

Holy Cross Retreat



Letter 175

23rd June 2023

Greetings,

It is good to be back home, despite the weather being much colder than two weeks ago.

Chris



Chris has been invited to conduct a retreat for the Passionists in Ireland at the Tobar Mhuire Retreat and Conference centre in Crossgar, set in 60 acres of woodland, just a half hour drive from Belfast. So one comes home and

another goes away!

PYRT



Last week three members of the Brisbane based Passionist Youth Retreat Team, including their leader, Tom Warren, were in Melbourne, based at Holy Cross to conduct some youth retreats. Next Thursday, Phi and Tri will head to Brisbane to work with the team over a little less than three weeks.

ELSPM

Yesterday there was a graduation of students from our Passionist English Language Study Centre, which included our postulants Thang and DJ, who will be returning to Saigon in mid-July.

Phi



Phi has been approved by the Provincial and Council to make final profession in Saigon on August 10th. This is great news for Phi, his family and his Passionist brothers, as it is for all our wider Holy Cross community. He has just completed a semester at YTU and acquired his driving licence, so it is 'onwards and upwards' for him.

Pam Storey



For many weeks now we have been praying for Pam Storey. Pam has been in hospital for one hundred days and was allowed home on Wednesday. She faces huge challenges managing at home and the next two weeks will be like 'hospital at home' as she learns how to permanently self-administer intravenous nutrition and tend to other medical needs that require hospital-like attention. Pam has been a long-time associate of Holy Cross, a Passionist Companion for over twenty years and a member of the 'Come Away' team. Please keep Pam in your prayers

Brian Gleeson CP



Over a number of years, I have been told by many people how grateful people were to receive Brian's weekly homily which was sent out with Provincial newsletters. Sadly, Brian can no longer continue this ministry. Having been in recent weeks I've not seen Brian for a while but he is facing a number of health complications, including severe immobility. Please keep Brian in your prayers.

The bravery of driving instructors



I may have missed Peter Norman receiving a much deserved award for his generous and demanding work assisting John Lin, John Qi, Tri, Phi and now JD learn to drive and pass their licence test. Some people describe it as one of the riskiest tasks a person can perform. Erick brought to my attention that our other driving instructor, Joe Senzo was awarded a medal for bravery for this work. While we know Mr Trump would say this is fake news, we have the accompanying photo!

Ordination of Quyen and Thong to priesthood.



Quyen and Thong were postulants at Holy Cross from mid 2016 to mid-2017, so it is great news for all of us to see them progress to this stage of their vocational journey last Tuesday. A story that has lasted from Thong's time here concerned his visit to the optometrist. He had undertaken an IELTS test two days earlier. I advised him what I would sit with him during his interview in case he needed help with his English. The first question the lady asked him was, "When did you have your last eyes test?" Thong replied, "two days ago". The lady was stunned, no doubt wondering why he had come to see her so soon after his last test. I then intervened and said, "Thong she is asking about

your eyes test, not your IELTS test!” After a laugh he revised the time and said, “maybe six years ago!”

Ordination of Cong, Doan, and Tuan Paul to Diaconate



In the same ceremony, these three brothers who are classmates of Phi, were ordained deacons. Because their English was considered sufficient at the time, they did not come to Holy Cross

as postulants to study English at ELSPM. They will come to Australia in two weeks time to gain pastoral and ministerial experience as deacons and stay for 12 months. Cong will be appointed to Oxley, Doan to Marrickville, and Tuan Paul (TP) to Endeavour Hills.

Visiting our brothers



Joseph Dominic (JD) visited our brothers, **Chris Mithen** and **Gerald Quinn** in Nazareth House yesterday. When he called in on Gerald, JD was surprised to find **Peter Addicoat** there. Peter was over from Hobart for a funeral and was visiting his previous community members. JD very much enjoyed visiting Chris and Gerald, which is so much easier for him now that he has a licence.

The start of Passionist Family Groups in New Zealand in 1988

I discovered last week while in New Zealand, that most people did not know how the PFG's got started in NZ, and especially about the experience in Otara described below which some might see as having been a nudge from God.



Fr Peter McGrath, the founder of the Passionist Family Group Movement was Provincial when he appointed my brother Paul and myself to our community in Oxley, Brisbane in 1985. Peter asked us to assist with the slowly developing PFGM in Brisbane. Many parishes were asking: ‘How can we go about building

community?’ In time, the number of parishes who set up PFG’s in Brisbane and Lismore diocese in Northern NSW, increased rapidly. We attended six weekly leader meetings in every parish, for several years.

Other Passionists came to assist and gradually many lay people began to see themselves as missionaries. We held formation days and weekends for leaders, co-ordinators and others who were interested.

