

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 October issue for 2025!

Warning-- for this issue, we tread on dangerous ground.

This month, we reflect on the gospel of the ten lepers whom Jesus healed but only one returned to give thanks. The encounter is strikingly unconventional. In Jesus' time, lepers lived on the margins of society, feared and shunned. **Bernadette Patelesio's** reflection draws out the profound wisdom of the one who returned. She reminds us that true gratitude arises from an awareness of our vulnerability and need. It is this awareness that opens our hearts to the magnanimity of God's love.

I often see myself among the nine. After praying desperately for something, once I receive it, I move on to the next petition. I spend far more time asking than I do thanking. Gratitude, I've come to realize, forces me to confront the vulnerability I'd rather forget. So, I move on quickly, avoiding the discomfort of acknowledging how deeply needy I am.

Bridget Taumoepeau, in her article, shares a powerful moment in Rome where she joined the Jubilee Mass with the LGBTQ+ community led by Fr. James Martin, SJ. The LGBTQ+ community continues to live at the peripheries of the Church. Yet, as Bridget witnessed, their faith is strong and deeply inspiring. They dare to proclaim that they are unconditionally loved by the same God. May we be transformed by their radical act of faith and courage.

We are privileged to feature **Dr. John Kleinsman's** compelling piece. The title explains itself, *'Ministering in places that we rather not be'*, as he reflects on how we, as Christians, can minister to those contemplating assisted dying. He writes about the Christian mission of accompaniment, of walking with people who do not share our beliefs, or we deem different from us. John's article calls chaplains and pastoral ministers to walk a very fine line, but it is one we must dare to walk if we are to live out the gospel authentically.

So, who are the lepers of our time? Who are the ones we deem unworthy to belong among us? If we are to be a truly Synodal Church, we must examine the lines we draw to protect "our faith." And the first step is to be like the leper who returned. This means, to acknowledge our own vulnerability and our need for God's love. For gratitude is the soil where the seed of compassion grows.

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 one who returned

A Reflection on the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Luke 17:11-19

Bernadette Patelesio
Launch Out Candidate



"Ten Lepers Healed" by Brian Kershishnik

This week's Gospel tells the story of the one leper who returned to give thanks. He sought out the true source of his healing, and because he gave praise where it was due, he was saved. He recognised the magnitude of what had happened and the grace he had been chosen to receive.

As a child, I believed I had to earn my place in God's "good books", that if I tried hard enough, made enough sacrifices, or showed enough kindness, then perhaps I would become worthy of God's love. But the reality is far greater and far more freeing: God's love is not something to be earned. It is already ours. It is unconditional. God is love, and God dwells within me; therefore, I too am called to live and reflect that love.

As adults, we hopefully grow into a deeper understanding of God's vast, unconditional love—love that was ours from the very beginning of time. God loved us into being with a unifying, reciprocal love. The modern mystic James Finley once said:

"If God were to stop loving you into your chair, wherever you are listening to this (or reading it), at the count of three, you would disappear. For you are nothing, absolutely nothing, outside and other than the love of God giving itself to you as your very life.

But it's your very nothingness without God that makes your very presence to be the presence of God."

This reciprocity echoes in the second reading: *"Jesus remains faithful even when we are not. If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself."* When we are faithful, we reflect Jesus; when we falter, his faithfulness remains.

It is only when we turn away, chasing things that are fleeting, even our own passing happiness—as the nine lepers did, that we lose sight of this love. Yet God continues to wait for our recognition and our trust in his power. When we respond in faith, we become living reflections of him, revelations of God's presence to others.

The Samaritan leper, once healed, did not stand at a distance as he had before. He came close, fell at Jesus' feet, and gave thanks. Along with healing, he was given courage. I wonder what he did next.

The totality of what had happened seems to have been grasped by only one leper. Optimistically, I like to think the others eventually turned back to Jesus and that perhaps they were just slow learners, but that is not the point.

This Gospel calls us to recognise God's healing. Whether from sin, suffering or brokenness - and God's desire for us all to be saved, including and especially the marginalised.

Our response is to give glory and thanksgiving to God. Amen.



