

# LAUNCH OUT LETTERS (LOL)

Newsletter and Journal of Te Hao Nui– Launch Out Formation Programme  
Archdiocese of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand

Archdiocese of Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand

Welcome to the April 2024 issue of the Launch Out Letters (LOL).

For this issue we have **Susan Apathy** leading the Gospel reflection for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter which highlights the story of the road to Emmaus. Susan underpins the mind shifts the apostles have to go through to recognise the risen Jesus; from enjoying his companionship to his sudden crucifixion then to the resurrection, which Jesus has foretold but one which they have not yet comprehended. This mind shift or conversion is not an easy one, and one which can only be made possible by God's grace. In some ways, like the apostles, we fear the resurrection because we do not truly understand what it is and so we walk through life in some state of stupor.

Such kind of conversion is what is called for when we try to come to terms with the ongoing conflict in Gaza. The way we relate to the Jews and the Muslims who are caught in this culturally divisive issue, calls for heightened sensitivity and discernment to go with our good intentions as our usual acts of solidarity and grief can be polarising. We are fortunate to have **Nick Polaschek**, our Catholic representative, along with myself in the Wellington Abrahamic Council, to help us reflect on our mission as Christians in these tenuous times.

The 4th Sunday of Easter is dedicated to Vocations. We have **Bridget Taumoepeau** reflecting on what vocation means. Vocation is an overused and misunderstood word in our church lingo, often connoting one's state of life (ordained/religious, married, single) or an occupation. However, vocation is our response to God's calling in whatever form that it comes and embracing it as part of the unfolding mystery of our lives. Accordingly, a life of discipleship can only be lived out as a vocation.

Finally, we present a snapshot of the history of synods in ADW, created by **Lucienne Hensel** and explained briefly by **Bridget**, which could be useful to share around in our parishes.

Our journey as people of God is similar to the gospel story of the road to Emmaus. We grapple with the events of our lives and wonder where God is in all of these, until we are made aware of God's presence in our midst through our conversations and coming together. Our awakening leads to the clarity of how we are to respond to the needs of the times and how we are to go about living our vocations. The synodal journey of the archdiocese of Wellington and the global Church, albeit our fears and even confusion, is no less than a walk to Emmaus. We know that Jesus is already walking with us.

The Lord has risen. Happy Easter everyone!

*Maya Bernardo, Launch Out Formator and Manager*

## Volume 3, Issue 2, April, 2024

Gospel Reflection by Susan Apathy ... Page 2

Online Resources & Birthdays ... Page 3

Relating to our Abrahamic sisters and brothers... Page 4

Updates ... Page 6

Vocation-The call to love...Page 7

Snapshot of ADW Synod History...Page 9



*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*

## After the Resurrection – Then What?

3rd Sunday of Easter (Luke 24:13-35 )

By Susan Apathy  
Pastoral Mentor



The Gospel reading of the Third Sunday of Easter (Year B) takes us once again into the disciples' despair and total bewilderment after the death of Jesus. Cleopas and another disciple have just rushed back from their meeting with a stranger on the road to Emmaus, who they recognised as Jesus himself when he blessed the bread and gave it to them. They are all talking about this exciting happening, but when Jesus appears they do not react with joy, but with alarm and fright. The Emmaus story they have just heard has not had the expected effect on them. What has happened to their desire to follow this great leader? Why are they unable to recognise that this really is Jesus (especially as this was not the first apparition of Jesus since his death)? They are still deeply traumatised - not even Peter, Cleopas or the other disciple can say, "Welcome, Lord." I imagine them all (including Peter) turning to each other, hoping someone will take the lead and tell them what to think now. They had been thinking, it

seems, that they had been living a beautiful dream with Jesus up until the crucifixion, at which point all their hopes and growing belief collapsed and now they were in a nasty real world full of despair. No one was stepping forward to take up Jesus' leadership role. The fact that Jesus is in front of them simply does not sink in.

