

LAUNCH OUT LETTERS (LOL)

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

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Welcome to the December issue of the Launch Out Letters.

This is our 10th and last issue for 2024. Initially I thought we can only publish 9 but ended with 10, and I can't thank God enough for a bumper crop of contributions that came. To all the Candidates, Pastoral Mentors, Spiritual Directors, Graduates and friends who shared their wisdom, opened their heart and their stories to witness to God's love—thank you!

For December we have **Rutger Keijser** leading the reflection for the Nativity Gospel. I like the imagery of 'building blocks of Christmas' he used, referring to the LEGO pieces he played with as a child. All of what we know, have and see came from granular pieces that come together. Even the universe is made up of unseen atomic particles. Our spiritual growth happens in small movements, often undetected until a certain moment brings it to the fore, revealing the work of God in our souls. The little of things of Christmas—God coming as a baby, through simple folks like Mary and Joseph, born in the small town of Bethlehem. Ordinary, not spectacular. I see the power of small things in the fruition of the Candidates' pastoral ministries. They often start small, with many stops and starts, until the little things—patience, an encounter, the feeble prayers for grace amidst the difficulties, became the building blocks of a ministry where they and the people are nourished. In this issue we get a snapshot of the pastoral projects of the Candidates for 2024, which they presented to Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, the leaders of the ADW, and the Launch Out community, last 23 November. It was a wonderful day of prayer and celebration.

Our final article is from our regular contributor and Launch Out theologian, **Bridget Taumoepeau**. She writes about the recently concluded Synod on Synodality—where to now? The building of a synodal Church is a work of patience. We start with ourselves, then with each other and bringing people on board, one listening at a time. If we look closely enough. God is in the details.

I wish you and your families a Christ-filled Christmas and New Year.

Maya Bernardo, Launch Out Formator and Manager

Volume 4, Issue 10, 2024

Gospel Reflection by Rutger Keijser ... Page 2

Pastoral Presentation 2024.. Page 3

Candidates' Pastoral Projects...4

Online Resources and Updates...Page 6

The Synod has ended, where to now? ...Page 7

Christmas Greetings...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

For comments and suggestions email:

m.bernardo@wn.catholic.org.nz

Visit the Te Hao Nui-Launch Out webpage: [https://](https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/about/church-mission/launch-out-formation-programme/)

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The Building Blocks of Christmas

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

By Rutger Keijser
Launch Out Candidate



Christmas has always been my favourite time of the year. As a child, growing up in northern Europe, Christmas meant snow (climate change has since taken care of that), family gatherings, a huge Christmas tree and my yearly project of building a LEGO something for under the tree. This was when LEGO only came in five colours and without all the fancy bits you will find in today's LEGO sets, so my Christmas projects varied between red churches, white chapels, nativity scenes in five colours and the occasional Christmas train. As long as it related to (my understanding of) the Christmas story, it worked for me. I did not choose my LEGO projects randomly though. Choosing what object to build and what features it needed to have, could be time-consuming as it required me to reflect on *why* that particular object or feature mattered to me that year. For instance, at the end of a difficult year I would build a church or chapel with little lamps inside to light up my mood, or a train to take me to distant places. In the eyes of a child, the possibilities are boundless.

An image that each year came to life before my eyes was the angel appearing before the shepherds (Lk 2:9), soon followed (Lk 2:13) by an army of angels singing God's praises. Can you imagine sitting in the fields at night, going about your business, and all of a sudden, a beautiful person appears out of nowhere to tell you that the Messiah has been born in Bethlehem? Nowadays you would take out your phone, record it and share it on Instagram, but the shepherds were not on Instagram so they did what anyone else would have done in those days: go to Bethlehem to check it out (Lk 2:15). And behold, they found Joseph, Mary, and the baby, and when they saw them, they shared what the angel had said about the child. And then the Gospel says, "All who heard it were amazed by what the shepherds told" (Lk 2:18).