ONLINE RESOURCES & UPDATES

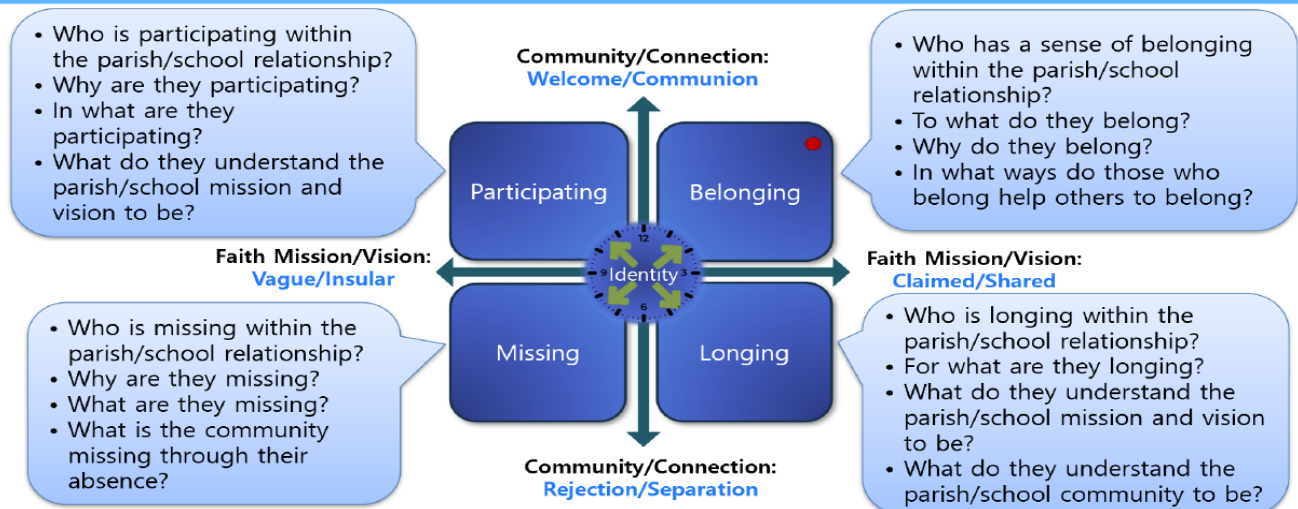
- Latest issue of **Welcom** https://www.wn.catholic.org.nz/adw_community/welcom-issue-2-out-now/
- **CathNews New Zealand** <https://cathnewsnz.com/> - An online resource produced by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC). Please sign and subscribe.
- Resource for Sunday homilies and reflection where Launch Out Candidates occasionally guest - **Food for Faith** <https://foodforfaith.org.nz/>
- New free Catholic online resource. Founders are: Dr Joseph Grayland, Michael Kelly SJ, John Murphy, SM and Professor Thomas O' Loughlin - **Flashes of Insight** <https://flashesinsight.com/>
- Resources for Support of Life Sunday - 12 October
 - ◇ **Nathaniel Report** - <https://nathaniel.org.nz/>.
Excellent resource on bioethical issues by the Nathaniel Centre, the bioethics centre of the NZCBC.
 - ◇ **Assisted dying law-changes** <https://cathnewsnz.com/2025/09/09/bioethicist-worried-by-proposed-assisted-dying-law-changes/>
 - ◇ **Shine TV Podcast titled "Fighting for Life"**. <https://www.shinetv.co.nz/videos/thcom-25-86vodpgc>
(You need to subscribe then under Thoughts & Comments look for "Fighting for Life".)
- **Story of Mother Aubert** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fkV6ufsBtoY>. We celebrated her anniversary last 01 October.
- This 28 October the Church celebrates the promulgation of **Nostra Aetate**, the Vatican II document affirming the call for the Church to dialogue with peoples of all faith. The NZCBC Interfaith Relations Committee will hold a webinar about Nostra Aetate, click this link to joint : <https://tinyurl.com/NA-NZ-2025>. This will be held on **28 October, 7-8pm**. For more information email c.macleod@ncrs.co.nz
- Other resources on Nostra Aetate:
 - ◇ The document https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html
 - ◇ Video explaining Nostra Aetate produced on its 50th year anniversary, 10 years ago <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCYRRR7Lfc>



Last 06 September we had a Learning Day with **Colin McLeod**, Director of the National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS). Below is an overview of the findings of his dissertation.

