



*When he had finished eating, he said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch".*

*Luke 5: 4*

## LAUNCH OUT LETTERS (LOL) Hepetema (September) 2021

Tēnā koutou e hoa ma. This will be a bit of a meaty issue, may take more than 15 minutes to read. September, after all it is a month packed with events— Seasons of Creation, Birthday of Mary, Holy Name of Mary, Our Lady of Sorrows, Social Justice Week and Māori language week.

**Telesia Alaimoana** leads the reflection for the last Sunday of September on Mk: 9:38-43. She touches an uncomfortable topic in lay ministry, one which I find strongly connected with the coming Synod on synodality. The Gospel invites us to reflect if our ways of ministering and leading are encouraging synodality or otherwise. Building on her articles from previous issues **Bridget Taumoepeau** explains more details about synodality. There is no other way than synodality for the Church, and the most compelling reason I believe is climate change. We cannot solve the crisis of the environment until we work together. **Catherine Gibbs** unpacks the complexity of living justly for the environment. She does more than explain, she challenges us to act NOW; there are certainly things we can start doing (or not do) asap! A scientific article written in 2009 posits that the melting of the icebergs will unleash dormant prehistoric pathogens into the oceans that will find eventually mutate into a virus causing an influenza(-like) pandemic. And here we are 2021... As Catherine rallies us to do our bit to address climate change, our dear **Vicky Raw** had an experience of MIQ for 14 days; she shares her experience with us. Finally, we can't end September without talking about Mary, we have **Mely Kartawidjaya** sharing her reflection on discovering the love of the Blessed Mother. Through Mary we pray for our safety and most importantly, a conversion to be a Synodal Church that can work with the rest of humanity and creation towards restoring our wounded planet.

Noho ora koutou katoa.

—Maya Bernardo, Launch Out Formator & Manager

### Power and Control Gospel for the last Sunday of September 2021 Mark 9: 38-43

By Telesia Alaimoana  
Launch Out Candidate



<https://reknew.org/2016/08/brief-history-political-power-church/>

Reflecting on the Gospel of Mark, I remember at one of the Parish Council meetings, the Parish Priest informed us that there was a group from a local Seventh Day Adventist church who approached him about using and accessing the church for their use. No other details were elaborated on. I was not sure how the other Parish Council members thought, but I certainly and quietly reacted negatively to the request. Feelings of jealousy, passiveness, and defensiveness overwhelmed me at that moment. I thought, who are they? and how dare they want to use our church?

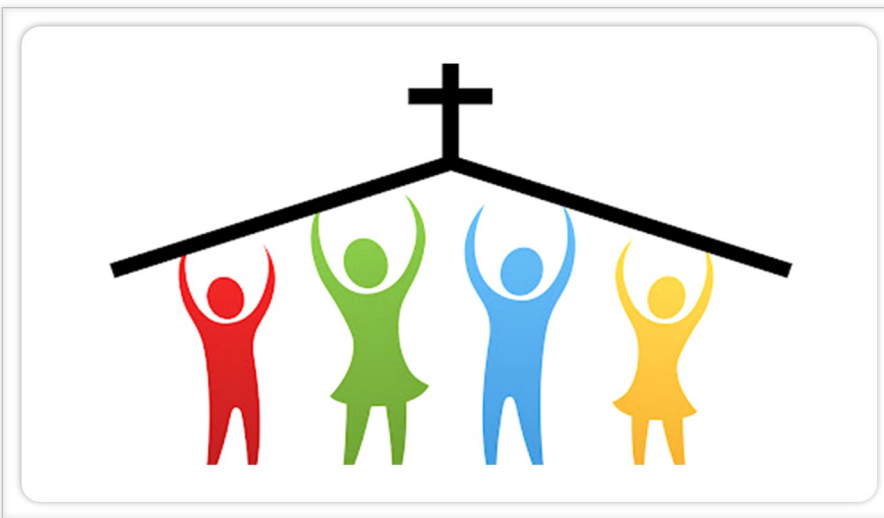
In the Gospel, one of the disciples told Jesus of someone who was healing in His name. He explained to the disciples that the situation is a blessing and not a problem. The problem was not in the healing ministry, but in the

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disciples' possessiveness and defensiveness of their ministry. The disciples were thirsty for power and control, that their authority had been challenged by others who are doing the good work of healing. They were envious that someone else was doing what they should be doing.