A new development occurred in 1987 when Grafton parish started PFG’s with fifteen groups. Meeting informally with 15 couple and allowing everyone to share and receive support, required a new structure. This need was extended the following year when Port Macquarie parish began with twenty-two groups. There had been great expansion between 1985 and 1988 and since the Family Group concept was unique to Passionists and reflected our charism, it was decided in 1988 to rename the Movement, the Passionist Family Group Movement.



In early 1988 a request came from Lynn Hill to set up Passionist Family Groups in Paeroa, New Zealand. Lynn said there was a lot of excitement following the ‘Renew’ programme and people were keen to establish and meet in small groups. She tracked down Mike and Trish McMahan who had been in a Family Group in Daisy Hill, Brisbane and were now living and working in Auckland.

On June 19th 1988, Mike, Trish and their five children headed off for the weekend to Paeroa to speak at the Masses and share their experiences. On their way home



from Paeroa, some of their children asked Mike and Trish “how is that Paeroa a parish is starting Family Groups and we aren’t”. Before going home, Mike and Trish drove to their presbytery and asked the parish priest (Fr Paddy Collins) if they could start Passionist Family Groups.

The weekend after their Mass talks at Paeroa, Mike and Trish spoke at East Coast Bays and invited parishioners to indicate their interest. The following Sunday, on July 3rd, PFG’s were established in East Coast Bays.

The last week of June 1988 was memorable. On June 27th, Paeroa officially introduced the Passionist Family Group Movement. On June 28th, a Mass was held in Hamilton Cathedral to mark the closure of the Passionist community in Hamilton, our residence in New Zealand. Five days later East Coast Bays introduced Passionist

Family Groups to their parish. I was fortunate to be present at each of those three celebrations.



The decision to spread to New Zealand was taken with some caution. There some were Passionists and PFGM leaders in Brisbane who thought it a big risk to establish groups and support them from Australia. We went to New Zealand wondering whether we really should be there.

I asked a married couple, Peter and Leonie Macrae to help us and they brought their two children, with him. Ever since the start of the Family Groups in Bardon, Family Group people in Queensland had been singing a song, 'Welcome to the Family' by Debby Kerner and Ernie Rettino. It was planned to use the song when PFG's were set up in Paeroa and East Coast Bays.

Neither Peter or Leonie had been to New Zealand before and high on their list of things to do, was to hear some Maori singing. I took the family to the largely Polynesian primary school of Otara, Auckland, where he had conducted a parish mission in 1979, the same year as we conducted a mission in Paeroa. Unfortunately, that nine-year gap meant that I was unable to locate any of the Mill Hill priests or school staff leaders that I had met during the mission.

Disappointed, we made their way to the car when I noticed a group of school children walking to the parish church. They were being led by a guitar carrying teacher. I followed the group to the church and asked the teacher if he would mind us listening to the children singing. The teacher said "they are not very good, and they are just learning some new songs today". Convinced that 'not very good' Polynesian children would seem very good singers to a group of Aussies, I led the Macrae family into the foyer of the church and closed the swinging doors so that we would not distract the children.



As we looked at the various posters at the rear of the church, we suddenly heard the children reading the words from an overhead projector to the first song the teacher had requested them to learn. We looked at one another in astonishment.

**Welcome
to the
Family**

These children were learning the very song that PFG members in Paeroa and East Coast Bays were going to be taught in a couple of days' time. *"Welcome to the family, we're glad that you have come to share your life with us, as we grow in love and, may we*

always be to you what God would have us be, a family always there, to be strong and to lean on.....”



Peter looked at me and said “I think we are being told something; I think we’re meant to be starting Passionist Family Groups in New Zealand”. I was overcome that not only were they singing that song, but that they were learning it and singing it for the first time. I could only nod my head and say “God is here with us’.

“May we learn to love each other more with each new day, ay words of love be on our lips in everything we say. May the Spirit melt our hearts and teach us how to pray, that we might be a true family”.

St Paul’s churches and Passionist Family Groups (Part 5)

This year we are celebrating 50 years since the PFGM began (in Terrey Hills parish, Sydney) in 1973 and 35 years since the Movement began in three different New Zealand dioceses (Paeroa, Hamilton, (East Coast Bays, Auckland, Melville, Hamilton and Whanganui, Palmerston North.



Over the past forty years, new roles developed as the PFGM grew and expanded into new areas. Much like St Paul's missionary band, coming from diverse areas, these teams shared a common task but not a common life. It was quickly identified that it was crucial to have a suitable ‘leader couple’ for each group, to assist in keeping to aims and goals of the Movement alive; to help group members to plan regular events and to respond to each other’s everyday needs.



Having a couple committed to the role of parish coordinator also became crucial. Usually, this role has been exercised by a married couple. As the PFGM spread to new areas, regional co-ordinators were appointed to support, encourage and guide a small number of parish coordinators and their group leaders. Formation for these roles and for all of these people was provided.

