



Parish Family

Groups

ST MICHAEL'S PARISH FAMILY GROUP

SUNDAY 11TH MARCH 2018 VOLUME 4

**Q: What Do You Expect of
a Parish Family Group?**

**A: "For the people to love one
another"**

A letter from the Founder, Father Peter McGrath, CP

The question is simple. The answer is simple. The implications are immense.

A well functioning Parish Family Group is an extended family. It provides a nurturing and supportive environment for all its members to grow as Christians. In so doing, the Family Group gives support to each family within it. Whether the family be dual, solo, blended, or whatever, it does this by providing a network of relationships.

The Family Group is open-minded. As in any extended family, the Family Group welcomes new members and mourns the loss of departed members. It maintains a positive, adaptive atmosphere. Therefore, it continues to grow in depth of commitment and love. Being an extended family, a Family Group experiences all the ups and downs of life. It has its own winter, spring, summer and fall; all the emotional seasons.

A Family Group is more than the sum of its parts. It is a basic building block of Christian community, providing a sound foundation for the life of the parish. The Family Group answers the basic need for community- a sense of belonging. It is out of this sense of belonging that the members of the Family Group willingly participate in the life of the parish family and beyond. It is true to say, "One does not fully participate until one feels that they belong." When people are at home in a Family Group, their gifts and graces are revealed. Then they use them within the parish community and, beyond the parish community, in Christian Mission.

Christian education occurs in a Family Group. Barriers are broken down. Families are freed to tell their stories. They discover they have the same challenges. They also share the same values. They learn from each other. There is heartfelt prayer in a loving and supportive Family Group. For the most part, such prayer is very informal and influenced by the rhythm of life. At the heart of this prayer is the Eucharist, whether the intimate Home Mass or the parish celebration.

Hence, it is obvious that a Family Group is far more than social. In fact a Family Group is INCARNATIONAL. The Spirit of Christ, as St Paul says, living in the hearts of its faithful members, is able to work wonders. People are accepted, understood and forgiven. There is true reconciliation. People break bread at a common table. All the Sacraments of the Church from Baptism to the Anointing of the Sick, find a place within the Family Group.

The Family Group is the CHURCH.

Father Peter McGrath, CP

“A Family For All”

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” John 15:12

WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF PARISH FAMILY GROUPS?

- **Get to know other members of your Parish.**
- **Support each other’s joys and sorrows.**
- **Build a Christian Community.**
- **Involve our children in our Christian sharing directly or indirectly by our example.**

Date for your diary!

The launch Session will be held in the Church Hall on **Saturday 21st April** after **6 o’clock Mass.** All welcome!

What can I give to a 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. As with your own family, sometimes you need to make an extra effort. You might not feel like participating but you might just be what someone else needs.

Where does it come from?

The Family Groups Movement was first identified as a valuable resource for parish community building during the Listening 2004 consultation. In 2007 the Bishops’ Conference’s Marriage & Family Life Project Office invited Fr Peter McGrath to help launch several Family Group parish pilots. Family Groups are now running in 17 parishes across England and Wales. The Groups, established between 2007 and 2015, span the dioceses of Cardiff, East Anglia, Liverpool, Nottingham, Salford, Shrewsbury, Southwark and Westminster, as well as Arundel and Brighton. A National Steering Group was convened in October 2014 to establish foundations for the Movement in England and Wales and to support and promote the development of new Family Group pilots. The Steering Group is run by the Family Groups and supported by regional FAMILIAS (Association for Catholic Diocesan Marriage and Family Life Ministry) representatives and a Chaplain.



The Family Group parishes use their dedicated blog *Family Groups in England and Wales* as an online platform for sharing news, pictures, ideas and inspiration. <http://familygroupswales.blogspot.co.uk/>

The Diocese of Arundel & Brighton
Diocesan Pastoral Team
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