

# Passionist Family Group Newsletter – 14 June 2026



## Reflection

As I come to the end of five years serving as National Coordinator of Passionist Family Groups, I do so with both sadness and joy. I feel sadness that I have not been able to do more, and at times I have carried a sense of failure in trying to encourage people to persevere and to keep faith with the spirit and vision of Passionist Family Groups. Yet alongside that sadness is deep gratitude for all that has been shared, nurtured, and sustained during this time.

We live in an age marked by individualism and polarisation, and in such a time it can be difficult to believe in, or live with, a strong sense of community. When Clare, Lucy, Sam, and I moved to Greytown in 2017, I initially felt that we were outsiders. I was wrong. The local Catholic community welcomed and accepted us, and before long we had formed friendships that gave us real support and a deep sense of belonging. It was out of that experience of belonging that I travelled throughout Aotearoa in my role as National Coordinator, seeking to support and encourage Passionist Family Groups. There were many blessings, but there were also challenges, and after Covid things became harder. People were more fearful of gathering, and the work of building community was too often set aside.

For me, that only confirmed and continues to confirm how much community is needed now more than ever. I accepted the challenge of staying connected with Passionist Family Group members around Aotearoa, hoping to strengthen the sense that we are among friends, part of something like an extended family. Again, and again, however, I heard the same refrain: we are ageing, we are tired, we have done our bit. Many people felt unable even unwilling to step into coordinator roles, and that reality has weighed heavily on groups that are trying to continue.

Group and parish coordinators have often felt left in the lurch, with expectations resting on them to keep things going even as their own energy begins to fade. That has created understandable frustration, especially for those who would like to step back for a while but feel there is no one ready to take their place. Even so, I remain deeply thankful for those who have continued to care, communicate, and serve so faithfully. I hope that their example will be seen and heard, and that others will be inspired to reach out, offer support, and share the responsibility of keeping these communities alive.

This need reaches far beyond Passionist Family Groups. Across our society and within our parish communities, people long to connect. Every effort matters. A conversation, a phone call, a visit, a text, or a message is never wasted; each one is an opportunity to rebuild and strengthen the bonds between us. This is why I have always seen my role as one of support and encouragement: reminding people that age is no barrier to being family. We may slow down, but we do not lose the gifts and talents that help create connection and belonging. Each of us can continue to contribute, whether in small ways or large.

We hear many experts speak of a current loneliness epidemic; despite all the modern tools we have for communication. Even places that seem to offer natural opportunities for connection, such as retirement villages, can still become places of withdrawal if people do not feel able to reach out to one another. The problem is not simply whether people are near each other; it is whether they feel known, welcomed, and valued.

The same can be said of social media. We are constantly shown what others are doing, wearing, buying, or achieving, and yet many people feel more isolated than ever. For many young people especially, these endless comparisons can deepen anxiety and create a painful sense of not being enough. What is presented as connection, can leave people feeling even more alone. That is why intentional, grounded, face-to-face community remains so important.

That is why I am both amazed and humbled by what Passionist Family Groups continue to offer and build. This is not a programme with a beginning and an end. Rather, it is a way of living that seeks to reflect the spirit of the early Christian community: creating places where people know they belong, and from that belonging are strengthened to reach out to others. This has happened, and continues to happen, whenever life is celebrated, sickness is carried with others, and love and companionship are offered in times of grief and loss.

To me, this is humanity at its best. I am reminded of a line from the film *Conclave*, when an older cardinal asks, "What is the Church?" and a younger one replies, "It's what happens next." That, for me, captures something essential about the spirit of the early Church and the way of Jesus: welcoming people, supporting them in difficult times, celebrating with them in joy, and using prayer and ritual to build strong bonds of faith and love.

So, I continue to work in the spirit of 'what happens next'. My hope is that we will lift our eyes and recognise that, with God and with one another, much is still possible. If we remain open, generous, and willing to reach out, then the future of our communities can still be full of life, faith, and hope.