They too belong here: Investigating the relationship between Catholic parishes and parish schools in Aotearoa New Zealand

Substantive Theory – Parish/School Relationship Theory



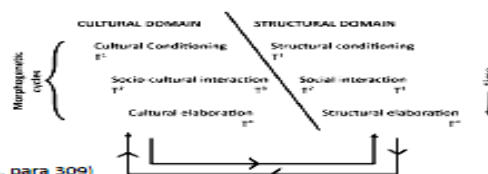
The problem: Today Catholic parishes and parish schools in Aotearoa NZ have little connection outside of physical proximity, usually a shared name, and separate understandings that they are each Catholic.
The research question: What are key features demonstrating the relationship between the Catholic parish and the parish school in Aotearoa, New Zealand?
The Aim: To explain the complexities of relationships that exist between Catholic parishes and parish schools.

Unrefined Features – From interviews



Key Features – Major Findings - Interviews and Literature Analysis

- Who am I? Who are we? – The Centrality of Identity.**
"We're looking to be, what is our identity? Who are we?" (F4)
 - Identities?: Parish and School; Catholic; Ecumenical; Universal and Local Church; Religious & Secular. Also, Preference; Symbols and Metaphors.
- Where are we going? – Evangelisation and Mission.**
"Where are we going?" (F4)
 - The place of faith and places of faith; Eucharist; Dialogue; People of Justice; Visioning Missions.
- What is being built here? – Being community.**
"What's going on here and building the community here?" (P8)
 - Communion; connection; barriers; welcome and belonging.
- Who is leading? – Leadership Responsibility, Workload and Formation.**
"I think that a lot of Catholics especially the leaders are really, really hoping to find something within." (F4)
 - Responsibility; Workload; Formation; Priests and Principals Leading Together.
- Recognising and Participating in Change**
"What is going to happen to the Church in the future?" (P4)
 - Stasis or Change; Structure; Culture; Agency; Reflexivity; Time



Archer, M (1995, para 309)

A little pilgrim of hope

Bridget Taumoepeau
Pastoral Mentor



James Martin, S.J., addresses a group of LGBTQ pilgrims gathered at the Church of the Gesù in Rome on Sept. 5, 2025. (Courtesy photo.) Photo and caption copied from Outreach, an LGBTQ Catholic Ministry <https://outreach.faith/2025/09/watch-father-james-martin-s-j-speaks-at-lgbtq-jubilee-year-pilgrimage/>

Recently I went to the UK and Ireland to visit family and friends. On the way back I had 5 days in Rome. I was aware it would be extra crowded due to the Jubilee year, still pretty hot and, in the time between my journey planning and actually being there, the canonisation of Carlo Acutis had been rescheduled to occur on the day I would leave. That undoubtedly added to the crowds.

All this conspired to make the visit quite difficult. I had visited Rome a couple of times before, so had visited the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Museums, climbed to the dome of St Peter's and seen some famous places, buildings and churches already. This time I planned to attend the General Audience; to go on a day trip to Pompeii; and visit the magnificent Caravaggio paintings in various churches. High on the list of must-do things was to pay my respects at Pope Francis' grave in the Maria Maggiore church – a model of simplicity. All of these I achieved without getting sunstroke. But I remained a little unfocussed towards the end of my visit, until I remembered that my time in Rome coincided with the LGBTQ pilgrimage for the Jubilee. I knew that Outreach – the organisation founded by Fr James Martin SJ – would be there, but was unaware that there would be pilgrims from all over the world joining together.

Having easily e-mailed Fr Jim previously, I decided to give it a go, and, true to form, he replied very promptly and put me in touch with the Italian organiser. That was the beginning of a truly lovely experience. I was informed of the events that were taking place; issued a pass on my phone and welcomed with open arms – no questions asked about why I should be interested.

