

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 September issue for 2025!

This issue features contributions from our Launch Out pastoral mentors, offering reflections that speak deeply to the heart of intentional discipleship.

Catherine Gibbs opens with a compelling Gospel reflection, inviting us to consider what it truly means to be an *intentional* disciple. The word itself is a challenge, it means fully choosing to follow Christ, regardless of the cost. And the cost is great. What does that mean for us? Catherine responds with a powerful question: “*What is the whole of my life built on?*” She invites us to examine our priorities, offering a practical and honest response to Jesus’ call to true discipleship.

In September, we celebrate the **World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation** (September 1) and **Caritas Social Justice Week** (September 7–13). Care for creation is not just an environmental concern, it is a social justice issue.

Susan Apathy shares a deeply personal and motherly perspective on climate change, reflecting on the life of her son, a climate activist. Her story is especially poignant as we also celebrate the **Nativity of Mary** (September 8). Susan’s reflection reminds us that many of today’s prophets, those who live lives of full surrender, may not be Catholic or even Christian, yet they embody the essence of intentional discipleship.

On a different but connected note, **Bridget Taumoepeau** writes from Europe, where she recently visited her ailing sister. Her piece is intimate and moving. If we are to understand social justice as caring for those on the margins, we must also embrace our own vulnerabilities. Only by accepting our full humanity can we truly see others and recognize our deep interconnectedness. It is this fullness of our humanity that God asks of us. It is through our humanity that God will do God’s work. It is our full humanity that God loves unreservedly.

The beauty of discipleship lies in knowing that we are chosen by God to share in God’s work. True discipleship demands much from us but it also offers gifts beyond what we can imagine. Like Mary, the model of discipleship, we too can proclaim our *Magnificat*:

“The Lord has done great things for me, and holy is His name.”

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/)

Be blessed at that deepest place

A Reflection on the 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 14:25-33

The gospel from Luke challenges us to be intentional in our discipleship. We read how Jesus was surrounded by “great crowds.” Imagine if today we’re gathering in civic square to see and hear from this teacher who is attracting a lot of attention. As we listen we hear a challenging and at times strange message. We’re being told to renounce everything that we hold dear – our family, our possessions, our money, our jobs and status, if we want to be a true follower of this man - Jesus.

Living as a Christian follower today what does this ‘renounce everything’ mean?

What must we do if we are to take his words to heart?

I think it means asking ourselves on what, precisely, is the whole of my life built?

What gets priority?

For most it doesn’t mean we have to walk away from all our responsibilities of family, of providing for education and health etc. But it’s more than just cultural or nominal faith or just wanting to help people in need and offering a few prayers of petition when the going gets tough.

To be an intentional disciple means actively cultivating a life that reflects his teachings.

It means making time for God every day in prayer; in being generous with resources and time; it means being humble in quiet service and nurturing peaceful encounters.

It’s a conscious choice to align one’s life with Christ. It means making mistakes and fresh starts. It requires forgiveness and compassion and... it takes a lifetime.

The heart of Luke’s gospel today is that if you are rooted in God, then you are linked to a cosmic power and can hold fast to what is essential. You will be blessed at the deepest place, and you will find peace.

This Sunday is the beginning of Social Justice Week and this year we’re asked to imagine peace for all, by building peace together (See Online Resources Section to link with Caritas Social Justice Week).

By prioritising the four basics of discipleship: the Word of God; the People of God; the Spirit of God and the Mission of Jesus Christ we can build peace in all our relationships and dealings with others. “As Catholics, we are sent out to “go in peace” - to live lives that glorify God by upholding the dignity of all people. Through prayer, silence, action, and service, we become channels of Christ’s peace in a world longing for healing.” (Social Justice Week, 2025 Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand. CST).

Be rooted in God and you will be blessed at that deepest place.



Catherine Gibbs
Former Pastoral Mentor

UPDATES

Launch Out Learning Day Open to Parishes and Schools

“They too belong here: Investigating the relationship between Parish and Parish Schools in ANZ” by Colin Macleod, Director of the National Centre of or Religious Studies.

