

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 June issue of LOL.

It's my turn to write the Gospel reflection. The Gospel for the 10th Sunday in Ordinary Time is Jesus' encounter with his family. In this Gospel Jesus defined who his family is. Family is a sensitive topic, and it touches important aspects of our lives, such as identity and belongingness. In the gospel, Jesus introduces what it means to be part of God's family. It is a family not just of blood but by our relationship with God—of doing God's will. Such kinship offers the identity of being a disciple of Jesus and the belongingness of being part of the Christian community.

Jude McKee shares her reflection on doing pastoral projects in her parish, St Theresa's Plimmerton. She uses the metaphor of Beethoven's 6th symphony to discuss the stages of making a pastoral project happen. Music is a creative way of explaining the complexity of working in parishes. And an orchestra is composed of many distinct instruments, with each instrument producing a different sound. As with music, the outcome should be something that enriches people—a harmonious sound if the players listen carefully to each other. **Cecily McNeill** offers the third and last instalment of her essays on the role of women in the church. In her article she approaches the controversial issue of women's ordination. A discussion of women's role, as it is with that of the lay, is essentially an ecclesiological discourse of who we are as church. Finally, **Bridget Taumoepeau** reflects on the plight of migrants and refugees, as we celebrate the day of prayer for them on the 23rd of June. This is timely as the archdiocese of Wellington, and New Zealand as a whole, is increasingly becoming diverse. What are we doing to prepare for it?

The Church is the family that Jesus offers, but it is not spared from the challenges that beset ordinary families and communities. Synodality is a way, where we learn how it is to be family—to listen to each other and to bring on board the people whose views and backgrounds are different from us. Tomas Halik, one of the most prominent theologians of our time says that we do not know the full breadth and depth of what Church means. Church is a mystery that we are continuously invited to enter into. Church is the family to which we are all called to belong.

Maya Bernardo, Launch Out Formator and Manager

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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/>

Who is my family?

10th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Mark 3: 20-35)

By Maya Bernardo
Formator and Manager



Coming home is always a joyful occasion for a migrant like myself. My luggage is a big clue that I am a Filipino as it will be full of *'pasalubongs'* or gifts to give away to family and friends. It is my way of saying---'I have not forgotten you' and that 'you are still a part of my life'. Family and friends would like to see how I have been and it's always nice to say that life has been good and that I have done well. My success, is also their success; our shared identity and bonds are very strong. In this gospel, Jesus went home, but was not as lucky. Instead of a warm welcome, he was greeted by angry relatives who wanted to restrain him. He was adored by many but is also gaining notoriety among the scribes who accused him of being possessed by the devil. Jesus' family may want to prevent him from bringing shame and trouble to the family.

We read from the gospel that Jesus made a statement of what it means to be part of God's family. Jewish families in Jesus' time were closely knit¹, so it must have been a struggle for his family to come to terms with the life that Jesus has chosen. Their rejection of him must have been hurtful to him as well. It must have shocked his family when he came short of rejecting them by saying "Who is my mother and my brothers?" and declaring that his new family is "Whoever does the will of God, is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus defines his family as those who do the will of God. He reinforces this divine kinship as one which goes beyond blood but is forged by obedience to God's will. This kind of belonging was first introduced in the story of Genesis (the first reading, Gen 3:9-15). Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden of Eden because they defied the God's order not to eat of the tree of life. The restoration of that kinship with God was eventually accomplished through Jesus Christ. Jesus then declares the new eschatological kinship² where we are all called to belong, where we are not related as mother, sister, or brother. In the latter part of Mark's gospel (12:22-24), Jesus underpins this when the Pharisees tried to trap him with the question about whose husband a widow belongs to after marrying all seven brothers, in quick succession after each of their deaths. This kinship elevates our nature from being biological creatures to being divine children of God.

Jesus' declaration that his family are those who do the will of God did not really close the door on his biological kin, but was an invitation for them to join him in his kinship with God. Perhaps the cultural beliefs around family during his time, made it hard for his family to see it that way.

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Nothing affects us as deeply as our relationship with our families. Our families can be the source of our greatest joy and biggest misery. The family is our first place of belonging where we figure out who we are and have our place in the world. And for those who do not have a safe and stable sense of family, it could be devastating. As the gospel seems to depict Jesus stoically declaring his separateness from his biological family, this moment in Jesus' life must have been painful.

We can all remember moments when we have had to stand alone because even our own families could not understand a decision that we made or a change we have undertaken. If we look closely enough at our own lives, there are those moments of solitary departure, of having to stand alone. Do we reject a change of direction, so we can remain in safety of our families, or do we follow the unfamiliar paths where our discernment is leading us? In the personal story of Pope Francis, his mother was against his becoming a priest, because she was certain he would be all alone. His name's sake, St Francis of Assisi, defied his father, in the most dramatic way, by stripping himself naked to symbolise his total letting go of everything that held him back from giving his life to God completely. For many of us, the choice may not be as drastic, but it is a defining choice nonetheless.

We come in to this world through our families, and we are called to love and honour them. A life of discipleship goes beyond blood, and invites us to see kinship by the way we live our lives, that is to be the Good News to the world. It is only in this divine kinship where we truly discover to *Whom* we belong.