[https://youtu.be/tlZnKiQz2\\_I?si=thLN3LExPS80aFTS](https://youtu.be/tlZnKiQz2_I?si=thLN3LExPS80aFTS) I believe by Dana Winner

God go with you,

*Paul*

## Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A. June 14 2026

*We are his people, the sheep of his flock*



*O God, strength of those who hope in you, graciously hear our pleas, and, since without you mortal frailty can do nothing, grant us always the help of your grace, that in following your commands we may please you by our resolve and our deeds.*

### LECTIONARY READINGS

**First reading:** Exodus 19:2-6

**Responsorial psalm:** Ps 99(100):2-3, 5

**Second reading:** Romans 5:6-11

**Gospel:** Matthew 9:36–10:8

**Link to readings – [click here](#)**

**This week's liturgy reminds us of who we are, whose we are, what has been done for us,** and then, how we might feel drawn to respond. For the people of Israel, relations with neighbouring tribes always offered tempting religious alternatives. The Exodus story (**First Reading**) was a constant reminder of their covenant with God, in which the whole nation was called to be made holy. St Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, teaching that their concerns should not, ultimately, be about what they are doing for God, but about what God has done, and is doing, for them. (**Second Reading**) That is also a sentiment echoed in this week's **Psalm** – we, the sheep, are beneficiaries of a Good Shepherd who made us, who loves us, who is faithful to us, and to whom we belong.

St Matthew (Gospel) portrays Jesus as the compassionate shepherd of his suffering people. Jesus is concerned not only with their spiritual and practical needs, but also about ensuring there are enough 'labourers' on the ground to reach every 'lost sheep'.

As I pray this week, I might ponder: are there tempting alternatives getting in the way of my own covenantal relationship with the Lord? What has God done for me? What is God doing

for me? And what will God do for me? How is my relationship with the Good Shepherd, to whom I belong? In what ways am I able to labour alongside Christ in today's world?



### **Safeguarding: “Working Together for a Safe Church”**

**Any complaints** should be directed through the National Office of Professional Standards (NOPS) or reported directly to the New Zealand Police or Oranga Tamariki.

**Phone:** 03 365 1993 or 0800 114 622. **Email:** [prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz](mailto:prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz)

[www.safeguarding.catholic.org.nz](http://www.safeguarding.catholic.org.nz)

### **Formation (Adult Faith Education & Spirituality)**

**The Theme for this year's Formations is Nurturing and Nourishment.** Hugh McKay prefers the term "kindness" because it is the only form of human love that does not depend on affection. It is a response to a need, and it draws on our compassion – the quality that stands out most in Jesus' life. Jesus chose to mix with and meet outcasts, inviting them to share his table. His fellowship included everyone – a family for all!

*PJ Harding defines nurturing as what fills your cup, whether that is laughter, fresh air, good food or time with loved ones. In Passionist Family Groups our reaching out and being family to each other brings joy, understanding, service, care and support. It's not just about 'me' but the welfare and nourishment we can give to each other through our love, concern and compassion. This nurturing leads to nourishment of the heart.*

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**Formation Bookings:** Dunedin Parishes 13 & 14 June; Palmerston North 28 June `St Hellier's 26<sup>th</sup> July and 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; East Coast Bays 28<sup>th</sup> July 2026. Ashburton 8 August and Christchurch parishes August 9<sup>th</sup>

### **Report form Br Robert SM for his Passionist Family Group from our Napier Formation and PFG meeting with PP**

*Thank you to Helen, Bill & Alison and Kate who came along on Saturday in support of the PFG lunch meeting with Fr Brian Prendeville and Paul Traynor.*

*The outcome of the meeting is that Fr Brian, who had not encountered family groups in any other parish he has served in, was very pleased to have them active and keen they continue*

*to keep doing what they do. His comment was that nowhere in the bible does it say to stop serving because you are too old. He said whatever we were doing in our PFG's we should keep doing, and not worry about younger people not joining in because it is important people in the groups continue to care for one another. If we invite one or two people to be involved in anything happening in the church, slowly but surely the parish will become more alive.*