Continues on Page 3

Who is this 'All'? Wasn't the Holy Family sheltering in some cave and if so, who were the people standing around them? Here it pays to look at the original text. The Gospel (Lk 2:7) states that "there was no room for them in the inn." In Greek though, the word καταλυμα (*kataluma*) is used, which is primarily a guest room. Now compare this with the words Luke used in the parable of the Good Samaritan: "the Samaritan found the wounded man and put him up in an inn" (Lk 10:34). Here, Luke uses the word πανδοχειο (*pandocheio*) to describe the inn. It is safe to say that the *kataluma* Joseph and Mary were staying in was not a *pandocheio*, a roadside inn commonly found along major roads, but the family room of the house of a relative. Remember that Joseph, Son of David, went to Bethlehem to register for the census. It is likely that Joseph had relatives in Bethlehem he could stay with. As the guest room was already taken however, Joseph and Mary ended up in the family room which in those days was shared with some livestock. When Mary was due to give birth, Joseph's female relatives would have assisted her. Afterwards, males would be allowed back in the room. So, when the shepherds shared their story, they likely spoke to all of Joseph's relatives gathered in the family room to admire the newborn baby.

What about Mary then? Luke wrote that "Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). Scholars agree that Mary was 15 or 16 years old when she gave birth to Jesus, and 14 when Gabriel appeared before her (Lk 1:28). She will have spent hours pondering on Gabriel's words, and the group of excited shepherds telling her and her relatives that this baby was the Messiah will not have come as a total surprise to her. Didn't Gabriel promise her that "no word from God will ever fail" (Lk 1:37)?

Again, there is more depth in the Greek original than the English translation. Luke uses the words παντα συνετηρει (*panta suntereie*) and συμβαλλουσα (*sumballousa*). *Sunteteie* comes from the word *untereo*, which implies protection and remembrance. *Sumballo* implies preserving and observing. Thus, Mary makes a *deliberate effort to preserve her knowledge for later use*. Just as the shepherds are watching their flocks (Lk 2:8), Mary 'watches' what has happened in her life, continually interpreting what God is doing in her life, remembering, and connecting events. Mary was truly an incredibly wise young woman, a 'gentle and kind spirit' (1 Peter 3:4).

While Mary was reflecting on everything that had happened to her since Gabriel appeared before her, nine months earlier, the shepherds were ecstatic, singing praises to God for what they had heard and seen (Lk 2:20). The spirit of Christmas holds both qualities: Mary's thoughtful introspection and the joyful happiness of the shepherds. Our

well-known Christmas hymns echo the ecstasy, when we sing of the newborn King, the little town of Bethlehem and the angels singing in the night. Today's Psalm tells us to rejoice and be glad (Ps 97:1). Christmas is a time to celebrate with family, friends, and whanau.

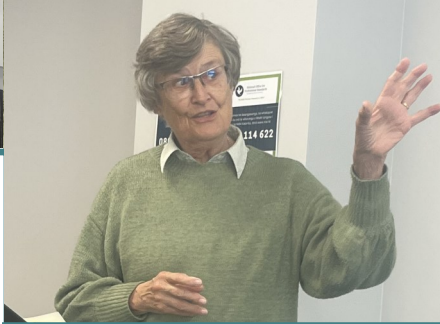
But Christmas is also a time to ponder and reflect on what has happened in your life. What mattered to you most over the year gone by? Where did God come to your aid? Like Mary, what did you keep, reflecting on it in your heart? I no longer use LEGO to express my feelings. The bricks I used in my youth have literally crumbled and returned to dust. The careful reflection has stood the test of time however and goes hand in hand with the joyful celebration of the birth of Jesus. Let us be thankful for both.



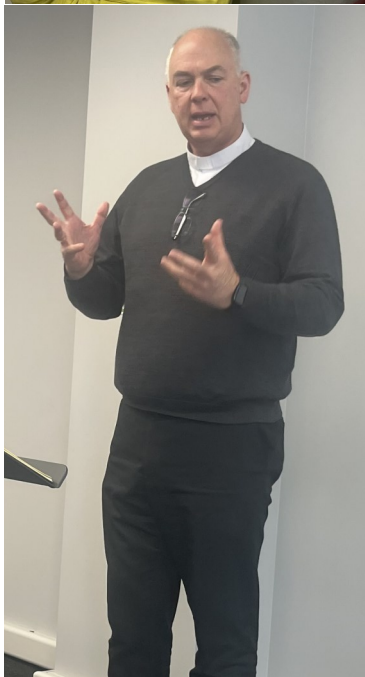
Pastoral Presentation 2024



Launch Out Angels. Simone Olsen (daughter of Jackie Jansen, Graduate) and Mely Lau (former Candidate). Simone gave us a festive spread to celebrate the occasion and the Christmas season. Mely made our scones.