So..... I set off for the prayer vigil and the Mass the next day, both of which were held in the stunning church of the Gesu. Luckily, I realised that it might be full, so got there early, which allowed me to soak up the atmosphere; make friends and appreciate the atmosphere of joy that permeated the gathering. Many priests, speaking different languages, were available for reconciliation; people greeted each other affectionately; I recognised familiar faces from the internet, including little Sr Genevieve, who works with transgender people and was a great friend of Pope Francis. Who can forget the image of her weeping beside Francis' coffin?

Continues on Page 6

The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Francesco Savino, Bishop of Cassano all'Jonio in southern Italy and vice president of the Italian bishops' conference. A smiling man greeting many friends in the congregation, who started by blessing us all with Holy Water, the significance of which he referred to in his amazing homily. He reminded us that the sprinkling with baptismal water 'let our eyes glimpse what truly unifies us'.

His homily emphasised the dignity of all – each with our stories, our wounds, our fragility, and our beauty. He stated that he wanted us all 'to leave the celebration more joyful and hopeful than ever'. He certainly achieved that. About halfway through his homily, he referred to the historical origin and features of Jubilees – the forgiveness of debts, freeing of slave etc. He emphasised that a 'Jubilee was the time to liberate the oppressed and restore dignity to whom it has been denied.' This resulted in a long spontaneous standing ovation! A new experience for me and very emotional. He, himself, was a little overwhelmed and took a moment to compose himself. The homily continued on a very hopeful note about entering into the life of the church, despite the painful chapters of our lives. He told us that Pope Leo had, in a private audience, said to him, very tenderly, 'Go and celebrate the Jubilee organised by Tenda di Giornata and the other groups that work with our brothers and sisters.' Very reassuring for the pilgrims to hear that Francis' welcome was being continued by our present Holy Father.

After the homily he embraced Fr Martin and, later, the sign of peace was the most joyful expression of belonging and caring for each other, that I have experienced. Truly this community were demonstrating welcome - the very issue that they have often themselves been denied.

What a privilege to be amongst these pilgrims who were infused with joy. An unexpected gift of the Jubilee year, for this little pilgrim of hope.



Ministering in places that we might rather not be:

The spiritual and pastoral accompaniment of those contemplating an assisted death

By: Dr John Kleinsman



Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash

Introduction:

Taking care of the sick, including those who are dying, is a fundamental expression of Christian discipleship. The Gospel stories show that this was a prominent feature of Jesus' ministry. These stories, as well as accounts such as the meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well, highlight a key pastoral principle: Jesus always meets people 'where they are at' physically, emotionally and spiritually – at their point of need.

The *End of Life Choice Act (2019)*, which came into force in Aotearoa New Zealand on 7 November 2021, has created a new and challenging dynamic for pastoral and spiritual carers accompanying the dying as well as for healthcare providers and other carers.

At the time of its enactment, this legal, medical and social sea change prompted Catholic care providers within New Zealand to reflect on their identity by re-examining their core values. Their reflections were published in November 2021 in a document titled *Our Enduring Commitment to End of Life Care in Light of the End of Life Choice Act*¹. This document frames the Christian position on assisted death in terms of an ethic of care centred on the unconditional dignity of each individual person and the common good:

We have agreed to continue working within our traditional ethic of care which respects both the dignity of every human being and the best interests of the human community.

... Inspired by the Good Samaritan, who was moved with compassion to help a fellow traveller on the road, we will do what we have always done – we will provide compassionate care to all in a way that attend to the needs of the whole person, body, mind and spirit.

... We will not allow our staff to be involve in assisted dying practices as detailed in the End of Life Choice Act (2019). We accept and act according to the traditional understanding that these interventions are not medical treatments. They stand outside our ethic of care and scope of practice.