### ***Another response from one of our Coordinators in Napier***

*Firstly -Thank you for coming to Napier and offering us such good leadership.*

*When you greeted me I commented that our group no longer functioned as a group after many years of sharing. Your response was would I join another group - reply too busy! The truth as I see it there is no escape from the Passionist Movement and that is why I attended this meeting.*

*The group gathered at this meeting is the ultimate family group. This is the group where the seeds of the Movement were sown in Napier and has yielded such great results - This is the Group to which I will always belong. This is the group our dwindling energy should be going into. We have tried many times to replenish the groups with new young people with little success. I believe that the way is through the children - they are the future.*

*When we look at the Parish situations where are the families filling our schools and coming to church - they are overwhelming immigrants. How do we get the Passionist movement to these families? In my view it is there already but not with that name.*

*In our 3 churches we have groups already functioning - St Patrick's people from the Philippines very active in the church and together socially - St Thomas More Samoans have long been a solid active community group and in St Mary's we have a large Indian group in church and school. These three groups are the church of the future in the Napier Parish.*

*Sorry I have rambled on a bit. I would like to thank you for involving Father Brian our PP it was amazing to hear his comments and see his reaction to the Passionist Family Groups- it is the first time in many years we have had our Parish Priest involved. We are truly blessed to have this wonderful, loving, caring person with us.*

*I kept the author of this anonymous as the message is important.*

*Belong, Behave, Believe*



### *Prayer:*

1. We pray for Pope Leo and thank him for his truth-telling regarding the war in the Middle East and elsewhere. Let us walk the path of peace with him.
2. We remember all those who are suffering as a result of wars and injustices.
3. We are reminded by Pope Leo XIV in his first encyclical to stay strong in the preservation of human dignity.
4. We pray with gratitude for all the men, women and children who have contributed to the life and spirit of our Passionist Family Group Movement over the past 38 years.
5. We pray for many members of PFG's in Whakatane who are seriously ill.
6. We pray to be like Jesus, spending ourselves in the service of others- welcoming, guiding and leading people through care, compassion and forgiveness.
7. We pray for all struggling to live due to the constraints globally impacting our world
8. Let us take up the call of Pope Leo to foster a sense of belonging in our communities. Also to be united in Christ – united in Mission
9. We remember that God calls on us, as people of faith, to offer our voices to help those who have none.
10. Keep in mind all those who continue to struggle with mental health challenges, and their families who support them in their daily lives.

*Please remember in prayer Fr Robert Steele PP in Pukekohe – his brother died recently and now he is expecting his brother Bruce to die, Leonie Christian, Margaret and Graeme Armstrong, Jocelyn Kev Bryant and family, Tim Walsh, Debbie Cotter; Christine and Derrick Scott; Paul, Deb and Nick Kelly, Norma Bellamy and family.*

*Also, please remember, Pat Carson, Graeme Matthews, Di Buckley, Adrian van de Pas and her sons Robert and Dean, Tim Bartells & family, Linda Darbyshire and family in your prayer, Christine Geoghegan's daughter Kate and extended families, Pauline Prendergast, Robyn Burns (Hill)*

*We prayer for each other and our intentions.*



## Humour:

- Why couldn't the tree get on his computer? **Because he could not log on.**
- What's a skeleton's favourite type of road? **A dead end.**
- What did the grape say when it got stepped on? **Nothing, just a little wine.**
- What did the alien say to the landscaper? **Take me to your weeder.**
- Me: "I want to write when I grow up."  
Dad: **"Why don't you left instead?"**
- How many apples grow on an apple tree? **All of them.**
- What did Elvis say to his landscaper? **Thank you for the mulch!**
- Why didn't the lifeguard save the hippie? **He was too far out!**
- What did the mother broom say to the baby broom? **Time to go to sweep.**
- The other day I was attacked by a bunch of circus clowns in a parking lot. **I won though, cause I went right for the juggler.**
- I'd like to shout out sidewalks **for keeping me off the streets**

*Belong, Behave, Believe*



**Have a great week everyone.....**