Date: 06 September, 9:30am to 1:00pm

Venue: Connolly Hall, Metropolitan Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

Parishes and parish schools play significant roles in the Church’s mission of evangelisation. Yet in practice, their relationship with one another is complex and frequently misunderstood or undervalued. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this relationship is further shaped by a Catholic education system that is globally unique, presenting both distinct challenges and opportunities. Colin MacLeod will initially share findings from his doctoral research, alongside insights from his experience as a Catholic educator and Director of the National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS). The second session, after morning tea, will develop a practical overview of governance, leadership, Religious Education, and the school preference system.

This event is co-sponsored by Te Hao Nui- Launch Out- Church Mission with the Office for Vicar of Education

ONLINE RESOURCES

- Latest issue of **Welcom** https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/adw_community/welcom-issue-2-out-now/
- **CathNews New Zealand** <https://cathnewsnz.com/> - An online resource produced by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC). Please sign and subscribe.
- Resource for Sunday homilies and reflection where Launch Out Candidates occasionally guests - **Food for Faith** <https://foodforfaith.org.nz/>. **Bernadette Patelesio** makes her debut for the 02 September, 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time readings.
- **Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand** has prepared special resources for anyone to dip into. Go to <https://www.caritas.org.nz/schools/social-justice-week>
- The Synod’s Final Document- Towards a Hopeful Future by Richard Lennan, Boston College, Clough School of Theology and Ministry <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxLelWzraTk>
- **Garrat Publishing Videos**- Useful videos about Church and Synodality <https://www.youtube.com/user/JohnGarratt1>
- **Synod Final Document** https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/news/2024-10-26_final-document/ENG---Documento-finale.pdf
- **Season of Creation** <https://seasonofcreation.org/>



Climate Change Activists- Prophets Of Our Time

Susan Apathy
Pastoral Mentor



Copied from: Photo by Markus Spiske <https://unsplash.com/photos/man-holding-no-mature-no-future-signage-iZyJzBWxjYA>

How does it feel to be a mother of a Climate Change activist? This question was posed to me recently by a friend. It drew me to look deeper into my experience of being a mother to my son, who has lived much of his adult life as a climate change activist.

It may be worthwhile to explore the insights of parents such as myself, who witness their child become someone different from what they imagined that child would become. I'm not sure what value my insights offer but certainly I can express the awe of being a mother of a great child, and I hope my reflection can encourage more people to support the climate prophets who are selflessly fighting for our future.

I will say, as background, that there was a very small amount of activism in the genes (or at least the stories) he received from us. Both his father and I took part in some protest actions when we were in our early twenties. (My husband attended the huge protests when the New Zealand Rugby Union planned to exclude Māori players from the All-Blacks team to be sent to South Africa to play against the Springboks. I attended one or two protests to express my opposition to the Vietnam War.) This was when we heard about the amazing American Jesuit prophet priest Daniel Berrigan SJ who was a hero among Catholic tertiary students in Wellington at the time). Later, when my boys were in their early teens, I took them to one or two very small, gentle protests, to show them that we all can stand up for our beliefs and let our leadership know what we believe in. Our older son did not go into activism, however. His path lay more conventionally in the law. In my own life, as I settled into teaching, and had the children, attending protests disappeared. I feel guilty about that, but I felt too busy. What a feeble excuse that seems now.

My younger son (the activist in the making) has always been a searcher, a seeker of big challenges, and someone who has wanted to make the world a better place. He became a Zen Buddhist and gained his professional qualifications as a psychotherapist because he is interested in helping people to work through the problems in their inner depths. He and his partner run a psychotherapy practice. I would like to feel that idealism and hope are seen in our family – but certainly the strength of the idealism and hope he shows is particular to him.