Our Prayer with and Ministry to the Dying Need Never Know Human Barriers:

Meeting people who are dying at the point of their need, and accompanying them on their journey towards death, is what Catholic orders and carers have been doing for more than 2,000 years. The advent of legalised euthanasia, however, means many priests, chaplains, and Catholic health carers have found themselves in a new space, described by the New Zealand bishops as "a place that we might rather not be – a place of personal challenge." (*Ministers of Consolation and Hope: Principles and guidelines for those working with and ministering to people contemplating assisted dying.* (MCH) (Version 2) ²

How, precisely, do we minister in a place that we would rather not be? How, precisely, do we minister to people who are in a place that we would rather they were not – a place that is defined by inclinations and beliefs that are clearly contrary to Catholic moral teaching on euthanasia/assisted suicide?

¹See Nathaniel Report, Issue 65, December 2021, p. 8.

²NZCBC. (2022) See: <https://www.catholic.org.nz/assets/Ministers-of-Consolation-and-Hope-20-May-2022.pdf> accessed 29 September 2025.



Photo by Shoeib Abolhassani on Unsplash

The first point to be emphasised is that the legal permissibility of “assisted dying” (the terminology used in the Act) does not change Catholic moral law. This means that we can never concur with the intention of another person to end their life nor actively cooperate in any actions which lead to an assisted death. For Catholic chaplains, priests and lay, who may find themselves called on to provide sacramental care and officiate at funerals as part of their accompaniment of the person and their family, the question might be framed thus: “How are we to respond with a pastoral care that at once expresses the Church’s deep concern for the salvation of souls and safeguards the dignity of the sacraments and the nature of her funeral rites?”³

One way of managing the inherent theological tensions that arise from accompanying people contemplating an assisted death is to remove ourselves from, or stay outside of, that space. This, however, should offend our deepest, instinctual pastoral sensibilities. As the NZ bishops stress in *Bearers of Consolation and Hope, A Pastoral Statement on the Spiritual and Pastoral Care of Persons Contemplating Assisted Dying in Aotearoa New Zealand* (BCH): “We do not need to deny the objective wrong of euthanasia in order to accompany, with consolation and hope, those who might feel drawn or pushed towards this type of death.”⁴ (n.5). In other words, “our faith tells us there is no place or situation, no matter how uncomfortable, where our faith cannot be expressed, or God’s grace encountered.” (BCH, n. 3)

In explaining their position, the NZ Bishops write: “Many parents know only too well the mix of desolation and consolation. Sometimes their children – young or adult – make decisions, or behave in ways, contrary to the Gospel. Yet, as mothers and fathers, far from turning away, they stay close ... [and] pray for their daughter or son, entrusting them to our merciful God while continuing to walk alongside them in love.” (BCH, n. 2) “Pastoral and spiritual accompaniment of those considering assisted dying becomes a hīkoi of hope most especially because it leaves open the way to an encounter with God ... Our prayer and ministry with the dying need never know human barriers.” (BCH, n. 4)

In making this point, the NZ Bishops are mirroring the teaching contained in the 2020 Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Samaritanus Bonus – on the care of persons in the critical and terminal phases of life* (SB), in which we read:

Pastoral accompaniment involves the exercise of the human and Christian virtues of empathy, of compassion, of bearing another’s suffering by sharing it, and of the consolation of entering into the solitude of others to make them feel loved, accepted, accompanied, and sustained.” (Introduction)

Samaritanus Bonus continues: “All are called to give witness at the side of the sick person and to become a “healing community” in order to actualize concretely the desire of Jesus that, beginning with the most weak and vulnerable, all may be one flesh.” (Introduction)

Creating Healing Communities – Lessons from the AIDS Epidemic:

In recent years, many have written about caring for the dying, including the priest, writer and theologian, Henri Nouwen. His extended meditation on this topic, published in 1994, is particularly salient given that he was writing in the time of the AIDS epidemic that was then sweeping the world.

The fact that AIDS was largely transferred through sexual contact, and in particular its prevalence within the male gay community, generated, unsurprisingly, a strong sense of moral condemnation from many. This included religious leaders as they wrestled with the inherent theological tensions between upholding their teachings on sexual ethics versus responding to persons with grace, compassion and mercy. Some, unfortunately, went so far as to describe the disease as a form of divine punishment. Understandably, this affected the provision of care to people with AIDS, including spiritual care, especially in the earlier days of the epidemic.