Jesus's rebuke, "Why are you so agitated?" shows the depth of their fear, not just that this apparition must be a ghost, but that their life with Jesus as they had been living it is no more. The shift to dumbfounded joy as he proved that he was a real person, not a ghost, enabled them to listen to what Jesus said next – as he explained what the scriptures actually said about the Christ – him.

The disciples' biggest mind shift was perhaps to start to believe (and keep on believing) that the Messiah had really called them to preach repentance like the prophets – no matter the dangers they might face, they too were prophets, and Jesus would always accompany them.

This story speaks to us at our own depths. How often we fail to recognise the Lord – indeed it takes a lifetime of practice to recognise Jesus in every person we meet and to face every person with attentive love, as Jesus faces us. If we cannot recognise Jesus in each person, nor can we recognise Jesus as the Christ.

The second message of this Gospel is that everything written about the Messiah in the Prophets, Psalms and Psalms has been fulfilled. The suffering Redeemer is here.

The apostles hadn't really expected a suffering Redeemer – despite what their time with Jesus had taught them, much of their headspace must still have been absorbed by the idea of a redeemer who would conquer the Romans and lead the Jewish people to a happier life through independence from the Roman domination. But this is not what the scriptures said – they spoke of suffering, death, rising from the dead and repentance for the forgiveness of sins to be preached to all nations. Repentance is not just an act of contrition such as we learned as children. It is a complete turning from one's old way of life to a new way of life, preaching the Kingdom of Heaven, a transformed life leading to a transformed society, which is at hand now. This requires and enables us to see and act in a new way, imitating the love of God. We as individuals are tasked to help this to happen in the whole society. The running of a parish, the work to set up the liturgies, even the baptisms and weddings and funerals, are set inside the broader job of enabling the new way of life to come into being. What we are really faced with is sharing Jesus' vulnerability, his solidarity with those who suffer, taking on the task of working with and for the most oppressed. Repentance calls us to the spiritual and practical salvation of the world. There is nothing small about the Gospel command!

*Continues on Page 3*

What else is there to say about this radical command? Luke's gospel has just five more verses (not in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday readings). Jesus took the disciples to the outskirts of Bethany, blessed them and was carried up to heaven. He had told them to stay in the city until they were clothed with the power from on high (Pentecost). Meantime they were full of joy, and continually visited the Temple to praise God. What a change! Today's Gospel reading shows a crucial episode in the disciples' transformation to new people, joy-filled people, with the strength and determination which is revealed in the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles. This transformation comes out of a time of awareness of their own weakness and failure; we too need our failures to enable us to be open to transformation. The disciples do not transform themselves but are enabled to be open to the transformation Jesus offers them, and to us.

We pray for our own transformation during the Easter period.

*Just a little extra:*

As we continue to move through the Easter period and contemplate how we can make this Gospel reading come alive in our hearts, here is a final word from Pope Francis: "We can call on God for hope and serenity, with trust in our hearts. We can also recognise that this awareness of the wars, starvation, destruction of the planet, and poverty around us must spur us to action, to work to bring the Kingdom of God to reality in very concrete ways".<sup>i</sup>

