

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 first issue for 2025!

As we begin this season of Lent, we are invited to reflect on the first Sunday Gospel of Lent on the temptation of Jesus. In [Susan Apathy's](#) gospel reflection, she encourages us to view the desert not only as a place of challenge but also as a space for conversion. This desert is not just a literal one; it represents the difficult times in life, including the struggles we face in our ministry. During this Lenten season, we are called to intentionally choose to enter into our own deserts, and allow ourselves to be purified and transformed.

In this issue, we present the Te Hao Nui - Launch Out Candidates for 2025. It is a moment to get to know these dedicated individuals and to pray for them as they journey through the demands of their formation. Their commitment is nothing short of inspiring. These candidates, who juggle demanding careers, family responsibilities, and the rigorous requirements of the Launch Out program—theological studies, pastoral projects, prayer days, retreats, pastoral learning, and spiritual direction—are truly answering a unique vocation. The formation process takes years, often 4-8 years, and is not for the faint of heart. It is a vocation to grow intimately in love with God and express that love through service. Their journey in many ways mirrors the passion and death of Jesus. Like many of us, they go through many seasons of dryness and doubts and giving up is one of the biggest temptations.

I feel deeply privileged to walk alongside these remarkable Christian leaders, watching them grow and persevere in their formation. Let us continue to support them in prayer, that they may stay steadfast in their commitment and continue to grow in zeal in their service to the Church.

In a fitting way, [Bridget Taumoepeau](#) offers an alternative Way of the Cross for Lay Leaders and Ministers, which invites us to pray through our challenges. We are also grateful to [Mary Kay, RC](#), for the beautiful photographs she captured during a walk on the beach in Waikanae during the dark moments of the pandemic. These images, combined with Bridget's reflection, create a powerful prayer resource to guide us through Lent.

As we look ahead to 2025, a Jubilee Year with the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope,' we are reminded that, like the candidates and all of us, we are pilgrims on a journey of hope. Lent, for me, is the most hopeful liturgical season because it is through the passion of Jesus, when all seems to fail and fall into darkness, we find the enduring power of unconditional love that makes hope possible.

May we all embrace the Lenten journey with the same perseverance, knowing that hope, like Jesus' passion, sustains us through every challenge.

Maya Bernardo, Migrant Ministry & Formation Coordinator



*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

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

The desert as a place of conversion

1st Sunday of Lent, Luke 4:1-13

By Susan Apathy
Pastoral Mentor



By Wolfgang Hasselman <https://unsplash.com/photos/dessert-field-pVr6wvUneMk>

The readings for the first Sunday of Lent focus on our relationship with God. In the first reading the Jewish community makes thanks offerings to God for their deliverance from the Egyptians. In the epistle Paul writes that anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, and in the gospel Jesus confronts the devil during his forty days alone in the desert and is able to defeat him, by calling on scripture. They are all readings about gratitude, and humility.

Let's concentrate on the Gospel. Jesus has only just been baptised by John, then he has experienced the Holy Spirit descending on him and a voice saying "You are my beloved Son, my favour

rests on you." Filled with the Holy Spirit he goes into the wilderness for forty days where he is tempted endlessly by the devil – what a comedown after being filled with the Holy Spirit and told he was favoured by God. He had perhaps expected a continuation of the ecstasy after his Baptism, and a continuation of the power that might have filled him? But it doesn't last. Nevertheless, he continues his efforts to pray, to face God, to seek the path God is leading him on.

Ecstasy gives way to hunger, possibly to the desire that people who have already begun to crowd round him as a leader will come and rescue him and confirm his leadership by serving him, bringing what he might need. As one who has been filled with the Holy Spirit he might also wish that God's angels will guard him in a spectacular way, matching the glory he has already experienced, and no doubt reinforcing his growing reputation among the Jewish people.

But Jesus is well versed in the scriptures and knows that the history of the people of Israel doesn't work quite that easily. He calls on key statements from the scriptures. "Man does not live by bread alone.... Worship the Lord your God and serve him alone... do not put the Lord your God to the test." It doesn't matter how much God's blessing has descended on him, the real work must be based on faith and trust, and it will be hard work.

