

Our Lady of Mercy Parish Girrawheen - Western Australia

Father Anthony Vallis

I first met Mike Hurn, who is coordinator of the Personal Advocacy Group, when I took over the parish. He in turn introduced me to the members of our parish who support the Disabled Friends of the group. They have met at the Parish Centre every Tuesday at 6.30pm. Once a month they attend our Saturday Vigil Mass and bring up the gifts. I also celebrate a very beautiful and meaningful rite of Reconciliation every two or three months. I found these gatherings exceptionally uplifting and healing for all concerned.

At Mass and at the meetings, for example, Kim, as soon as he hears the music, would sway from side to side and sing in a loud voice and with a big smile. His mannerism is very infectious. Kerry would appear very stern until we held hands in the prayer group. She would then move into the centre and just turn to each member and 'nod' with a 'bit of a smile'. Ming would call out for his mother – he obviously missed not having her with him at these gatherings. I also celebrated the life of one of the group who died last year. The loss of one of their family was very evident, but the faith of the families was exceptional.

Being part of their journey and watching the support group share their faith and love so generously has heightened our awareness of the big part that they have in our parish family's celebration of life and faith. In their quiet way they teach us about trusting one another and caring for each other in the spirit of Jesus.