The disciples objected to the action of the healer because "he did not follow us". Exactly my thoughts when the Parish Priest stated that the group was from another denomination! I had little concern for the needs of those in the group while I was being overly possessive of my own status as a Catholic parishioner. The same happened to the disciples who demonstrated little concerns for the one who needed the healing while they were concern and possessive about their own status as leaders and followers of Jesus.

These attitudes can be destructive in the life of the church today. Some people involved in parish ministry can be



<http://apostolicfaith.org/online-magazine/77275117697458unityinthechurch>

very possessive about their authority and field of responsibility which might lead to being resentful towards others. Feelings of jealousy and the pursuit of exclusive power and control can lead to envy when others succeed in their ministry efforts. Such feelings can cause those involved in ministry to undermine the efforts of others who desire to promote the Gospel. Another interesting example of these attitudes is what had happened to the Samoan Chaplaincy a few years ago,

when most Catechists and some of the members walked off from the leadership of the archbishop at the time, objecting to the announced changes to the administration of the Samoan Chaplaincy. The battle for power and control can be fought with rules and regulations, budgeting, facility allocation, slander, malicious comments, and appeal to false loyalty. The spirit of possessiveness and defensiveness is recognised anytime we feel threatened by another's success or resentful when God's will be accomplished through another's ministry. It is important to realise that such feelings reveal a need for conversion and repentance so that we can promote the work of the Holy Spirit, who works in mysterious ways whoever God chooses. Such an attitude will lead us to care for those in need rather than seek a mistaken greatness based on the ability to control rather than the willingness to cooperate.

The Holy Spirit works in ways to share the grace of Christ with all humanity. We are invited to know, love, and serve the Lord – the Universal Call to Salvation. We acknowledge that God's grace works in mysterious ways to all people, even to those who we believe are very different from us.

*"Feelings of jealousy and the pursuit of exclusive power and control can lead to envy when others succeed in their ministry efforts. Such feelings can cause those involved in ministry to undermine the efforts of others who desire to promote the Gospel".*

# Reflecting on past and present realities to discern a better future

By Catherine Gibbs  
Launch Out Mentor

In his recent book *Let Us Dream* Pope Francis uses three Ls to envision a better future, noting ‘If we put **land** as well as decent **lodging** and **labour** for all at the centre of our actions, we will be able to create a virtuous cycle that over time helps us restore the dignity of our peoples.’ p128.

Following is a personal reflection on caring for our common home within a local context using examples set in the past and present. It raises serious questions for discernment which I hope might spark questions of your own.

## LAND

From an early age I learned the importance of caring for Mother Earth. My soil scientist father never let an



opportunity pass without teaching his five children about the lifegiving properties of what lay under our feet. We learned to ‘read the story’ of our land at hundreds of road cuttings throughout the country. Living in Lower Hutt Dad would regularly cycle with my brothers and me to Petone beach to play in the sand. The beach was wild, covered in grey sand and strewn with chunks of driftwood, banks of sharp shells and washed by chilly harbour water. There were a lot of seagulls attracted by the waste discharged into the sea from the local meatworks.

Sixty-five years later Petone beach has changed. Layers of human impact over time have influenced this place significantly. There are obvious efforts to repair, restore and protect the natural environment with dune planting, designated dog walking areas, lots of rubbish bins and historical details for pedestrians on the footpath. Streams of trucks and cars move in both directions. Petone beach is not a destination but a noisy corridor for transporting people and goods, and a fitness venue where cyclists compete with joggers for space. There are not many gulls now with numbers controlled because of the flight path of aircraft descending into Wellington.

Using this simple beach example, I ask myself:

How well are we respecting and implementing biodiversity on the edge of the harbour?

What opportunities exist at Petone beach to be a place for peoples’ wellbeing?

Is there evidence we’re transitioning from fossil fuels towards zero carbon emissions?