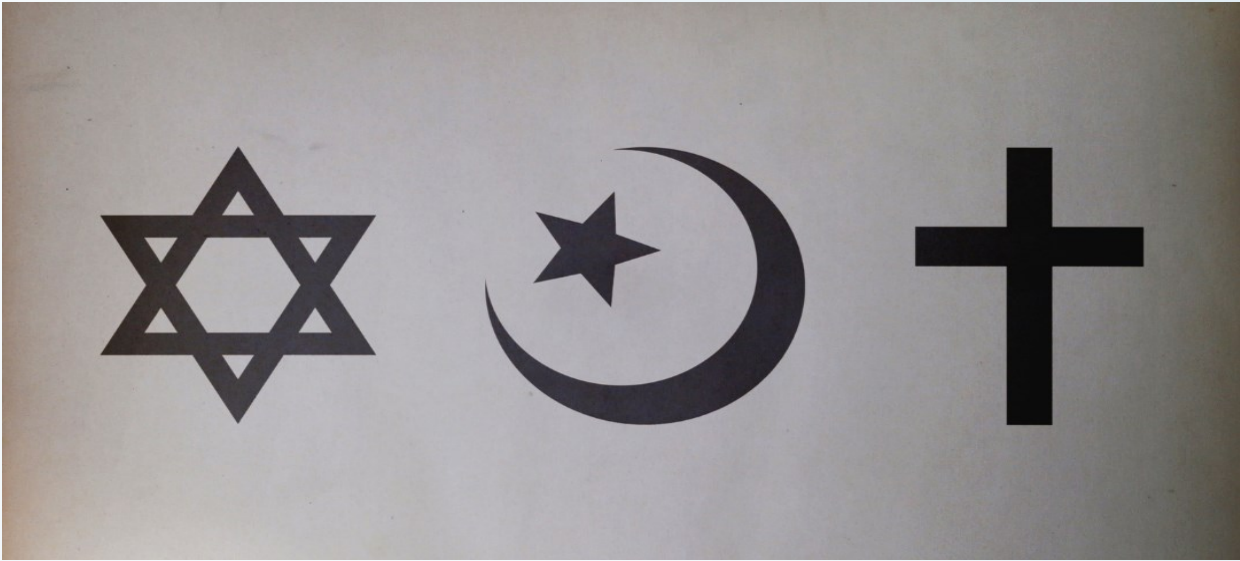
<sup>i</sup>Pope Francis, in a new foreword to *Questioning God* by Timothy Radcliffe and Lukasz Popko (article in *The Tablet* 23/30 December 2023)

*"The running of a parish, the work to set up the liturgies, even the baptisms and weddings and funerals, are set inside the broader job of enabling the new way of life to come into being. What we are really faced with, is sharing Jesus' vulnerability, his solidarity with those who suffer, taking on the task of working with and for the most oppressed. Repentance calls us to the spiritual and practical salvation of the world." — Susan Apathy*

## ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Food for Faith** <https://foodforfaith.org.nz/>
- If you are looking for a contemporary take on theology, try listening to this video/podcast **The Rob & Caleb show: The Passover Special**—An interesting discussion about the apparent contradiction between the synoptic Gospels and John in the chronology of the Passion (recommended by Margaret).
- **Interfaith resources**
  - ◇ [What is dialogue? https://www.kaiciid.org/who-we-are/what-is-dialogue](https://www.kaiciid.org/who-we-are/what-is-dialogue)
  - ◇ [Holy Land work to build respect - NZ Catholic Newspaper](#)
  - ◇ [The rise and rise of intolerance in the online world | The Press \(waikatotimes.co.nz\)](#)
  - ◇ [When does anti-Zionism become antisemitism? A Jewish historian's perspective \(theconversation.com\)](#)
- **Webinar - Bishop Peter Cullinane** - The mission & vocation of lay people Register for free at <https://australiancardijninstitute.org/webinar-bishop-peter-cullinane/>
- **Online seminars from Te Kupenga** <https://www.tekupenga.ac.nz/catholic-theological-college-2/tasteoftheology/>
- Recommended reads by Bridget Taumoepeau
  - ◇ [Father James Martin: My experience at the Synod - Outreach](#)
  - ◇ [We are a kingdom of priests - Where Peter Is](#)





In recent decades the Church's approach to the other Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Islam, has changed. Sadly, Christians and the Catholic Church community have a long history of persecuting the Jews that stretches back to the early centuries. Our relationship with Muslims has also historically been fraught since the Crusades. However, the document *Nostra Aetate* from the Second Vatican Council for the first-time recognized Judaism and Islam as both positive, though incomplete, forms of collective religious response to the one God. We have similar forms of prayer, compared to other non-Abrahamic religions, and share very similar ethical attitudes on many issues. This landmark document has since resulted in Jewish-Catholic dialogue in various forms, which never existed before. One of these is the *Abrahamic Council of Wellington*, born from the the *Wellington Council of Christians and Jews*, which has always had Catholic representation since its beginning in 1991. The Council is dedicated to increasing understanding and cooperation between the three Abrahamic faith traditions and the wider society of Aotearoa/ New Zealand.