We know from this what we are called to do – to rely always on God, to look into our hearts in simplicity, and to try to ensure that what we pray for is truly what God wants. (And here, it's obvious that what God wants is a concentration on the needs of the poorest and the meek and lowly).

We must remember, as Paul says, that "All belong to the same Lord who is rich enough, however many ask for his help, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans: 10: 12-13)" This reminds us of the humility and generosity with which we must act if we are to keep our hearts truly oriented to God, and God's will. This is the humility of the people who always remember they were wandering Arameans, who found refuge in their misery, and deeply committed themselves to God, their only salvation.

Here is part of a reflection by Fr Ron Rolheiser. Most of us are in the second half of our lives, and so this may have particular relevance to us!

*"In his book *Report to Greco*, Nikos Kazantzakis tells the story of a conversation he had with an old monk: "Do you still wrestle with the devil, Father Makarios?" I asked him. "Not any longer, my child. I have grown old now, and he has grown old with me. He doesn't have the strength. ... now I wrestle with God." "With God!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "And you hope to win?" "I hope to lose, my child. My bones remain with me still, and they continue to resist."*

Continues on Page 3

As we grow older, what, in our bones, continues to resist God? How is it that we switch from wrestling with the devil to struggling with God?

We wrestle with the devil when we struggle with the weaknesses of youth, but we wrestle with God when we struggle with the angers and resentments of aging. The latter is the struggle to move beyond the death of our dreams, beyond how we have been wounded and cheated and all the resentments that come with that, so as to feel instead inside of us the compassion of God. That is the final task of the spiritual life: the movement from resentment to gratitude, from cursing to blessing, from bitterness to graciousness.”

We can reflect on what Jesus wrestled with in himself in the desert – the desires for success and achievement that we all face in our younger lives. Those desires continue to be with us well into our middle years and our job is to be aware of how they entwine with our search for God, and our search to save others. We might consider the relationship between the path to leadership and the path to humility, love and simplicity. We move gradually towards, and inevitably put off, confronting the later stage of struggling with God. But there are many around us who face old age or who, while still young, face significant ongoing illness, and we cannot accompany them if we do not also understand something of the sorrow of confronting what we will not be able to achieve.

So what might we give attention to during this Lent?

Perhaps we might reflect frequently on Jesus’s time in the desert, when he confronted the question of how he was to deal with the next years of his life, when he must put into practice what has been revealed to him. He did not seek to become a Rabbi. Much of his “teaching” was simply shown through his actions. He healed the sick and fed the poor, and spent much of his time providing whatever the poor might need at the moment he was with them. It is all so simple, and also so difficult.

Alternatively, we might spend time placing ourselves in the place of Jesus in the desert, and retelling the story with ourselves in the central role. What might we find out about ourselves and our temptations?

As we consider ourselves. in our personal deserts, we might confront our bones, what we can give up, and we might draw strength from simplifying and purifying our personal commitments.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- [Food for Faith https://foodforfaith.org.nz/](https://foodforfaith.org.nz/)
- A video from the School for Synodality (in YOUTUBE) An interview with Bishop Nicholas Hudson, Episcopal Secretary of the Bishops’ Conference, and a papal pick for the recent XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops – the Synod on Synodality https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2RZpt6FKJ3w&ab_channel=SchoolforSynodality
- Final Synod Document https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf
- Jubilee News and Resources from the ADW <https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/jubilee-2025/>



LENTEN RESOURCES

- Caritas Lenten Resources <https://www.caritas.org.nz/lent-resources>
- **Wise and Holy Women of Lent: Art and Stories** by Br. Michael O’Neill McGrath, O.S.F.S (Boston College Clough School of Theology)
 - ◇ PART 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W1gdYLYCDh0&ab_channel=BCCloughSchoolofTheologyandMinistryCont.Ed
 - ◇ PART 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hf3Tdpu2dgM&ab_channel=BCCloughSchoolofTheologyandMinistryCont.Ed

