders as potential insiders and emphasised that members were to become a family.

Paul initiated and encouraged contact between local churches but his primary emphasis was on building personal relationships, rather than creating something with an institutional character. Bonding occurred through the exchange of letters

from their apostle (2 Cor 4:16), visits of individuals to other groups (Rom 16:1), sending financial aid (2 Cor 8-11-13), praying for one another (2 Cor 8:14) and passing on news and greetings (1 Cor 16:19; 2 Cor 13:13; Phil 4:22).



These same exchanges have been occurring within our Passionist Family Groups for many years. During the first decade, a regular publication, 'The Family Connection' was sent regularly to local parish co-ordinators. Letters or newsletters from the Directors were sent to local leaders. Professed Passionists, lay Directors and other co-workers established groups, visited parishes, attended meetings and addressed or spoken with groups of co-ordinators.

Directors (now referred to as National Team Coordinators) and Regional Coordinators undertook the same work begun by Professed Passionists. Many people have contributed to the establishment or support of Passionist Family Groups in 'new' parishes. Because bonds have been created, some people have made hospital visits to people from other regions and attended funerals in other parishes. Some shared holidays together. Regularly, and especially at annual formation weekends, people exchanged helpful ideas and stories.

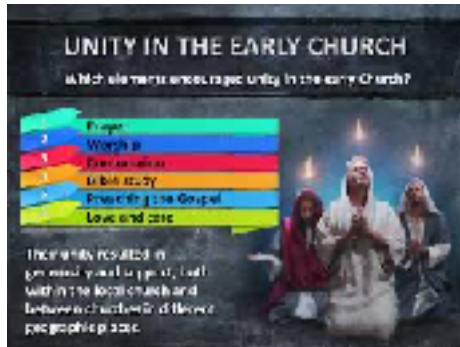


In Paul's letters he talks of the Eucharistic meal but he makes no mention of an official celebrant (priest). This might seem strange, considering the emphasis the church later gave to these matters. Paul did highlight the importance of proclaiming the Lord's death worthily' each time they celebrated Eucharist. It can be presumed that the early Christians followed the Jewish custom of the leader of the household presiding over the meal. In some cases this host or patron would have been a woman.

It is clear that Paul would not allow the common meal to become a source of disunity as had happened in Corinth, and he gave firm directions to avoid this. Eucharistic and other common meals were not the only meetings that the churches held. Throughout Paul's letters there is mention of a variety of meetings, such as building up the community (1Cor14:12;26), sharing gifts (Acts 20:7-12), disciplining (1 Cor 5:4-5), settling disputes (1 Cor 6:5f),



praying during a crisis (Acts 12:5) and gathering leaders (Acts 20:17ff). The structure obviously varied from meeting to meeting and from one church to another, though traditional formula, psalms and scripture readings had their place (1 Cor14:26; Col 3:16; Eph 5:19; Rom 1:3-4).



Paul's sense of order came from the attitude of the members towards one another rather than from an imposed common structure. The cohesion of his groups was achieved through personal contact, not corporate organisation. Paul called on the Jerusalem church to avoid division (Gal 2:1-10), and he asked the Gentiles to support the Jerusalem church (and to acknowledge that they had started it all). At the same time, the other churches were not subservient to the Jerusalem church nor controlled by it.

There are three dimensions of Paul's communities that highlight how they fitted in to the emerging communities of that era. First, they were voluntary associations with regular gatherings of like-minded people. Second, they took their character from the household unit where one experienced personal identity and intimacy. Third, they had a vision of universal and eternal fellowship which was central to Jesus' message and vision. Despite the advantage of this over other community models, that there is only a secular word (ecclesia) used to describe meetings, and that they met in ordinary households, gives evidence to Paul's appreciation that every part of life is 'religious'.



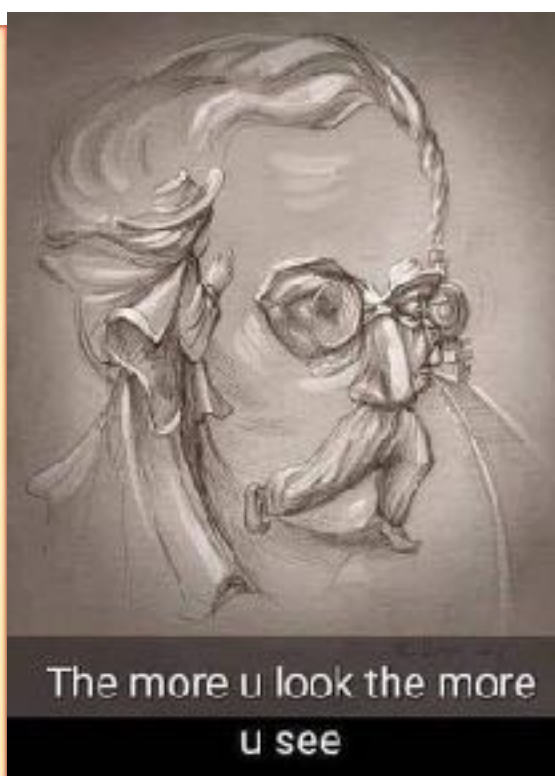
For Paul, it is through meeting, that the community comes into being and is continually recreated. So often priests or laity have referred to Passionist Family Groups as 'just social' or non-religious, instead of seeing that the relationships between the people are sacred; that their care of one another grows from these relationships and that groups are formed within a Christian environment that promotes the kingdom of God (A Family for All). The three dimensions of Paul's communities accurately describe a Passionist Family Group: a) belonging is voluntary; b) their character is based on the household unit of personal identity and intimacy and c) the vision of a 'Family for All' is akin to the universal fellowship which was central to Jesus' message and vision.

To be continued....

Notice

Fr Gerald (currently PP at Donvale and East Doncaster) will take up a new role as PP at Rowville and Scoresby. From July 19th. Fr Toan Nguyen (ordained in 2017 and currently assistant at Craigieburn will become Administrator at Donvale and East Doncaster, from August 9th.

Humour



A woman visited her husband in prison. Before leaving, she told the correction officer; you shouldn't make my husband work so hard. He's exhausted! The officer laughed and said, "Are you kidding? He just eats and sleeps and stays in his cell". The wife replied: "Rubbish, he just told me he's been digging a tunnel for month!"

A daughter wanted a pet spider for her birthday. So her father drove her to the pet store and picked one out. The owner said, "that'll be \$200 please." The father said, " \$200!! It' would be much cheaper getting one off the web".

A student asked: "Teacher, would you punish me for something I didn't do?"

The teacher replied: "Of course not".

The student said: "That's great, because I didn't do my homework"!

- I'm so good at sleeping. I can do it with my eyes closed.

- I told a chemistry joke, there was no reaction.

- What's the most terrifying word in nuclear physics? Oops!

- A man got hit in the head with a can of Coke. His father said, "Thank goodness it was a soft drink".

- Don't you hate it when someone answers their own questions? I do!

A young teacher is surprised by his students

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=nbzN85ufutE>

Prayers

We remember those who's anniversaries are around this time and their families.



We also remember those in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially Salvatore Rao who is dying (father of Mirella) Pam Storey, Maree Bartoli, Bronwyn Burke, Michael O'Callaghan, Lynda Chin, Gerry Bond, Marissa (Cathy Petrocco's sister), Alexander Lim, Maeve Reardon, John Lazzari, Des Grisell, Peter Owen, 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, Mary and Kate Dunn., Fr Gerald Quinn CP, Fr Brian Gleeson CP, Anne Jenkins

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