## LODGING

This term is used by Pope Francis in the broadest sense of our general habitat including the homes we live in. ‘*Laudato si*’ seeks to help people to ‘hear the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.’ The encyclical establishes a plea to humanize our urban environments and restore networks of belonging and solidarity .

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After 52 years I've returned to Lower Hutt - the city I thought I'd left behind. My life journey has morphed into a circle dance, in which the lines of TS Eliot come into focus:

*'We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.'*

As a young person in a predominantly white, middle class community we belonged to several networks including Catholic parish groups. With my brothers and sister, neighbourhood kids and multiple cousins living nearby, we played in common spaces until dark, built treehouses, and created trolleys out of wood and old pram wheels. Reciting the family rosary was a centre piece after dinner. We enjoyed listening to the radio and we played family games before bedtime. With the advent of TV, we watched shows at our

grandparent's house on a Sunday evening after a meal together.

Today I live in a neighbourhood full of young families, but the yards and streets are silent. As most of the houses use their garages for storage, the parked cars all disappear from the street during the day. People of different ethnicities gather in the city mall which is saturated in noise. The enormous carpark is polluted and unsafe. Enticements to spend money are everywhere. Families eat out, but the table conversation is limited because of Smart phones in hand. Big screens dominate both commercial and private spaces.

Given what we currently know about integral ecology and using this example of my hometown in 21st century I ask:

How well are we adopting more restrained lifestyles?

Do we enable networks of belonging and solidarity to flourish today?

Have we transformed our cities so that social and cultural wealth can be generated which also encourages care for the environment?

## LABOUR

*'Work is the capacity that the Lord gifted us with, that lets us contribute to His creative action. In working we shape creation.'* Pope Francis p131. *Let Us Dream*.

Today work is understood more broadly than the privilege of the employed. Throughout childhood the work my father did seemed important and paid for our education and family holidays. With his income we gradually increased domestic items including a fridge and washing machine. When we climbed into Dad's first car we thought we were millionaires. The work my mother did was an ongoing cycle of keeping the household running smoothly for our family of seven. It wasn't considered 'work' more akin with simply living. There were no shopping malls. We were encouraged to help our neighbours by running errands to the corner shop.



It's a very different working environment fifty years on with more options emerging due to Covid lockdowns. More people seem less focussed on growing the economy and recognize the wasteful accumulation of goods. Might this be a chance to see God's Spirit offering us a way out of the dire predictions for our common home?

Recognizing the value to society of the work of nonearners is an important part of re-thinking a post-Covid warming world. While many paid workers can now work from home for parts of the week it is widely acknowledged that productivity has paradoxically increased. Could we consider reducing paid working hours? Have we seriously considered working less so more people can gain access to the labour market? What would it take for the government to consider a universal basic income? Can communities of different beliefs and ethnicities work together so that cultural contributions are valued?

Fresh hope emerges through an integrated ecological approach. As nations struggle to find new ways to organize themselves, I believe we're being given the opportunity to reflect the truth of who we are. That what the Lord asks of us today is *'a culture of service, not a throwaway culture. But we can't serve others unless we let their reality speak to us.'* Pope Francis p15. *Let Us Dream*.

Realities include the once in 100-year weather events becoming a regular feature; the disappearance of the morning chorus from our towns; increased numbers of homeless people and the rise in those seeking help from mental distress.

In what ways am I allowing the reality of the lives of others speak to me?

Am I allowing the time to listen to those living on the edge?

Does the cry of the earth concern me to the point where I'm compelled to act?

Through the power of the Holy Spirit I pray for the faith and vision to make God's dream for ourselves and our world a reality. How about you?



<https://ecociv.org/home-bb-old/>

*"Fresh hope emerges through an integrated ecological approach. As nations struggle to find new ways to organize themselves, I believe we're being given the opportunity to reflect the truth of who we are".*



1. What are the different phases of the lead up to the Synod “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission”?
2. What is the word that Pope Francis uses to describe the free and frank way of speaking that he wants in a synod?
3. How many Synods has Pope Francis already held?