Pope Francis has extended the pluralism of *Nostra Aetate*. On visiting a synagogue in 2015 Pope Francis said "*in fact you are our brothers and sisters in the faith. We all belong to one family, the family of God, who accompanies and protects us, His people.*" In our era we are beginning to appreciate that our Christian faith does not simply contrast with Judaism that it arose from, but is a faith expression deeply rooted in the Jewish faith, and can only be more fully understood in terms of its Jewish roots. In 2019 the Pope met the Grand Imam Sheik El-Rayeb, leader of the Shia Muslims, and signed a document that included the following line: *the pluralism and diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and languages are willed by God in His wisdom, through which he created human beings.* In this statement the Pope acknowledges Islamic religion to be part of God's plan, which is fulfilled in Christ.

Both Judaism and Islam have a rich cultural and religious history, and encompass a wide diversity of views and practices, just as Christianity does. While the media often focus on a certain group within Islam, there are currently 1.8 billion Muslims in the world. They have a range of views on many issues of religious practice, from very conservative to more liberal. Often the Western media highlight the views of an extremist minority within Islam, or Judaism, implying they are representative or exemplary of the entire faith community. As Catholics we do not appreciate it when the media refer to a group such as Evangelicals as Christians, because this implies either we as Catholics think like them or are not really Christians. We need to be thoughtful in our response to media reports about different faith traditions than our own. We also need to question some of the things we think we know as facts about both Judaism and Islam.



The current conflict in Gaza has highlighted the longstanding complexities existing in Abrahamic relationships, not only between the traditions but also within the traditions themselves. Anyone involved or concerned about the relationship between Jews and Palestinians is inevitably positioned, based on what influences have shaped their particular view of the situation. However, the extremists on either side, whose solution is the disappearance of the other side, “from the river to the sea”, do not offer

a positive way forward. While this does not appear to directly concern us as Christians, we are indirectly involved because our history of past persecution of Jewish people down the centuries, which culminated in the Holocaust, produced the context for Jewish people seeking to return to their own ancient homeland in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our culture and religion actually caused the situation.

Both Muslims and Jewish people in our communities appreciate Aotearoa/New Zealand as being a country tolerant of differences in ethnicity and religion, in contrast to many others; however some do suffer periodic discrimination and abuse, based on prejudice and stereotyping. This is particularly true of Muslim women as their distinctive headwear often make them stand out. Likewise, currently Jewish synagogues, visible signs of Judaism in our communities, are regularly defaced in this country. Despite most New Zealanders being friendly and tolerant towards those who are different than the majority, there are a small minority who are not.

What should our approach be towards our Abrahamic sisters and brothers? Because Jews are a tiny invisible minority in our town and country, we are unlikely to knowingly encounter them in our daily lives, unless they choose to let us know their ethnicity if we should meet them. One obvious context in which parishioners could meet Muslim people now is in providing support for new refugees, many of whom are Muslim. However, as there are an increasing number of Muslims now living in our communities, we may also personally encounter them in places like schools, as students or parents, or even in cafes. In such settings, where they may feel uncertain or even ill at ease within our secular Western context, it is important to personally recognize we have a very limited understanding of people of a different culture or religion. They may have difficult backgrounds that it is hard for us to understand or even imagine, and they may find it difficult to talk about that. Primarily we simply need to be open and responsive. We also need to speak out in public situations where we witness mistreatment of Jews or Muslims.