2025 TE HAO NUI- LAUNCH OUT CANDIDATES

Rutger Keijser – Rutger joined Launch Out last year. Rutger was born and raised in the Netherlands. He moved with his wife Landa to New Zealand in January 2007. Rutger works for Transpower, NZ's national grid owner and operator, and is responsible for risk management, assurance and emergency management. Raised in a protestant family, Rutger over the years developed a love for the Benedictine and Celtic forms of Christianity, and recently converted to the Catholic Church as a part of his journey to further evolve his spiritual and pastoral life. Rutger is an active member of Saint Mary of the Angels' parish. Rutger feels called to further integrate his work life and his spiritual life, by making faith a bigger part of his life. Depending on where the Holy Spirit guides him, this could take several forms, such as supporting the sick and elderly as a chaplain or working to prepare parishes for the more frequent and severe effects of climate-induced and other disasters. Rutger is currently an Associate of Kopua Monastery, active member of the Christian Meditation community, and a member of the Parish Pastoral Council of St Mary's of the Angels. His pastoral mentor is Susan Apathy.



Jude McKee- Jude is New Zealand-born. She has two older brothers and a younger sister. She is a 'professional' aunty to her nieces, nephews, and also to a little great-nephew who is a grand wee man! Jude cared for her mother, Terese, for some time in their home after her father died. Terese is now in full-time care. Jude recently took up the role of Executive Assistant for Archbishop Paul Martin – a far cry from her previous role in the rugby environment for over 24 years. But Jude has 3 loves – her faith, her family, and rugby! Jude saw the opportunity to immerse her administrative skills attained through rugby, and her training thus far through her Launch Out Formation programme, as a true gift from God. She came to ADW with the blessing of her family, friends, and previous employers who knew they could not compete! In sharing of her faith, Jude is passionate about bringing people together to pray and share their stories over a meal. She is very active within the Plimmerton Parish of St Theresa's and has a special interest in ensuring the youth of the parish are actively involved in praise and worship. This is Jude's last year in Launch Out. Her pastoral mentor was Mary Jackson Kay, RC.



Margaret Bearsley-Margaret joined Launch Out in 2019. She is originally from Waikato and now lives in Wellington. Margaret studied theology through Holy Cross College in Mosgiel in the late 1980s. After two years working at the National Centre for Religious Studies in Auckland, she returned to Hamilton to study law at Waikato Law School. When her husband died in 2011 after a long illness, she began to consider how she could again become active in parish life, initially beginning with involvement in St Vinnies. Her intentions in becoming a member of the Holy Trinity Parish Pastoral Council in 2019 were to help the amalgamated parish flourish as a united Catholic community and support parishioners' spiritual growth and missionary outreach. Undertaking the Launch Out programme provides many opportunities for her to discern her calling to support parish life and growth. Margaret is now in her final year in Launch Out and she is currently writing a book on evangelising to people who are not sure what they are looking for. This is Margaret's last year in Launch Out. Susan Apathy was her pastoral mentor.





Vicky Raw– Victoria joined Launch Out in 2019. She is by nationality a Piwi – half a Pom and half a Kiwi –but she also has Portuguese heritage. Born in central London, she moved to Edinburgh to undertake her undergraduate studies in agriculture. Part of her studies took her to Angers, in the wine-growing region of the Loire Valley, France, where she developed her personal and professional interest in the wine industry and in particular in viticulture. Eventually, her work path led her to the Marlborough region where she has been based in Blenheim since 2000. During this time, the call to service both at the parish and local community levels has helped her to deepen her faith and put down roots in the Top of the South. Vicky rejoined Launch Out in 2000 as she firmly believes that we are all called to partake in active ministry in the church and where better to develop this than doing Launch Out. Undertaking the various study modules and attending prayer days and retreats have helped her to develop new areas of spirituality and theological, scriptural and liturgical understandings. Journeying along this exciting path with the other Launch Out candidates is a privilege. This year is her final year in Launch Out. Vicky credits the support and love of her father, Edward, who made sure she finishes her papers and is a ‘good disciple’. Her pastoral mentor was Susan Apathy.

Bernadette Patelesio– Bernadette joined Launch Out in 2019. Bernadette has been living in Wainuiomata for the past 30 years. Bernadette and her husband Peter have five children and 10 grandchildren. She has worked as an analyst and as a piano teacher, but now works part time as a casual in the local community hubs while she also cares for her elderly mother. She belongs to Te Wairua Tapu Parish in the Hutt Valley. Bernadette has loved the formation she has received being part of the Te Hao Nui programme, especially the Pastoral training and Retreat days. A highlight has been having access to regular spiritual direction and mentoring which has been invaluable for her spiritual growth and for her as a lay person working in the parishes. Her pastoral mentor is Bridget Taumoepeau.