The wind beneath our wings. We are so blessed to have the guidance and love of our Pastoral Mentors—Susan Apathy, Bridget Taumoepeau and Mary Jackson Kay, RC and Spiritual Directors-- Clare O' Connor, RC. Regina Daly, PBVM and Neil Vaney, SM didn't make it to the big day but were very much with us in spirit and love.



Thank you to **Archbishop Paul Martin, SM** who continue to support and inspire our work. In our presentation he is keen to see how our experiences and the wisdom we draw from our pastoral journey. We are also thankful to other supporters, **Mary Ann Greaney** (not in the photos), Launch Out Graduate who linked the graduates' stories with the Candidates. **Chris Duthie-Jung**, Director of Church Mission underpins the Archdiocese's commitment to lay formation. Thank you too to **Kevin Crighton**, Launch Out Graduate who led the closing the prayer with such depth and love. Thank you to **Christine Walkerdine** for all around support in making this day happen. Thank you to whānau who came to support Candidates, specially **Landa**, Rutger's wife who blessed us with her lively presence. Shout out to **Fr Bill Warick**, Parish Priest of Holy Trinity Parish and **Simone Meech**, DRS of Holy Cross Miramar, who came to support Margaret. **Fr Kevin Mowbray, SM** of St Mary's of the Angels, also dropped by to support Rutger.

Margaret, Vicky, Jude, Rutger and Maya capped the day with drinks and our usual Christmas card-writing tradition. Vicky flaunts a drink that 'shall never be named'.

Te Hao Nui- Launch Out Pastoral Presentation 2024



Rutger Keijser- St Mary's of the Angels (SMoA)

This year is Rutger's first year as a Launch Out Candidate. He started out by getting involved with two programmes ran by SMoA, namely: 1) the Aged Care Project where he aimed to find a subgroup supporting a new community or retirement home and make a start with regular visits; and 2) identify a succinct event supporting the National Shrine; the event chosen was the Assumption of Mary on 15 August. St Mary's Young Adult group were asked to organise this, and he would provide support. However, both projects unveiled challenges of working in a parish context that is different from his 35 years of managerial experience. Meanwhile, other aspects of his ministry grew—he was appointed member of the Parish Pastoral Council, and he started his formation as an Associate of Kopua Monastery. A possibility of collaborating with the Archdiocese in its plans for the Jubilee year is in the works.

A nugget of wisdom Rutger picked up is—not to be ambitious, but also, not to give up.

Jude McKee- St Theresa's Plimmerton

With a new Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), St Theresa's Plimmerton had the opportunity to set out on a path that aligned with Pope Francis' and Archbishop Paul's desire that we should be a synodal missionary Church. Jude reflects that we often make assumptions that people understand 'church' language and, therefore, have a clear understanding of what we are being called to be. That's not always the case. Hence, Jude chose a project that would help form the group. The PPC members were guided through the process of immersing themselves in a synodal way to discern our current Mission Statement, and whether it was relevant for our community today. The members engaged fully in their own prayer time and came well prepared to the PPC table on the final night. They gathered with a guided prayer experience. The synodal process which followed was certainly spirit-lead and the feedback from the PPC members was very positive.

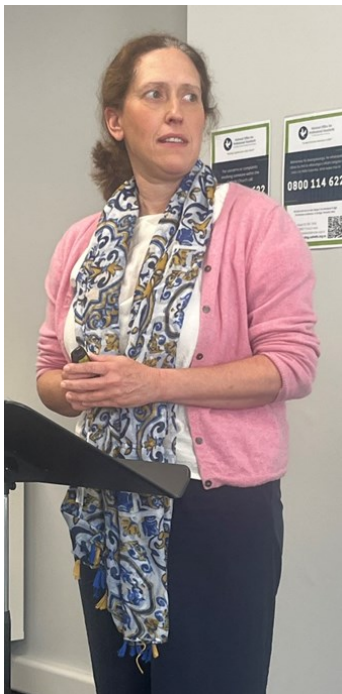


Mary Kay, RC, Jude's mentor, who was also involved with her pastoral project, acknowledged her good leadership and her faith in delivering her pastoral project. Mary shared a book mark to the audience with the poem of Anne Powell, RC on Contemplation.