In our approach to those from the other Abrahamic traditions we need to treat them as Christ himself, as Jesus told us. This means showing respect, concern, and care for them individually and also for their collective reality, their cultural and religious practice, even though we may not agree with all that is said or done in their cultural context. It may help us to remember that Jesus himself was a Jew. Following Pope Francis’s lead, through our relationship with our Abrahamic sisters and brothers we can learn to appreciate our differences as being a gift of God that will enrich our sense of our shared humanity and even deepen our faith.



Nick Polaschek is currently the Chair of the Christian Group in the Wellington Abrahamic Council. He and his wife Linda are actively involved in the New Zealand Community for Christian Meditation and are Associates of the Cistercian monastery, Our Lady of Southern Star Abbey, at Kopua in Hawkes Bay. He has a PhD in Nursing with degrees in economics and sociology.

# UPDATES



## The wisdom of the seed and discerning the mission of the synodal Church

After a long Christmas and New Year break we gathered for the first time this year at the McKee's residence in Whitby. Vicky led us into a prayer reflection for the first half of the day. We began by reflecting on our journey in 2023 using the story of Elijah as God reveals Godself in a still small voice. We then moved on to drawing wisdom from the gospel story of the sower as we look forward to 2024. Vicky gave us a moving reflection on the unfolding journey of the seed, drawing from her experience working in the vineyards of Marlborough. In the afternoon, we spent discerning on the question "How can we be a synodal Church in mission?" This was led by Bridget Taumoepeau. It has been a lively discussion of sharing insights and our hopes for the church.

It has been a life-giving day of fellowship and prayer. Thank you to Jude's parents' Brian and Tre McKee for letting us use their beautiful home for the day. Thank you Jude for the wonderful hospitality. Thank you Bridget for leading our discernment session.



## Prayer Day with Regina Daly and Carmel Cole

Make sure it is on your diaries— Prayer Day at Ryan Room, Home of Compassion, Island Bay. In this prayer day, Regina and Carmel will lead us in deepening our sense of ecological connectedness and connecting it with nourishing our spirit of vulnerability by welcoming the autumn season of letting go.



## Launch Out Library

We recently received a donation of good books on theology and ministry from **Cecily McNeill**. If you are looking for resources for your studies or for your pastoral ministry, you are welcome to view and borrow this collection at the Catholic Centre in 204 Thorndon Quay. Or you can email [m.bernardo@wn.catholic.org.nz](mailto:m.bernardo@wn.catholic.org.nz) to see if we have a book in the collection you are looking for. Available to all Candidates, Pastoral Mentors, Spiritual Directors and Graduates.



## Telesia's Graduation

Calling Launch Out Graduates, Candidates, Pastoral Mentors and Spiritual Directors (past and present), please join us in celebrating Telesia's thanksgiving mass for completing her formation in Launch Out. Archbishop Paul Martin, sm, will preside over the celebration.

The word vocation comes from the Latin *Vocare* – to call. The dictionary describes a vocation as a career, an occupational group. Catholic understanding of a vocation, however, is much more linked to the idea of calling, especially a calling from God. Traditionally we tend to think of vocation as relating to the priesthood or religious life, although we are told that vocation also refers to marriage and the single life.

These latter descriptions of 'vocation' seem to describe a state of life, rather than an actual calling. Those of us who have not specifically chosen to take Holy Orders or religious vows would probably feel we have landed up in the married state or single life in ways other than by being called. Of course, having found ourselves there, then we need to consider how we live that state, striving to be closer to God.

The website of an overseas Archdiocese states that "God calls you through baptism and confirmation to serve Him in a specific way of life. You can follow God's call as a single person, married person, ordained priest or a vowed religious." Interestingly, the lay state is not specifically named, yet many are called, and intentionally enter into lay ministry. Would they, if asked, say that their vocation was to lay ministry or would they refer to the categories of married and single?