Initially, professed Passionists oversaw this regional coordinating, but beginning in 1990, lay people began to assume the role of Directors of an area, which usually included a number of dioceses. Again, most of these roles were exercised by couples, who, like the regional and parish co-ordinators, unanimously found sharing

this ministry was a great gift to their own relationship. A huge number of co-workers exercising these roles reflected many parallels with St Paul and his co-workers.



Paul and his teams tried to guide and nurture the small communities they founded. Personal contact was critical for achieving this. Some visits were brief and others were lengthy. Writing letters in response to particular difficulties was one way this personal contact was maintained and we are fortunate to have some of this correspondence from 2000 years ago. Special delegates were sent to establish and support new churches, and Paul frequently mentioned in his letters that these communities were constantly in his prayers.

Paul's fellow-workers or 'labourers' were instrumental in founding a church and then maintaining personal contact with that church and with Paul. Establishing a church seems to have depended upon a prior cell, much like the way the Family Groups have been established within existing parishes. People like Epaphras established the church in Colossae (Col 1:6,7) and maintained contact with Paul about its progress.

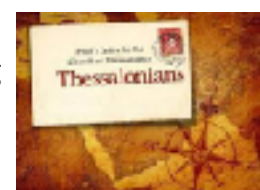


Passionist lay teams have repeated this kind of activity, gradually over several years taking on every aspect of establishing and supporting a new PFG parish without the need of a professed Passionist's presence. This is a model highlighted by Vatican 2 and practiced by Paul and his co-workers in the early church. In some of his churches, people were designated to bring news of the community's progress to Paul. Sometimes they gave financial aid to him or to churches in need. This enabled their ministry to continue (eg. Phil 2:25).



The position that Paul's helpers had in the communities they worked for, was not guaranteed by anything other than their ministry itself, and obviously in some cases they had to earn the respect of the local community. Paul sent Tychius to Colossae, Timothy to Philippi and Thessalonika and Titus to Corinth on a temporary basis and asked that they be accepted.

This strategy ensured sound support and follow up for the communities and it provided personal, rather than structural links between the various communities. It sought to individually develop groups through missionary service, rather than building an organised super structure. Paul strived to encourage his communities in a fatherly tone. Sometimes he indicated that further faith education was needed (eg 1 Thess 4:13ff). In writing



to the Thessalonians, Galatians and Corinthians, Paul adopted an authoritative tone.



Paul did this because he wanted to correct serious departures from basic gospel teaching, and because disunity had developed. Sometimes he gave clear directions to the communities (1 Cor 11:34; 16:1) but generally he 'urged' or 'appealed', rather than commanded. A classic example is his famous appeal of

love.

Some Directors were uncomfortable using that term, especially as directing became a less practised part of supporting parish leaders. A change in structure was proposed and is now in place whereby in Australia there is a national co-ordinator with an officially appointed national team and in New Zealand a national co-ordinator accountable to PFGM trustees who works with regional teams.

The Directors and now the National Co-ordinators and their teams, have exercised their ministry in a similar fashion to Paul and his teams. Regional Co-ordinators convey relevant information about local parishes back to a member of the National Team. These teams remain in regular contact and where possible they and the Australian and New Zealand National Coordinators gather to share experiences annually or biennially.



A large number of people have assisted in the founding of Passionist Family Groups by speaking to parish priests and pastoral councils or with groups such as school parents. Some have spoken at parish Masses or conducted the set-up information session. Others have assisted by briefing potential parish or group Co-ordinators on their roles. On set-up day, people have come from other parishes to share their experiences and offer assistance. Some have assisted in an administrative capacity, making telephone calls, writing letters or sending correspondence, arranging travel, booking venues for activities, buying and preparing food for leadership formation weekends and much more.



This band of helpers enabled the Family Groups to spread and be maintained throughout Australia and New Zealand. The generosity of many couples who carried out this ministry for decades, is astounding. As with Paul's communities, difficulties

have arisen, but with so many generous labourers, the groups have been able to negotiate these challenges.

There will always be challenges. Just as Paul made the radical choice to go to Asia, a



major concern at one time, was the tension between extending to New Zealand and other areas where new areas where parishioners or parish priests were requesting to join the Passionist Family Group Movement while there was a need to offer proper support to those groups that had been recently established.

The PFG's first went to New Zealand in June 1988, and spread to 80 parishes in six years. That could not have happened if a lot of people in Australia and New Zealand had not been prepared to extend themselves. Interestingly, some historians today speculate whether if Paul had not undertaken his incredible journeys Christianity would ever have expanded beyond a small Jewish sect!

=Structures need to be continually assessed, so that the work load is spread, and workers are not overburdened. For the first few years it was necessary to continue to call on people to help who were already heavily committed. Their generosity enabled this wonderful work of God to continue. Many can quite rightly claim to have been missionaries in the same sense that Paul's co-workers were.