See answers on Page 9

## UPDATES

### SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

Last July LOL we announced the upcoming Synod. I entitled it “Synod of Synods”, that was an error, it should have been “Synod on Synods” or more appropriately, “Synod **on** Synodality”. This Synod is an invitation by Pope Francis to “*reorder the internal mechanism of the Church for reflection and discussion, and to help a new way for the Church to understand and articulate both her internal self-understanding and mission of Evangelisation*” ([www.pillaratholic.com](http://www.pillaratholic.com)) . It is a process for process, where the synod journey will help us understand and bring to life what it means to be Synodal Church. It is no less than a synod for the reformation and conversion, as Church. This is the best time to be part of Church/parish leadership. This is the best time to be part of Launch Out.



<https://www.pillaratholic.com/p/synod-guidelines-urge-living-synodality>

We in Launch Out— Candidates, Graduates, Mentors, among others, may be tapped by our individual parishes to assist. Our skills in facilitating, leading group discernment, explaining the documents on the synod from the Archdiocese and the Vatican, etc., may be called upon. Notwithstanding lockdowns, current sentiments on closures of church-buildings and growing disengagement with church/parish, and our own personal and pastoral responsibilities. Discern personally how you are called to respond to this invitation. We are not called to carry this burden on our own (that thinking negates the very meaning of synodality). Each parish will approach the listening and the gathering of voices unique to their own realities and strengths as a community.

Read up on Bridget’s article on synodality. If you have questions, feel free to get in touch with any of us in the Church Mission Team.

### PRAYER DAY

We have our last prayer day for 2021 with Clare O’Connor on 09 October at the Home of Compassion. I’ll email the details nearer the time.

### Te Awa Kairangi Prayer Walk

Join the prayer walk along Te Awa Kairangi (Hutt River) on Sunday 3 October 2021 (9am-5pm). It is being organised by an ecumenical (interchurch) group of Valley residents, for the Season of Creation. Email: [riverprayerwalk@gmail.com](mailto:riverprayerwalk@gmail.com)



<https://www.odt.co.nz/news/national/auckland-miq-breaches-incredibly-disappointing>

For years to come 2020 and 2021 will be remembered globally for COVID-19. It disrupted our lives; from one day to the next we were unable to go out and meet our family and friends, go to work, go to the shops, and go to Mass. Our borders were closed to the outside world almost immediately to curb the virus from reaching us. The PM fronted the media everyday with updates and always ended with a plea for us to be kind.

This simple message always makes me think of the verse: He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

What does it mean to be kind? Ann Gilroy wrote that it is 'a consistent way of being encouraging, of looking out for others, of deciding for the common good, of being truthful, of cooperating, of being in solidarity, of participating ... we can imbibe the vitality of the land unfurling with vibrancy and zest in spring. This energy bursting into life, blossom and leaf around us is pure kindness – refreshing, rejuvenating and delighting us ... It's God's reminder that we are not alone' (September 2020, Tui Motu, page 1).

Her words helped me reflect on my journey back from England and the subsequent time that I spent in MIQ in July this year. My 18 hour transit at Changi airport in Singapore was an experience never to be forgotten. When we eventually disembarked from Heathrow we had to line up, have a fluorescent green tag put around our wrists and were marched across the terminal, through heat seeking devices, passed the few opened shops and restaurants (which we were not allowed to stop at) to a large airport lounge. Here people, with similar wristbands from other parts of the world, were congregated. Nobody could leave this area until their next flight. As I contemplated my surroundings, my thoughts and feelings turned towards those who are unceremoniously and unfairly rounded up. Such images were to be reoccurring over the next two weeks.

There were only chairs and sofas to sit on, food had to be ordered online that was delivered to a central point and the bathroom facilities were poor – this was not the Changi airport that I had previously experienced. The possibility that there was somebody with COVID-19 amongst these many hundreds of people was high, despite pre-departure tests.

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As the hours went by, the evening turned to night-time and the last planes for the day departed the lounge became quieter and emptier. Sleep started to creep up on me. I found a sofa where I could lie down on for a few hours. As I closed my eyes, I experienced yet another new feeling – that of solidarity with the homeless as I too was totally alone in a far-off place surrounded by strangers. I was vulnerable, a bit hungry and didn't know when I was going to have my next shower. It was a very sobering time of prayer and contemplation. For far too many this is a living reality where there is no bed for the night. How do I react in the face of these injustices faced by people?