I was fortunate to begin writing my article on the [20th Sunday in Ordinary Time](#). The readings for that day could not be more appropriate. In Luke's Gospel, "Jesus said to his disciples: *Í have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it was blazing already!... Do you suppose I am here to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division...*" The first reading describes King Zedekiah, at the insistence of the Jewish leadership of the time, giving permission for the prophet Jeremiah to be thrown into a well where he was to die – fortunately the King rescinded the permission (at the intervention of the Ethiopian eunuch Ebed-melech the Cushite) and Jeremiah was rescued. The second reading describes Jesus himself as the prophetic leader who had to endure crucifixion.

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These readings tell us about the fire in prophets' hearts that enabled (and still enables) them to cry out their message to the people, often causing much division and putting themselves in danger, including danger of imprisonment and death. Prophets, of course, do not do this for fun. They are driven to warn the people of terrible danger that requires major changes of heart and of action. God is with the prophets, though it is not necessarily obvious to the ordinary people, or indeed to the leaders of their society. In the Bible, it is the prophets who manage to confront the embedded powers in the higher levels of societies. The prophets are never comfortable and suffer much.

The role of the prophet is always a dangerous one.

I can think of no better way to describe many of our climate activists in this hugely difficult time, than to call them prophets. Not many of them are church goers (the church doesn't pay much attention to prophets today, I fear); they are often penniless, (activism doesn't pay well!) and they need a fire driving their hearts, in order to act in a way that they hope will help save the world. In this article I refer to my son, Michael and his partner, Selina, and many others who gather with them. Their prophetic cause is the climate crisis, where both ordinary folks and politicians are clearly not yet doing enough to make the necessary changes that might still save our planet.

What does it feel like to be a mother of an activist – how did I feel when I went to sit in court while my son and his friends faced a major case brought against them by the police, for causing possible danger to themselves and those in cars beneath them because they were holding up signs above the motorway? I was proud of them, supportive, and guilty that I wasn't doing as much as they were. (The case was dismissed - the defendants argued that they were not actually causing danger to themselves, or others and expert witnesses argued that any possible danger was justifiable because of the pro-social benefits of climate action - the jury could not come to a decision, and the police eventually withdrew the charge.)

Recently there have been two activists sitting in a coal bucket 80 metres above the Denniston Plateau, to stop the work of Bathurst Resources (an Australian mining company) which wants to turn the Denniston plateau into an open cast mine. As well as the mining causing destruction to a huge area of native bush and animals, the burning of this coal will add significantly to the carbon debt of the world. The protestors spent three weeks and two days in the bucket, most of the time in pretty freezing weather. TV1 news on 20th August reported that they had just come down from their vigil and been arrested. This is just one current action.



It seems to me that those who undertake these actions are particularly brave, but they are also supported by many others who help to plan and arrange the logistics and the publicity, and so on, and those supporters can be equally counted as prophets for their depth of commitment to a cause they believe in, which affects our whole world. There are many spectacular actions and smaller actions that are happening throughout New Zealand and throughout the world. Activists support each other with hope and love so that they can find the energy to make a difference. They are part of a worldwide movement.

So, at last, I will get to the question of how I feel as the mother of a climate activist:

Above all, I feel very very proud.

I feel deeply grateful for the prophetic stance my son and his partner are taking, and the support the group gives each other.

I am ashamed that I am not brave enough to do what they do, and I wish we, his parents, could support them more than we do.

I am fearful for what his activism work might do to his strength (like a number of activists, including his partner, he has long term health issues).

I feel grateful for the very small part we as his parents have played in contributing to his awareness that protest is a significant necessary action when those with power do not step up.

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I acknowledge that some others consider that prophets are just a nuisance, or much worse. I am glad that their protests are based on care and concern for their own group and the general public.

I don't talk about climate change with some people – it is a no-no as a topic with some of my friends and even some family members. I don't talk about it at church, where I believe many churchgoers would not understand. Am I a coward or am I suitably keeping the peace? I read a lot on the issue, but I don't feel up to joining the marches anymore. I wonder how Greta Thunberg feels these days. I know how Pope Francis and Pope Leo feel, because they have both issued so many statements about the issue – a recent item on NCR National Catholic Reporter (US website) shows how many of Pope Leo's recent meetings and statements have included references to climate change and the need to take action.