³The Catholic Bishops of Alberta and the Northwest Territories. (2016). Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons & Families Considering or Opting for Death by Assisted Suicide or Euthanasia: A Vademecum for Priests and Parishes. See: https://caedm.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/2016-09-14_SacramentalPracticeinSituationsofEuthanasia.pdf (accessed 29 September 2025).

⁴See: <https://www.catholic.org.nz/assets/Uploads/Bearers-of-Consolation-and-Hope.pdf> (accessed 29 September 2025).

While there were many Catholic organisations which worked closely with AIDS patients from the beginning, including the likes of Mother Theresa's religious order, a reluctance by some to get involved meant many people with AIDS died lonely deaths, feeling alienated not just by the Church but by society as a whole – a clear case of God's love and care being limited by 'human barriers'.

Against this backdrop, Jesuit priest and spiritual writer Henri Nouwen's writings on dying take on a prophetic dimension that we might otherwise not appreciate.

[Jesus'] death opened for us the possibility of making our own death a way to union and communion ... To care for the dying means to help them live their dying as a way to gather around them ... all of humanity ... When we say that it is not good for a human being to die alone, we touch a deep mystery. In our death, we need to be, more than ever, in communion with others.

And again:

*Caring ... is helping these people to grow in their awareness that their individual, painful condition is embedded in the basic condition of human mortality and, as such, can be lived in communion with others. (p. 80-81)*⁵

In addition, for Nouwen, the sense of communion and connectedness called for when caring for the dying is enriched and broadened to the extent that we who are carers/accompaniers recognise our shared vulnerabilities with the dying. "We lift up not only our own life to God in gratitude, but also the lives of those of whose weaknesses we are aware ... thus we make all part of our 'fellowship of weakness'." (p. 100)

There are useful parallels between the theological and pastoral tensions linked to choosing an assisted death and the theological and pastoral challenges posed by the AIDS epidemic. Drawing on Nouwen, whose insights, as noted above, are echoed by *Samaritanus Bonus*, perhaps the most important insight is that the basis of good pastoral care involves *forming and maintaining healing communities of care in which those who are dying feel connected and included*. For those providing spiritual accompaniment, this connection can be enriched by an honest awareness of their own mortality and weaknesses which, when adequately acknowledged, establishes the grounds for a 'fellowship of weakness'.

Conclusion:

Acknowledgement of the pastoral imperative to connect spiritually with people contemplating an assisted death does not immediately answer the question of exactly *how* Catholic Ministers should be or act as they minister to such persons. Specifically, this is a matter of how to compassionately and lovingly manage the inherent theological tensions, tensions that will, to a large degree, always be context dependent. As noted above, the sorts of questions that arise include the permissibility of administering the sacraments and whether it is acceptable to provide a Catholic requiem mass.

This reflection seeks to lay out some of the broad pastoral parameters that will inform the decision-making process chaplains will need to undertake when finding themselves faced by the dilemmas that ministering to people contemplating an assisted death, or opting for it, throws up. It will also, hopefully, encourage chaplains back to the NZ Bishops Guidelines first issued in 2021 and then updated in May 2022⁶

Our long and rich Catholic tradition of caring for the sick and dying, informed by Jesus own life, highlights the pastoral importance of accompanying the dying. When it comes to medically assisted deaths, there are lessons to be learnt from the way in which, as a Church, we responded in the second half of the 20th Century to the inherent theological tensions associated with the AIDS epidemic.

Spiritual and pastoral accompaniment in this space is extremely challenging. However, knowing our moral history provides a helpful backdrop against which to appreciate the NZ Bishops Guidelines on accompanying persons contemplating an assisted death: Firstly, that "it is proper that the Church's sacraments – encounters with God – are ordinarily provided to the person who requests them" (MCH, Part 4 vii) and, secondly, that a funeral will be offered as part of "an integrated model of pastoral care with priests [and others] ready to affirm God's mercy when presiding at the funeral or tangi." (MCH Part V iii).

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⁵Nouwen, H. (1994). *Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying & Caring*. New York: Harper San Francisco, p 78.