Similarly, the church does not seem to acknowledge that one might have more than one vocation – either concurrently or consecutively (there is no intention to compare this to terms of imprisonment!) Many priests and religious have had other vocations before entering religious life. Some may leave religious life and return to the lay state, either married or single, and others may have so called 'late vocations' to the priesthood, for example, after being widowed. Recently the permanent diaconate has been established, which involves people in a lay state to be actively involved in service to the people of God.

All this is noted to illustrate that the idea of vocation, has, up until now, been rather restrictive in its definition and we, especially as lay people working specifically for the Church, should take a wider view.

Thomas O'Loughlin, a British priest, and theologian, writes of "*The Vocations Muddle*<sup>1</sup>. He feels that as Catholics we have an impoverished idea of the meaning of vocation. In his article he espouses the idea that 'Every human being has a vocation. To be is to be called. To exist is to have a vocation.' He addresses the idea that vocation can be both constant and changing. In general, we are all called to be disciples, to be part of the body of Christ, but individually we are unique, different from any other human being and also different from how we were some years before, and how we will be in the future. The call, however, 'is to follow the path shown us by Jesus as the way to the Father.'

He refers to St Paul's writing on gifts – the gifts of the Spirit. (1 Cor 12:4-12.) As we know, they are varied, and we could add many other categories of gift - listening; dispute resolution; being able to motivate others etc. Added to this is the idea that some societies do not yet appreciate the many and varied gifts of women. O'Loughlin distinguishes between gifts and skills and the need for training and formation in order to be of service to God, our community, our Church. This he links to the idea of ministry, or the many ministries, that are ways of service.

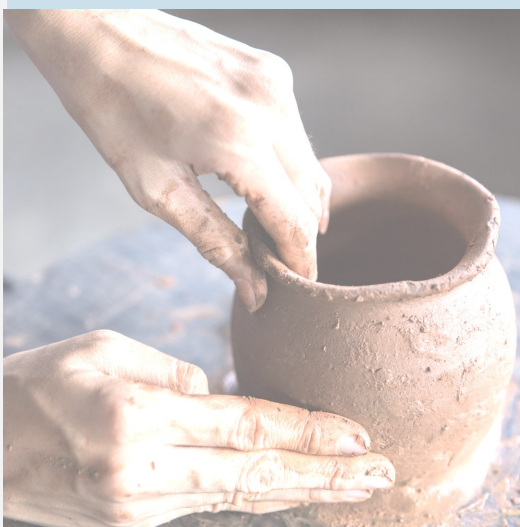
My personal journey might illustrate some of these points: as a child I was always interested in God. I was exposed to many forms of Christianity through my childhood and young adulthood, none of which seemed to fulfil my desire for a close relationship with God, or to reflect Gospel values, until I experienced Catholicism through both French people with whom I lived, and the experience of visiting the very Catholic Republic of Ireland on many summer holidays.



That decision to ‘convert’ as the saying goes, would be my first experience of vocation. Preparation was long and included study and instruction and involvement in the church and liturgy, before I took the step of being formally received into the Church. Certainly, it fulfilled the mission of striving to be closer to God and to be of service. I subsequently married, without much consultation with God as far as I recall, but that led to the joy and vocation of bringing up children in the Church and being involved in a church community.

As a teenager, I was making decisions about my future career and was attracted to medicine, partly because I was quite good at science, but due more to the idea of helping and healing people. Later I was interested in the Medical Mission orders, but it was obvious that I was not called to the religious life. However, especially over ten years in Tonga I would consider that I approached my work with a missionary attitude. There was much to be done in the development of services and I was also in a position of having had the privilege of good medical education, now being able to apply that, and to learn many more new skills.

There was also the joy of working with the Calvary Sisters who ran a clinic in Tonga and demonstrated dedicated care of their community, while maintaining excellent medical/nursing standards. Later in my time in Tonga, I ran, with WHO, a training centre for local health workers, which was a wonderful experience - seeing the opportunity for young Tongans to learn, in relevant ways, how to contribute to the health and wellbeing of their country. So, even then, there were two vocations running side by side – medicine and family life.