My time in MIQ made me reflect further on incarceration. I was only allowed to leave my room either to go for my regular COVID-19 tests or to walk around the front yard for 30 minutes a day. The first time that I was allowed out I was told off by a soldier as I wasn't wearing my mask even though I was on my own! I had broken (unintentionally) the MIQ law. When there were other people walking around the yard we had to keep 2m apart, walk (not jog or run) in the same direction – around and around and around. Three soldiers monitored us from different positions. I reflected on how prisoners around the world are constantly under surveillance when exercising in similar stark environments. The yard had a couple of bushes – these were the only greenery that I saw for two weeks.

Being unable to open a window for 14 days was something that I had never experienced before. I knew that this could have been the case and deep down I prayed that I would not have to face this sacrifice. At home I throw, open the doors and windows whenever I can. Now that I can do this again I appreciate it all the more.

Ann Gilroy's words 'God's reminder that we are not alone' resonate with my time in MIQ as I never felt alone. It was the perfect time to do a 14-day Ignatian retreat called Sacred Space COVID-19 'Isolation' Retreat. Every morning I would sit in bed to read, pray, contemplate and write on the theme of the day. I went to Mass online and on my daily walks I was able to pray the rosary. Other blessings came in the form of numerous daily phone calls, WhatsApp messages, Zoom chats with family and friends in NZ and the UK. A friend sent me a box of things that I had packed before going away. I had forgotten that I had included in it my slippers and when I saw them, I sent up a prayer of thanks! There was beauty in the surrounding concrete jungle. The tall glass buildings reflected the sunlight into my room and at night their lights were small beacons in the darkness. On my last night the sky was adorned with a semi-circular rainbow. I give thanks for my MIQ buddy Gill who I got to know on our daily walks.



The view from my hotel window on the last night of my stay in MIQ. God is with me, God is with all of us in this journey

Initially I saw my stay in MIQ as being the price that I had to pay to go to my sister's wedding. But, I soon realised that it was also a way of ensuring that I played my part in keep COVID-19 out of NZ. This continues to be the case by being double vaccinated, scanning the QR codes, wearing face-masks in shops, staying at home at Levels 3 and 4 and respecting the necessary social distancing. They are small but essential things. Over the last few weeks God has continued to bless me with the freshness of spring to which I say AMENE.



# Answers to the QUIZ

Copied from <https://harlowallianceparty.org/answers-to-quiz-3>

1. October 17 2021 – **Celebration of the opening of the process**; October 2021- April 2022 – **consultation at diocesan level**; April 2022 – September 2022 – **synthesis of the input from the diocesan and episcopal conference levels**; September 2022 – **writing of the working document by the general Secretariat**; by March 2023 – **Pre-synodal meetings**; March 2023 – **seven final documents prepared**; June 2023 – **second working document written by the general secretariat**; October 2023 – **Synod of Bishops**.
2. Parrhesia – the Greek word meaning to ‘speak everything’, implying speaking freely and candidly.
3. Synod on the Family (2014/15); Synod on Youth (2018); Synod on the Pan-Amazon Region (2019).

