

# ST PATRICK'S BREATH OF THE SPIRIT PRAYER GROUP

## Margaret Keast

The Breath of the Spirit prayer fellowship is under the umbrella of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Through Baptism in the Holy Spirit, which is a grace sent by God in our time to 'untie' the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation and reactivate a dynamic witness to faith. We use the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the building up of the Church family.

The group meets each Tuesday at 10:30am. The meeting opens with prayer and praise, then a time of praying in tongues, then silence to listen with our spiritual ears to the direction of the Holy Spirit. The time of silence varies from week to week. A lesson is prepared for the group and given by the leader. A witness is given to the working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Intercession follows and is a very important part of our meeting. Sometimes an entire meeting will be devoted to intercession. There can also be time after this for laying on of hands. The meeting closes with a song of praise. We will welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Pope John Paul said in 1992 as the Catholic Charismatic Renewal celebrated 25 years since its beginning. "I willingly join you in giving praise to God for the many fruits which it has borne in the life of the church. The emergence of the Renewal following the second Vatican Council was a particular gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

To grow in the knowledge of our faith

## Mary McGrath

My name is Mary McGrath and I have been in St. Patricks Parish since 1987. I joined the above parish Prayer Group to help me grow on my faith journey, get to know the Lord and what my role in life is all about. I am constantly learning and everyday realize just how much I don't know, if that makes sense.

One of the first things I experienced was the love for each other and care to be found in this parish. In saying that, I found it necessary to grow in the knowledge of our faith and those around me. Therefore, it was necessary to venture outside our parish to learn from speakers from all over the world. This was made possible by a conference held in Sydney each year called 'Share the Holy Spirit.' The aim of the conference was to start in 1995 and build up to the year of the Millennium. Needless to say it was so successful that it continued on to the present. Unfortunately, our Prayer group no longer exists for the following reasons:-

When we first began the prayer group was organised by Jill Palmer. She was the spiritual director of the group. After Jill attended the first conference, she returned on 'fire' with a flame that we all wanted. The following year we had nine people from St. Patricks attend, the following year, thirteen and so on. Each year it grew to the extent we sometimes needed two buses to take us there. We would stay at St. Josephs College, Hunters Hill, and reside in the boarders quarters as it was holiday time. The various conference sessions would be held in the class rooms. After some years, the prices became too high to hold the conference there, so they moved to St. Gregory's College at Campbelltown. This was an Agricultural College so you can imagine the beautiful grounds. This also was a boarding college. After some years, the organizers of the conference being The Servants of Jesus, purchased their own property minus accommodation facilities. This was a great disappointment to us as we had to find alternative accommodation. Unfortunately, it

became too complicated for us as a group to continue attendance as we would end up in motels quite some distance from the centre and it became too expensive.

This brings me to how we were able to do this for twelve years. Remember the sausage sizzles we held after Mass? This certainly helped to offset the cost of the hire of the buses and motels for the overnight stay at Kempsey each way. Naturally, if we each had to pay the total cost of travelling, accommodation, registration and boarding at college, none of us would have been able to afford this on a yearly basis. I might add, at this point, we were very blessed to be able to take a priest with us each year who said Mass each day of our travels, be it in a park or the grounds of the motel we stayed at. We also took our own BBQ and had many meals going, coming and during cooked by the Masters Barry and Allan who were also the bus drivers extraordinaire.

The conferences themselves were so rewarding, we were able to share our faith with other denominations, pray with them and in some cases put them straight about Our Blessed Mother. The speakers were from all over the world including The Vatican representative, Fr Tom Forrest who closed with a question at the end of one conference. He said, "Think about this: when you die and you meet the Lord, He won't want you to tell Him what you have done on earth. He already knows that. He will say, "WHO DID YOU BRING?" Those words have been embedded in my mind ever since and from then I knew what I have to do, do you?

One year I remember vividly was The Year of The Holy Spirit. Our Prayer group asked the principal of St. Joseph's if we could run a poster competition at the school. Approval was given and so the children were asked to do a poster relating to The Year of The Holy Spirit. This would be displayed on the windows of the bus so all travellers would know what year it was or totally confuse them. When the results were in, we discovered that St. Joseph's had some very talented students, however, more than half of them drew a picture of the bus with all of us seated. This was both a privilege and a joy to have these posters with us on our journey. That was not the end either. When we arrived in Sydney, the conference organisers saw our posters and we explained the story to them. They then allowed us to display them around the main assembly hall during the conference. At the conclusion of the conference, we finished with a concelebrated Mass said by at least ten priests including the archbishop of Sydney. At the end of the Mass, our group was presented with a painted banner which had been made specifically for our St. Joseph's School from their St. Joseph's School to bring back and present to the principal plus photos for their archives.

There are so many stories I could share, however, this is but a glimpse. We do miss not going now, but we do believe there is a time for everything and that was our time.