Bonita Tasele– Bonita joined in 2022. She was born and raised in Samoa in the village of Leauva’a. She is a mother of six adult children and a teenager. And a grandmother to 8 mokopuna. She migrated to New Zealand in 1988. She has completed her double degree at the University of Victoria with a double specialisation in BA in teaching and Samoan Studies. She finished her teaching Diploma at Teachers College, Karori, Wellington. She has also finished a Diploma in Religious Studies and Catechetical Studies from Wellington Catholic Education Centre (now Te Kupenga). She currently teaches Religious Studies and Samoan Studies at Bishop Viard College in Porirua. She is also an active parishioner of the Holy Family Parish in Porirua. She proudly shares that her inspiration to share her faith through teaching young people and serving the Church comes from her father. Her pastoral mentor is Fr Neil Vaney, SM.



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.

BIRTHDAYS

JANUARY

- 5 Neil Vaney, SM
- 22 Bridget Taumoepeau
- 27 Telesia Alaimoana

FEBRUARY

- 12 Joan McFetridge
- 21 Kaisa Beech
- 22 Bonita Tasele
- 23 Joe Green
- 26 Bernadette Patelesio

MARCH

- 20 Debbie Matheson
- 31 Catherine Gibbs



[This meditation was written some years ago but rediscovered recently. I initially wrote this for Launch Out Candidates and Graduates but realised it may well be for all those in active ministry.]

Jesus is condemned to death – although you are not condemned in undertaking this formation, you are certainly set on a course, as Jesus was, once Pilate put things in motion.

What was it that set things in motion for you at the start of your ministry?

Jesus was made to carry His Cross – embarking on the journey of ministry could be seen as a burden to carry. Certainly, there are obligations and hard work ahead.

Have you been burdened by this path you have chosen?



Jesus falls for the first time – maybe you started with enthusiasm and good intentions, but then there were stumbling blocks, maybe self-imposed, or imposed by others.

What was the first thing that got in the way, and caused you to fall?

Jesus meets His Mother Mary – what a poignant encounter, a mixture of joy and sadness.

What have been your encounters along the way? What emotions did they evoke?

Three Crosses by Mary Kay, RC

Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross – a stranger called to help.

Who has come to your aid along the way? Perhaps an unexpected person?

Veronica wipes the Face of Jesus – a caring, compassionate gesture, not turning away from the horror of it all. We all suffer in some way and need care.

Have you been able to accept tenderness from others as you struggled along the way?

Jesus falls for the second time – another fall. That must have brought on some despair and panic about how He was going to keep going.

How do you cope with setbacks? Do you feel shame, or want to throw in the towel, giving in to despair?

Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem – did He know them? Were they His followers, or others that had heard of His teaching. It must have been a risk for them to openly show their support of Him. Was this a meeting where both sides sought comfort – the women to support Jesus, and He to gain strength from them?

How many people do we meet? How do apparently insignificant people affect us? And do we know how many people we have touched? Is it a popular move to go through formation (like Launch Out) where you need to spend a great deal of time and energy?

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Jesus falls for the third time – despair must have been really setting in. The journey must have felt like one long torture. When would it end? Did Jesus wonder if he would make it to the end?

Did you wonder if undertaking this task was all a mistake? Are the difficulties seemingly too much to cope with? Can you draw strength from Jesus, knowing that He suffered so much more, yet could carry on?

Jesus is stripped of His clothing – the humiliation; the apparent cruelty of it all. As if all the other indignities had not been enough. Putting yourselves forward for ministry has meant you have had to expose yourselves in some ways. There have been embarrassments, challenges to your dignity, taking the risk of criticism etc.

Can you recall some of those instances?

Jesus is nailed to the Cross – so cruel, so vicious. You will not experience physical torture, but there may well be mental anguish.

How did you cope with any such difficulty? How did you avoid rage and thoughts of retribution? How do you manage to love those who do you harm?

Jesus dies on the Cross – Ministry will not literally kill you. But there are various ways of dying.