Continues on Page 6

Margaret Bearsley- Holy Trinity Parish

Margaret Bearsley presented on her experiences with establishing the Archdiocesan programme Building Families of Faith in one of the three Catholic primary schools in her parish, Holy Trinity in Wellington's Eastern suburbs. A theme that expressed itself throughout 2024 for Margaret, her parish priest, and the teachers with whom she was liaising, was BUSY. So busy in fact, that despite her perseverance and the goodwill of everyone involved, a start date for Building Families of Faith in 2024 slipped through the net. Margaret spoke of learning through failure, and of trusting in the Lord. She acknowledged the mission we have as disciples to proclaim the Good News, to evangelise through our day-to-day encounters. She expressed a powerful conviction that Building Families of Faith will commence at Holy Cross school, Miramar, in 2025, and concluded her presentation with questions about some of the challenges for evangelisation within the Catholic school system.



Vicky Raw- Te Whetu o te Moana (Star of the Sea Parish, Marlborough)

Star of the Sea (SOTs) parish has not run an RCIA programme since before COVID-19, which is a long time for any parish not to have an RCIA. Last year (2023), Vicky along with members of the parish's Discipleship Group, used the Sycamore faith formation programme to grow and develop leaders and grow in their understanding about evangelization and how to go about it. This gave them traction in re-launching RCIA. Sycamore, along with the book *At Home with God's People*, provided a valuable resource for running the RCIA programme for 2024. She worked with four other parishioners—Simon Popham, Cameron Vawter, Bob Boardman and Phil Eves. The RCIA was able to attract 6 individuals, 2 of whom are catechumens and 4 are candidates. Vicky credits their team's agility to respond to the needs of the RCIA candidates, such as giving them bibles early on (instead of during the day of the baptism), enlisting other parishioners to look after the kids of the candidates as they attend their formation and most importantly to be a team that prays together.

Bernadette Patelesio- Te Wairua Tapu Parish

Bernadette could not make it in person to the day, but she prepared a video, and her mentor Bridget Taumoepeau answered the questions. Bernadette continued coordinating the sacramental programme, which covers four churches and three schools. This year, they tried to do things differently, such as: 1) using more culturally relevant materials in sessions and liturgies; 2) met with families less but for longer, to lessen the pressure for the parents; 3) delegated administration to the team, and 4) they started planning earlier. God never fails to surprise; the Confirmation and the Eucharist went well, and a new team of leaders emerged to run the sacramental programme next year.

Parish Needs - 4 churches, 3 schools



ONLINE RESOURCES

- [Food for Faith https://foodforfaith.org.nz/](https://foodforfaith.org.nz/)
- The Birth of Jesus- Two Narratives (A Tutorial)
<https://www.bc.edu/bc-web/schools/stm/sites/crossroads/resources/mini-course/birth-of-jesus.html>
- Joe Grayland interviews Phyllis Zagano on the Diaconate
Deacons, the diaconate and women deacons - Phyllis Zagano
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9DGGXJVYDtDg&ab_channel=FlashesofInsight
- Audio-recording of speeches of the Wellington Abrahamic Council talk on "Sarah and Hajjar/Hagar, Our Abrahamic Matriarchs" <https://abrahamic.nz/2024/10/sarah-and-hajjar-hagar-our-abrahamic-matriarchs/>
- 3-minute retreats from Loyola Press. Their latest is a reflection by Joyce Donohue on the "Messiah has come" <https://www.loyolapress.com/3-minute-retreats-daily-online-prayer/>
- New issue from the Wellington Theological Consortium- [SomeThink! Dangerous Ideas](#) featuring contributors from the Catholic sector---Dr John Kleinsman, Director of Nathaniel Centre and Nick Polascheck of the Wellington Abrahamic Council.



A Christmas prezzy from Mother Aubert !!!

We especially would like to thank the **Sisters of Compassion** for sponsoring Te Hao Nui- Launch Out's venues for 2025. This is the 2nd year they have provided generously to us. Thank you!



The Synod has ‘ended’ - where to now?

By Bridget Taumoepeau
Pastoral Mentor



Copied from <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2024-10/synod-briefing-day-10-synod-focuses-on-decision-making.html>

The Synod on Synodality – Communion, Participation, Mission.

It has been a long journey and a very different experience of a Synod of Bishops. Probably in the past we would not have been very aware of the process followed at a synod, nor of the ‘interventions’ given, and maybe not even the connection between the synod and the subsequent Apostolic Exhortation written by the Pope of the time.