My choice, in middle age, to specialise in psychiatry was partly due to a serendipitous exposure to working in mental health services and becoming aware of the great need for care and compassion in those often despised by society. My introduction to *Te Whare Tapa*<sup>2</sup> sat very comfortably with me, as it addressed the spiritual needs of a person as well as the more familiar mental and physical needs. So, I would say that my vocation to medicine was developing and expanding.

After retirement, I undertook a degree in theology, which I would consider another vocation – the desire to study God and my religion, not just for intellectual reasons, but also to allow me to be able to contribute to my church community. In my family life the vocation was more directed towards grandchildren, than children, again as an extension of the original vocation developed during marriage.

All vocations, regardless of definition, require discernment – a decision making process that involves talking to God, as well as examining what it is in the proposed way of life that brings us joy and consolation – the Ignatian term for bringing us closer to God. Christin Bothe, a high school theology teacher in the US, writes about “*How do you know what to do with your life*”<sup>3</sup> In the article she states, “Discernment is not a matter of suppressing parts of who we are, to fit an abstract notion of ‘God’s will.’ It is an invitation to a place where we can say with frankness and sincerity, ‘I love my life’”. Another way of saying we are in consolation.

In considering, or discerning a vocation of any kind, there should be some curiosity – a degree of exploration. Victor Cancino, SJ, writes of “*The importance of curiosity to a vocation*”<sup>4</sup> He states, “Curiosity helps one maintain a life of service to the Lord.” Jesus himself recognises this when he says to some of the disciples “what are you looking for?” and then invites them to “come and see” (Jn 1:38-39).

But overall, vocation is a call to love – to give of oneself in a loving way. To follow the commandment of Jesus to love God and to love each other, despite the risk of disappointment or hurt. How we choose to do that is what we need to explore and discern.

Are not we all invited to look, to come and see, to talk to God about what he wants of us, recognising that which gives us joy and brings us closer to that same God.

<sup>1</sup>Thomas O’Loughlin, “The Vocations Muddle,” *La Croix International*, 3 January 2023.