Paul had an extensive band of helpers. Jesus, too had such a band. Apart from 'the twelve', there were seventy-two others he sent to towns ahead of him, and others, including women, who travelled with him. Surely this model teaches us something. Gifted people can assume responsible roles freeing others to attend to other local needed.



At this very time, it is difficult to attract people to PFG leadership roles, and while there are good reasons for this including ageing, we still need to appeal to people's generosity and the missionary call that Pope Francis is showing defies age.

It took years for Paul to return to some communities he founded, and imprisonment prevented him from making visits to his churches. Some of his letters would have taken weeks to get to their destination. The envoys Paul sent in his place were crucial to the support and guidance the local churches needed.





We still need envoys who carry the Passionist Family Group spirit and bring encouragement and challenge to different areas. The vitality of our enterprise depends on more people sharing the PFGM spirit. In this era of diminishing and ageing clergy we have the opportunity to model an effective way of carrying out lay ministry.

After Paul died, the churches carried on his work. The PFG founder, Peter McGrath died in 2018 and the work he began is continuing. More and more of those undertaking PFG ministry at present, will be unable to do so in future years. We want to actively encourage the lay ministry that is already alive in this Movement, by seeking younger people to be involved at every level and to continue the missionary aspect of Family Groups

The shape of most groups reflects the ageing of parish communities and does not yet well enough reflect the migrant families who could contribute so much and benefit themselves, from belonging. Hopefully people will come to recognise more clearly how they are 'being the church' by belonging and contributing to a Passionist Family Group within a local parish community of whatever denomination.



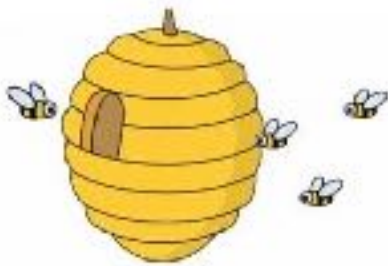
To conclude next week



Humour

**Where did Noah keep
the bees on the Ark?**

wife and jelly beans



In the Ark hives.



**"YOUR CALL IS VERY IMPORTANT TO US,
SO PLEASE CONTINUE TO HOLD."**





Barry, a rich man living in Darwin, held a party. To liven things up he put a 5 metre crocodile in the pool and said he would give a million bucks to anyone to jump in and swim to the other end. There was a splash and Barry's mate Lenny was thrashing around in a bid to outswim the croc. Lenny would have broken the world record for 25 metres as he launched himself out of the pool with the croc snapping at his heels.

"Well done, Lenny, here's a cheque for \$1 million," Barry said.

"I don't want it," Lenny wheezed, not looking happy.

"But you won it. Here, take half a million". Barry said.

"No forget it," said Lenny.

"Come on, I insist. You must want something for that incredible effort," Barry said.

"OK, I would like something" Lenny said. "I want to know who pushed me in".



The beekeeper is in Ireland, but his bees keep doing their work.

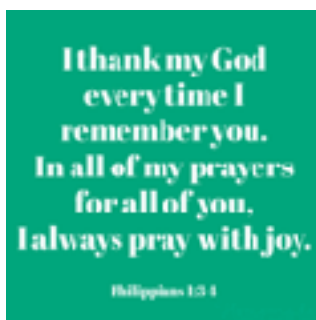
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| Q. What is a bee's favourite novel? | A. The Great Gats Bee. |
| Q. What would a bear be without a bee? | A. An ear! |
| Q. Why did the bee go to the dermatologist?. | A. Because it had hives |
| Q. Why was the bee hard to understand? | A. Because it was a mumble bee |

Prayers

We remember those who's anniversaries are around this time and their families, especially [Carlo Deprato](#) and [Alberto Ottaviani](#) (25th June), [Gemma Scapin](#) (28th June), [Brenda Roberts](#) (29th June)

We also remember those in our Holy Cross family who are unwell, especially:

Pam Storey, Lynda Chin, Alexander Lim, Maree Bartoli, Michael O'Callaghan, Cathy Petrocco's sister, Marissa, Gerry Bond, Bronwyn Burke, Jim Monaghan, Phil Drew Peter Owen, Des Grisell, Maeve Reardon, John Lazzari, Helen McLean, Greg Agosta, Angelo Vigilante, Errol Lovett, Peter DeMarzi, Marg Casey, Pam Gartland, Chris O'Toole, Sr Gen Walsh RSC, Mary Hackett,



Anne Jenkins, Patricia Keeghan, Peter McNamara,
Brian Gleeson CP, Gerald Quinn CP, Mary and Kate Dunn.

The **Mass link** will be sent by Chris [from Ireland](#)

Brian