

History of Launch Out

It began in the November 1998 Synod, with the decision of the assembly that the Archbishop will not accept candidates for ordination as permanent deacons in the service of the Archdiocese. As the assembly further asserts that...

“Should at any time there be insufficient priests for appointment as pastors or all parishes, groups of two or more neighbouring parishes are to be formed into clusters, with one or more priests appointed to serve the cluster, and with pastoral leadership in those parishes without a resident priest being entrusted to a lay man or woman”

This decision received 228 in favour and 27 against. Cardinal Tom Williams emphasises that he is supporting the voice of the people:

“I must state most emphatically that nothing but nothing—has been imposed from ‘the top’. I trusted in the common sense and sound faith of our people, and neither vetted nor veto-ed. My own vote was but one of 291. These decisions are yours, not mine”.

In 1999 the concept of Lay Pastoral Leader was discerned. A draft position description was prepared by an Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Task Group. A Working Group on Regional Cooperation was established. Part of the Terms of Reference for this group was an in-depth study of the following documents: *Lumen Gentium, Christifidelis Laici, Pastores Dabo Vobis and Novo Millenio Inuente*.

Finally, in 2001, the Launch Out Formation Programme was established to form Lay Pastoral Leaders for the Archdiocese of Wellington. The programme was envisioned to have three main components: spiritual, pastoral, and theological formation.

Spiritual Formation: Candidates to the programme must go through regular spiritual direction and attend prayer days and retreats organised every year.

Pastoral Formation: As part of their pastoral formation Candidates are required to run projects in parishes to gain a practical way of experiencing pastoral ministry in a planned, systematic manner. Candidates will be assigned Mentors to walk alongside and challenge them. Mentors ensure theological reflection happens so candidates grow in confidence and ability. Develop skills in pastoral practice, needs, assessment, evaluation, critical thinking, and reflect upon God’s action in their experience.

Theological Formation: Candidates are to undertake academic studies in Pastoral Leadership. In 1999-2000 the contents and structure of the academic programme for the Theological Formation was finalised and offered as a Diploma in Pastoral Leadership by the Wellington Catholic Education Centre (which later on became The Catholic Institute (TCI). TCI eventually merged with the Good Shepherd College of Auckland in 2019 to form *Te Kupenga* or Catholic Leadership Institute). The Diploma in Pastoral Leadership was later on changed into two progressive qualifications—Level 5 New Zealand Certificate in Christian Studies-Christian Ministry (NZCCS-CM) and the Level 6 New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies-Christian Leadership Strand (NZCDS-CL).

Joan McFetridge, former director of the Wellington Catholic Education Centre, was appointed Co-ordinator of Launch Out in 2002. Joan later passed on the role to Manager and Formator of Launch Out, Maya Bernardo in April 2019.