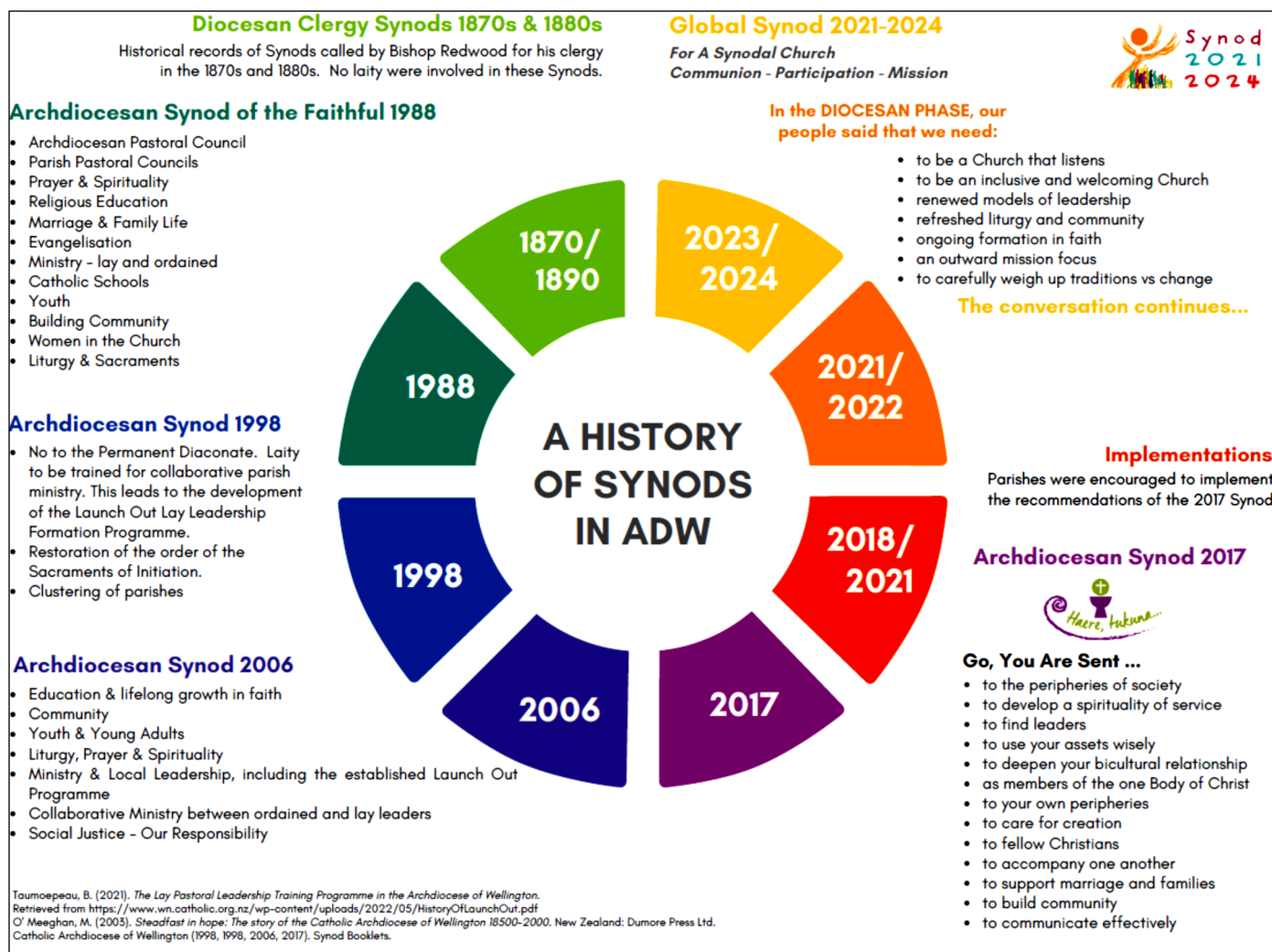
<sup>2</sup>Mason Durie, “*Te Whare Tapa Wha*,” Model of health and wellbeing, 1984.

<sup>3</sup>Christin Bothe, “What monks and College students taught me about commitment,” *America. The Jesuit Review*, October 12, 2023.

<sup>4</sup>Victor Cancino, SJ, “The importance of curiosity to a vocation,” *America. The Jesuit Review*, January 10, 2024.



# Snapshot of the history of synods of the Archdiocese of Wellington



Visual designed and created by Lucienne Hensel, Launch Out Graduate and Parish Ministry Advisor, Church Mission

The above visual captures the historical development of synod in the Archdiocese of Wellington (ADW). It is interesting to note that ADW is the only diocese in New Zealand, and among the few in the world that has used synod in guiding its pastoral vision and direction.

Wellington is unique in New Zealand in its tradition of regular synods. The first recorded one was in 1870, which was a very clerical affair with the doors closed to laity after the opening Mass. The modern archdiocesan synods began in 1988. Cardinal Williams outlined the reasons for holding a synod, including the desire to “Communicate the vision of Vatican II in the Archdiocese and to implement more fully its teaching.” From 1988 onwards the synods followed a pattern of thorough preparation; significant lay participation; publishing the outcome; and having follow up implementation of the decisions.

The 1998 synod was the last synod of Cardinal Tom Williams and the one that ratified the creation of Lay Pastoral Leaders, which later on led to the establishment of Launch Out. The synods of 2006 and 2017 were the synods led by Cardinal John Dew. The current synodal process, starting in 2021 up to the present, was in response to the Synod on Synodality called by Pope Francis.

Bridget Taumoepeau

Author, History of the Launch Out Formation Programme (2022)

<https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/HistoryOfLaunchOut.pdf>