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- Church-Mission-ADW **Facebook Page on For a Synodal Church**. Please join if you are on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/synod2021.ADW/>
- Read **Cardinal John’s** piece on the upcoming Synod : [https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/adw\\_welcom/for-a-synodal-church-communion-participation-and-mission/](https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/adw_welcom/for-a-synodal-church-communion-participation-and-mission/)
- Official **Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches: First Phase [October 2021 – April 2022]** in Dioceses and Bishops’ Conferences Leading up to the Assembly of Bishops in Synod in October 2023 <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/09/07/0541/01166.html>
- The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference recently came out with report entitled **“The Light of the Southern Cross”**. In its introduction, it says: *“It outlines, for Australia, a way to discern a synodal path: a new praxis of church governance. But the light which guides the process of discernment is not anchored in this corner of the world. It can radiate out to reveal models of Synodality that the global Catholic Church can embrace”*. See link: <https://www.catholicreligious.org.au/light-from-the-southern-cross>. Thanks to Joe Green for sharing.
- Bishop Peter Cullinane of Palmerston North wrote a piece on **Mission, Ministries and Co-responsibility** at CathNews <https://cathnews.co.nz/2021/09/16/mission-ministries-and-co-responsibility/> . Thanks to Bridget for sharing.
- Catherine Gibbs wrote a book review on **Joe Grayland’s book ‘Prayer, belief, and diversity in a secular context’** for the New Zealand Catholic Education Office <https://nzceo.schoolzineplus.com/newsletter/article/564?skin=1>
- Susan Apathy shares **Bishop Vincent Long**, OFM of Parramata, Australia, a refugee himself, a pastoral letter in response to the situation in Afghanistan <https://catholicoutlook.org/bishop-vincents-pastoral-letter-on-our-response-to-the-situation-in-afghanistan/>





Copied from shutterfly.com <https://www.pinterest.nz/pin/410179478563045862/>

## BIRTHDAYS

### September

05 Patricia Lynch

07 Vicky Raw

14 Regina Daly

19 Mika Teofilo

## Synodality— a closer look

By Bridget Taumoepeau  
Launch Out Mentor



<https://www.synod.va/en/news/vademecum-for-the-synod-on-synodality.html>

Last month the quiz questions covered the concept of synodality. This month we will look at synodality in more detail. The International Theological Commission issued a long document on “Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church.” This detailed document is worth studying. (See the link below). It gives an in-depth background – historical, scriptural, traditional, theological – as well as introducing the idea of the implementation of synodality at various levels in the Church, including parish level. Chapter 4 is devoted to the renewal of synodality, which has relevance for the upcoming Synod entitled “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission.”

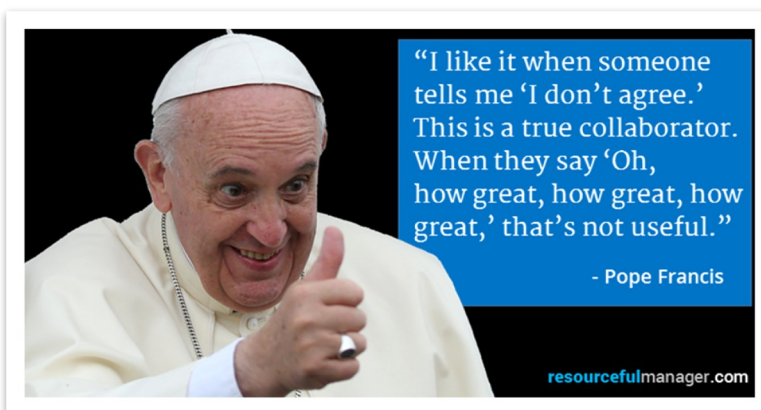
There have been other recent articles on synodality, which I will refer to here. Bradford Hinze explores Pope Francis’ dreams of synodality. Francis speaks of the need for decentralisation of the church, allowing for input from the periphery; he wants ‘an inverted pyramid’ to reverse the current mode of top-down power within the church; and he uses the symbol of a polyhedron to describe the multicultural church united through a

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multitude of rich diversities. Theologians remind us of the importance for Francis of the theology of people; the option for the poor; popular piety for the life of faith and the church in some cultures, and the need to assess the signs of the times. Francis believes that conflict is inevitable in life. It cannot be ignored, but can lead to dialogue and the recognition of the gifts that come from all sectors of the church. He promotes the importance of speaking humbly, honestly and boldly on issues about which one feels strongly. Very importantly he fosters listening to the sense of all the faithful in the church. This vision of synodality by Francis is seen as a new phase in the implementation of Vatican II. The bishops at that Council wanted robust collegiality to counterbalance what had become a very hierarchical church. This process started with the establishment of the Synod of Bishops and episcopal conferences, which are in place today. If you consider that synodality means 'walking together' the dreams of Vatican II for the involvement of laity have not been fully achieved, although the Launch Out programme is a good example of where there has been synodality between bishops and laity.