Jesus was recognised as a prophet – what would he say today? I wonder when the prophetic work of the climate activists I know today will become mainstream belief and action. Will it be too late by then? The role of the prophet is to remain ever hopeful in their action and their trials – perhaps I am simply not hope filled enough to be a prophet.

There have been superb major documents which have come out from the Vatican, (*Laudato Si* is not the only one) calling us to be aware of our responsibilities in relation to the climate crisis, yet here in New Zealand these documents are rarely mentioned in homilies, we are rarely asked to pray about the issue in the Prayers of the Faithful, and the actions taken within parishes, while laudable (e.g. planting more trees) are hardly sufficient yet to make the necessary difference.. One of my deepest wishes is that the Catholic Church in New Zealand, in every parish, would call all people to work together to do what they can to rescue the planet. I wish it did not feel like an optional extra in our Catholic life.

New Zealanders, and our government, seem to be coming late to an awareness of the effects of climate change. There are many ways to become more aware and more committed, by reading the wealth of material so easily available. A headline of an article from The Guardian republished by the Vatican website captures the important work of climate activists- *'If fossil fuel is a global addiction, climate activists are prophets trying to save us from our stupor'*.

There is a need to challenge the power structures within our society. This is a necessary prophetic action. In order to challenge the power structures of our society, we may begin by taking the simplest of actions, e.g. signing petitions or writing letters to government ministers.

My son tells me that most climate activists actually have very little hope around the big outcome, i.e. rescuing the planet, nevertheless activists find motivation and purpose in active hope (i.e. hope which comes from doing something). For them, climate action is an expression of ultimate values particularly love. The binary ideas of-- to rescue or not to rescue-- the planet often seem to my son, and those he supports, like a trap. We can give in to the death of God's planet, or we can work to rescue it. I cannot imagine what it feels like to keep on working so hard for a cause they fear will be lost.

I hold onto hope that we can still rescue this planet. Yet I know the road ahead is long, and the voices and actions of our contemporary prophets remain essential. I honour my son. I honour all of them.

I ask for God's blessing upon them. I pray for them—and for all of us. I invite you to join me in prayer.



Michael Apathy (Susan's son) and partner Selina Clare are active in Extinction Rebellion Movement <https://rebellion.global/>.

For every time, there is a season



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This is a beautiful river in the grounds of Kylemore Abbey. The water of life rushing forward, nurturing growth and beauty in its path, over stony ground and fertile soil alike. Hope is the truth in all things.

This well-known text from Ecclesiastes was very much in my mind, as I recently visited my older sister and brother-in-law in Scotland. It is over 50 years since I left the UK, and, although I used to visit regularly, it was eight years since I was last there, organised around my making the 30-day Ignatian retreat in Ireland.

During that time my brother-in-law has had a lot of physical ill health and is wheelchair bound, while my sister is clearly declining cognitively.

So this visit was quite challenging and filled with many emotions - admiration for their acceptance of a much restricted lifestyle, including the dependence on carer visits throughout the day; sadness at the loss of independence, energy, and the ability for easy conversation; concern at the levels of anxiety over small matters, fuelled by memory loss;

frustration at the repetitiveness of the speech content; gratefulness for their cheerful carers and family who live nearby and take great care of them. Perhaps what was most startling was seeing the pattern of my mother's dementia reappear in my sister and having to acknowledge that I too may have inherited those genes.

But, while family members are always so positive about my energy and activity, I am grateful for the experience that assists me in facing up to the future with all its uncertainties. I am sure there will be some serious conversations with my family when I return home.

The Serenity prayer is also so relevant - "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; the courage to change the things I can; and the wisdom to know the difference." I pray that I can use that wisdom to prepare for the future with grace, practicality and acceptance.

Bridget Taumoepeau
Pastoral Mentor