

## The Family Group Movement

Have you heard this before? “I wish I could be more involved in our parish” or I wish I really knew some of the people I see in church.” Or maybe you’ve said to yourself: “How can we show our children what it means to be Christian?”



## Changing faces into names and names into Family

Do you find it difficult meeting new people? Nearly everyone does. By joining a Family Group you will be in immediate contact with other families. Once you know them, you’ll find you are able to meet with them after Mass instead of feeling alone. A Family Group is a great way of helping you to break down barriers if you find it difficult to talk with people.

## What are the Aims of the Family Group Movement?

Members aim to get to know other members of the parish. They wish to support each other’s joys and sorrows and so build the Christian Community. They wish to involve their children in Christian sharing directly, if possible, if not, then indirectly by their example. **“Love one another as I have loved you.”**

## Do I have to be Holy?

You just have to be yourself. Many non-church attenders have found belonging to a Family Group is a great way to become involved in the faith life of their family. Family Groups provide a non-threatening environment for non-church going partners and friends.

## Who will be in my Family Group?

A Family Group is made up of 10 – 12 families, with a cross section of ages, including some children of the same age – like an extended family. Everyone is welcome to join, from grandparents to babies. There is room for non-church attending spouses, one-parent families and single people, elderly or young.



## What happens in a Family Group?

The groups gather once a month (e.g. a picnic, barbecue, casserole night, etc) to enjoy being with one another and gradually develop supportive relationships. Some get together just for the adults (to give parents of young children a bit of breathing space); while others include the children. Highlights in a Family Group’s calendar are family weekend camps, Baptisms, First Communions and a special anniversary.

People being able to share their experiences, through the good times and the difficult times, enhance the spirit in the parish community. It is through care and friendship that people are touched by Christian mate-ship. Family Groups live the faith in the everyday circumstances of their lives.

## How committed do I have to be?

A Family Group is just like a family, the bonds that develop the feelings of belonging create a sense of responsibility for one another. As in any family there is sometimes the need for extra effort. As with all aspects of life, you reap what you sow. You will get from Family Groups what you put into Family Groups.

## What can I give to a Family Group?

Yourself! You can give your friendship, support and time to other members of your group. You just have to be yourself. You can sit down and talk, share and listen to others. What you do doesn’t really matter. It is you that matters. Bonds develop and the sense of belonging creates a sense of responsibility for each other. As with your own family, there is a need sometimes to make an extra effort, as with all aspects of life.

## What if I’m single or divorced?

The motto is **“A Family for all”** Family Groups provide an extended family for all who wish to belong, married, single or divorced. There is a giving and receiving by all members of the group to each other. Everyone is welcome to join.



## But I’m already very busy!

Do you spend your busy time with your family? Being in a Family Group will mean that at least once a month you will be sharing an experience with your own family – plus some 10 other families. Is that being to busy?

## What if I've already got enough friends?

Well, maybe a group needs you! And if you do have many friends, you don't have to lose them to belong to a Family Group.

Have you ever thought what it is like for the people who are not like you and don't have many friends?

Many people don't stay after Mass on Sundays. Could it be that they really don't know anyone to stop and chat with? What if we could create a network where everybody knew at least 10 families well? Wouldn't that improve the atmosphere of the parish?



## What about the benefits to the Parish?

Through the interaction with your Family Group, you will also find you are bringing a happy loving spirit to your parish. The Family Groups operate within the parish and as such are responsible for promoting the life of the parish community.

Experience shows that Family Groups are a great asset to the parish, since many people become actively involved in parish life.

## History of the Family Group Movement

In 1972, Father Peter McGrath, C.P. was appointed to the tiny parish of St Anthony in the Fields, Terrey Hills, an outer suburb of Sydney. Then only 30 people gathered for Sunday Eucharist. The congregation grew and by 1973 over 1,000 people were attending.

Faced with expansion, Father Peter formed Family Groups to preserve the original community spirit where people knew each other by name and shared each other's joys and sorrows.

The Family Group Movement, though started in the Catholic Church has now bridged the gap and is ecumenical, being Anglican, Uniting and Baptist churches. School communities are now starting School Based Family Groups. The Passionist Family Group Movement is an International movement being in Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A. and the U.K.

In all countries it is seen to be a relevant way for the Lay people to work with other Religious to build Christian community and prepare for the future.

### For More Information



## Passionist Family Group Movement