On this occasion we could call it more of a ‘bottom-up approach.’ We were introduced to the synodal process in 2021. First of all, we had to understand what synodality meant. Then we had to learn the process of spiritual conversation, including the all-important roles of silence and listening in our meetings.

We met at local levels, then there were Diocesan and National meetings, and finally Continental meetings, with the summaries being sent to Rome. We could follow that process and see our concerns arriving in Rome to be discerned and discussed by an international gathering of bishops, priests, religious and lay, including women. It has been referred to as the greatest consultation process ever undertaken.

That alone was different, as was the structure of the meeting. No longer in a lecture type theatre with prelates placed in order of seniority, with the opportunity for only a brief, somewhat formal, chance to speak, but instead mixed groups gathered around round tables, with all having equal rights to speak and express their views. That was summed up by the famous quote from the meeting – ‘Your Eminence, she hasn’t finished speaking!’

Two synod meetings ensued in Rome, a year apart. The first looked at specific issues, some of which were subsequently referred to study groups, for more research and decision making to take place. The second considered the principles of synodality itself and how that can be inculcated into the Church at every level. Both meetings finished with all participants voting on each proposal, all of which passed with varying degrees of agreement.

Continues on Page 8

At the end of the second meeting in Rome there was another surprise – the Pope announced that he would not be writing an Apostolic Exhortation. Instead, he asked that the final document stand as it is, so this work of hundreds of people from around the world and from many different situations will become part of the *magisterium* (teaching) of the Church. That, in itself, is an example of true synodality. As the Pope said, the synodal journey did not end with the second meeting but, “continues in the local churches and their groups, treasuring the final document.” Furthermore, he has added a degree of urgency, asking that bishops prepare to give reports of their implementation to present to him, when they meet for their regular ‘*ad limina*’ meetings in Rome.

An enormous amount of writing and discussion about the synod has taken place over these years, including here on LOL. It is a fulltime job to keep up with all the opinions expressed. Brickbats and bouquets abound. It has not been plain sailing and the work is by no means finished. Many contentious issues remain unresolved. I would encourage everyone to read as much as possible about the different opinions, many written by eminent authors and commentators. So, it is now time, perhaps, to look to the future and our responsibility to inform ourselves of this extraordinary event in the Church and consider how we can incorporate the whole process into the life of the Church.

This will not be an easy task for various reasons. Change is always difficult. Many people at parish level have not taken notice of what is happening, have not taken part in synodal groups and probably do not see the relevance for them. The Church has a long history of hierarchical structure, which has been somewhat challenged by the synod and may be a difficult adaptation for both clergy and laity. And, we know all too well, that things move slowly in the Church. The synod was closely linked to the Second Vatican Council and we are aware that the changes outlined in the documents of that Council, have not yet been promulgated throughout the Church, despite it being nearly 70 years since that meeting.

Furthermore, it is the responsibility of everyone in the Church, not just those in leadership roles, to absorb the fruits of this synod, and incorporate them into the life of the Church. What could that look like? Archbishop Costelloe, President of the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference and a participant at the synod suggested that this will be ‘a sign of contradiction in the world.’

From the lay point of view, this is a challenge to us all to take up an active role in Church life. Up until now it has been easy to be passive – how often have we heard: ‘We should ask Father about that!’ So, we need to educate ourselves, undertake formation; consider our gifts and how we can contribute to the well being of our communities; be more reflective and ensure that our meetings together involve prayer, listening and moments of silence to allow us to discern the way forward; be inclusive in all that we do – not leaving it to a few to manage everything. The current interest in Divine Renovation is an opportunity to review the elements of the synod – Communion, Participation and Mission – how we can be a welcoming community, spreading the good news of the Gospel, really living and demonstrating a Christian way of life.

The Pope has issued a challenge to us, all of us, “that it will be possible to proceed, through synodal discernment and within the framework of the possibilities indicated in the final document, to the creative activation of new forms of ministry and missionary action, experimenting and verifying experiences.”

There is no turning back. Are we up to the challenge?



First row from the left: Maya Bernardo, Clare O' Connor and Bridget Taumoepeau
 Second row from the left: Mary Kay, RC, Vicky Raw, Margaret Bearsley, Bonita Tasele and Susan Apathy
 Third row from the left: Archbishop Paul Martin, SM, Jude McKee and Rutger Keijser.