Hoffman Ospino interviewed Rafael Luciani, a recognised expert on synodality. Luciani describes synodality as a way in which the church is and acts in history, and emphasises that Francis' approach is deepening the vision of Vatican II. It is about communicating, and for all baptised people to relate to each other. Some of this is going back in history to the early church. St Cyprian of Carthage (3<sup>rd</sup> Century) said that nothing should be done without the consensus of the people. Consensus implied consultation, listening, dialogue and discernment. It is seeking to achieve the *sensus ecclesiae* (to feel with the whole church), including the diversity of cultures, charisms, gifts and ministries.

This is very relevant for the upcoming Synod of Bishops entitled: "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation and Mission." The time frame for the process of preparation and the holding of the meeting is laid down in a chart that was published in WelCom. From October onwards we will be asked to contribute our ideas, guided by some questions and themes compiled by the Office of the Synod of Bishops in Rome.



I think it is important for us to use this opportunity to contribute to this process. There are some 'prophets of doom', similar to those Pope John XXIII described before Vatican II, who say that despite input from the People of God, the bishops and Curia in Rome will over edit the contributions and that the whole process is a sham. I think we should trust in the Holy Spirit and remember what happened at Vatican II, where the bishops remained faithful to the idea

of reform and responded to the 'signs of the times', (Gaudium et Spes §4), setting in motion a process of renewal of the church that continues today.

#### References:

(<https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en/search.html?q=Synodality+in+the+life+and+mission+of+the+church>)

Bradford Hinze, "Dreams of Synodality, Specters of Constraint," *Louvain Studies* 43 (2020): 297-312.

Hoffman Ospino, "A closer look at synodality and its promise of a more inclusive church," *National Catholic Reporter* Aug 23, 2021. (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

I was baptised as a Catholic when I was 10 years old, but never lived the Catholic faith until I attended the Life in the Spirit seminar, where I felt touched by Jesus. I repented and my life changed. I began to love the Eucharist and the Word of God. I began to actively participate in the charismatic prayer groups. I enjoyed and grew my relationship with Jesus more intimately. The important thing was my relationship with God the Father and Lord Jesus, then the rest? Mary wasn't in... even though I knew Catholics have great respect for the Virgin Mary. I already knew how to pray the Hail Mary, I prayed it occasionally and that's it. I thought the Rosary prayer was not so exciting, and people somehow honoured Our Lady a bit 'over the top'.

One day I was having trouble and worry. I came to the chapel and sat before the tabernacle. I started to cry and prayed pouring out my troubled heart to Jesus. Suddenly an image flashed in my mind where I was sitting on the lap of Mother Mary, like a little lamb! Mary embraced me warmly. I could feel her great affection. I felt a very strong relationship between Mother Mary and Jesus, this love comforted my troubled heart, and I began to feel at peace. I was surprised by the image because when I prayed, my thoughts were only focused on Jesus, but Mother Mary wanted to reach out to me. All this time I had only 'put aside' Mother Mary but she was not angry with me, with her humble and gentle heart she still wanted to come to comfort me.

Since that incident, I began to realise the great love of a mother. I was looking for my long unused Rosary beads. The Rosary prayer became alive and beautiful for me. Mother Mary was no longer far away. She was very close to my heart.

Today I am a mother with two teenage children. I need lots of wisdom to guide and prepare them for life. I believe Mother Mary who is always with me, praying for my children. I always show the children that Mary is indeed our perfect spiritual mother, and the Rosary prayer has become our weapon of faith.

Recently, a friend died of cancer. Due to the lockdown, his funeral mass was delayed by 11 days. This was my chance to share Mary's love to the family. Every night, through zoom, together with my small community, I invited them to pray the Rosary and the Litany until the day of the funeral. The bereaved family felt great comfort through the Rosary. After the funeral, they continued to pray the Rosary faithfully!

I want to end my sharing with a beautiful quote from Saint Maximilian Kolbe: *"Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much. You can never love her more than Jesus did."*

Thank you, Mother Mary. Praise be to you, the wonderful Mother of my Lord!