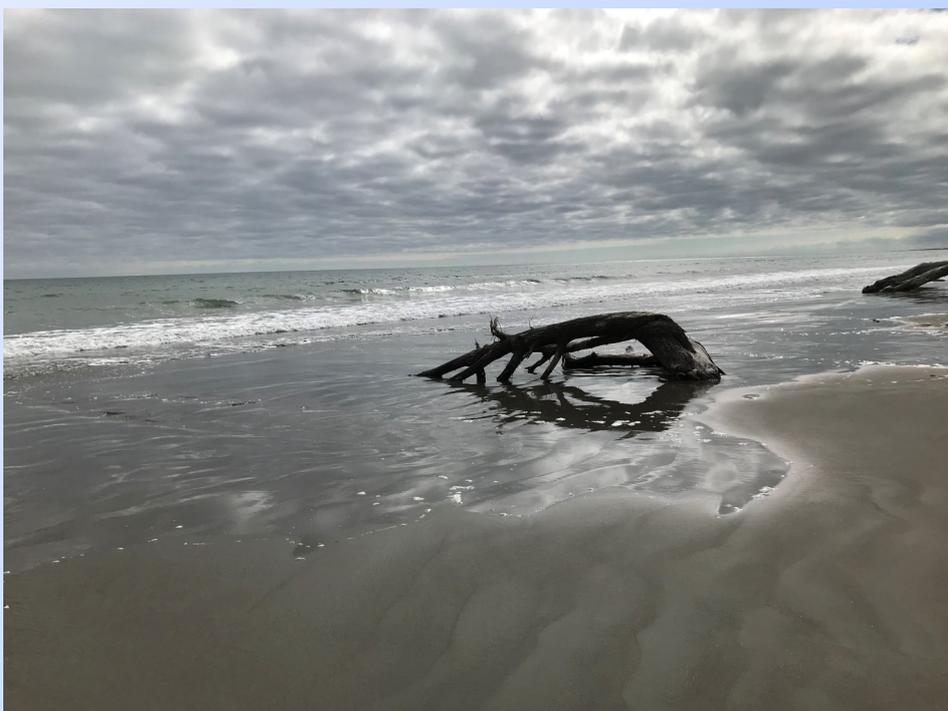
Did you feel that the dream had died? Did part of you die? Maybe your vision of the future was dashed?

Jesus is taken down from the Cross – this for me has the potential to be the gentlest of the Stations of the Cross. I always hope that the soldiers, or those assigned to take Jesus' dead body, did so with care and compassion.

Have you experienced kindness during your journey? Has someone acknowledged your feeling of helplessness and supported you along the way?

Jesus is laid in the tomb – this conjures up a feeling of calm, a sense of accomplishment after all the struggles. Dignity is restored, in a quiet way. And we all know what happened three days later.

Do you have a sense of renewed energy? Looking forward to living the life of "Resurrection people?"



Jesus Falls by Mary Kay, RC

UPDATES

PRAYER MORNING & START OF YEAR GATHERING

After over 3 months apart, we gathered again together at our favourite sacred space at the Home of Compassion. We started with a Prayer Morning led by Bernadette with the theme of 'Hope', drawing inspiration from the Jubilee Year. Thank you, Bernadette, from helping us connect with each other and pray together. We had a hearty and sunny lunch then had a lively conversation about what lies ahead for us in 2025. It was blessed way to start the year.



LAUNCH OUT ALUMNI GATHERINGS



Joan McFetridge, former Launch Out Formator and Manager was in town. The initial plan is to have dinner with Mika but we surprised with the whole lot of us showing up on 19 December at Shepherd's Arm. Happy to catch up with the one and only 'Commandant'.

Many Launch Out Graduates came together to celebrate the years of ministry of Joe Green, Barbara Rowley, Debbie Matheson and Christine Walkerdine on 01 Feb at St Anne's Church, Newtown. We had a mass celebrated by Jeff Drane, SM and then we went to cap the moment with good Italian food in a nearby restaurant.



Launch Out Graduate and now Fr Matthew White was ordained last 22 February at the Cathedral. Joan McFetridge specially flew for the occasion and some of the graduates gathered to celebrate this special day with Matt. Fr Matthew White is a Launch Out Graduate and a former Lay Pastoral Leader. He is currently based at the Catholic Parish of the Wairarapa.