¹ <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/jewish-marriage-and-family-in-the-ancient-world/>

² <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/mark/0>

BIRTHDAYS

JUNE

- 7 Maya Bernardo
- 12 Cecily McNeill
- 16 Susan Apathy



MAKING IT HAPPEN



Pastoral projects are part of the Te Hau Nui Launch Out journey. Of all the learnings and formation, perhaps this is the one that causes the most stress for the candidates. It's easy to see all the things that need doing in a Parish. It's easy to be on our own faith journey, involved in our own ministries in and around our parishes. But what is not so easy to do, is step up to the plate, put yourself out there, and make your idea – your plan – fall into the groove of the parish symphony.

Beethoven was the composer of a project entitled "Pastoral". It wasn't written overnight. The first sketching of the symphony dated from 1802. The first performance of the symphony was in 1808. In Launch Out we don't have 6 years for each Pastoral Project, but perhaps Beethoven's actual 6th Symphony gives us some perspective on the planning of a Pastoral Project.

The First Movement – The awakening of cheerful feelings on arrival in the countryside

Ah – I have been mulling over ideas and searching for inspiration and spiritual guidance and I have arrived. I am feeling very positive – cheerful almost – it is time to begin discussing my idea.

The Second Movement – Scene by the brook

And so I gather with our Parish Priest. I need not only his consent, but I need his input and most of all I need his support. The two of us converse. The conversation flows and then we bring in others who will help develop and support the project. Momentum is gaining.

The Third Movement – Merry gathering of country folk

The planning process is well underway. The people who need to be involved have been identified and are invited to participate in the planning. What might work? What might not work? What can be changed or altered? The crescendo of parishioners sharing their ideas and views swells so that meetings are a 'merry dance' that people want to attend.

The Fourth Movement – Thunder, Storm

There will be thunder and there will be storms as you plan and implement your Pastoral Project. Your original plan might have swelled out to something much more than you began with. Or, your original plan may have been too grandiose, and now the rain is falling on it, dampening it down, shrinking it to a manageable plan. You need to work through the storms. Navigate them. Listen to the voices of the team you have gathered around you, even when their voices are thunderous. You might have to change tack, move to 'safer ground', if that is what the team are calling for. Don't be frightened by the thunder or the storms. Thunder always makes us stop and listen. What are you hearing? What have you not been hearing? Rain helps to shape and grow what we have. Storms serve their purpose in creation and they serve their purpose in our learnings.

The Fifth Movement – Shepherd's song. Cheerful and thankful feeling after the storm

This is the finale. The project has been tended and cared for. It is now in action. There is a symmetry. All the movements have served their purpose bringing about this result. The project is up and running. The project is not about numbers- it is about creation; it is about working together; it is about providing for; it is about meeting the needs; it is about future planning; it is about drawing out the gifts that the Shepherd has given to the people in the parish and using those gifts to sing a cheerful song!



ONLINE RESOURCES

- **Food for Faith** <https://foodforfaith.org.nz/>
- **Online resources on preparing for the mass by the National Liturgy Office** https://nlo.org.nz/about/considering-the-liturgy/#section_1616
- **Jubilee 2025–Pilgrims of Hope** The bishops have created a special online page of resources for parishes, schools and individuals to use as we walk together towards Jubilee 2025–Pilgrims of Hope. It's an informative, indexed webpage with background information, links to online resources, and links to other websites, giving lots of information about Jubilee 2025 <https://www.catholic.org.nz/about-us/jubilee-year-2025>
- **Declaration Dignitas Infinita, on Human Dignity.** This document recently released by the Vatican addresses such issues as poverty, war, the travail of migrants, human trafficking, sexual abuse, violence against women, abortion, surrogacy, euthanasia/assisted suicide, the marginalising of people with disabilities, gender theory, sex change and digital violence <https://www.catholic.org.nz/.../Dignitas-Infinita-Inglese...>
- From Bridget Taumoepeau:
 - **“Ordination”** by John Dick. A timely reflection. circulated by the [Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform](#).
 - **Jesus desire our unity** by Fr James Martin, SJ
- Last 13-17 was Privacy Week, here are e-learning resources parishes can use <https://www.privacy.org.nz/tools/online-privacy-training-free/>
- [Leadership according to Jesus explained by Pope Francis in 6 points - ZENIT - English](#)



UPDATES

The 'launching' of Telesia Alaimoana *Celebrating the graduation from Te Hao Nui- Launch Out*



It was a day to remember. Telesia Alaimoana held her celebration of completing Te Hao Nui-Launch Out formation on 11 May 2024 at the Pius X parish church of Our Lady of Hope Parish, with her family, Samoan Mothers' Group, Our Lady of Hope Parish community and the Launch Out community. The event started with a mass celebrated by Archbishop Paul Martin concelebrated with Fr Penese Patelesio, followed by a festive reception at the hall of Pius X Catholic School.

The Samoan choir led a lively and angelic singing. Proclaimers were Telesia's family and the prayers of the faithful were read by Jude McKee, Bernadette Patelesio and Mary Ann Greaney.

In the reception Telesia honoured her pastoral mentors Catherine Gibbs and Susan Apathy, who sent her apologies, spiritual directors Clare O' Connor rc, Regina Daly pbvm, and Neil Vaney sm. Other guests from ADW were Mary Jackson Kay rc, Bridget Taumoepeau, Chris Duthie Jung, and Debbie Matheson. Mary Ann Greaney, Malia Vito-Tupai and Mikaelo Teofilo were also there as Launch Out Graduates. Although they were not able to attend, the community honoured the support and contributions of Cardinal John Dew and Joan McFetridge to the formation journey of Telesia.

Completing the LO formation makes a graduate eligible to apply for ministry positions in the Archdiocese, should that opportunity arise in the future. Telesia received a Certificate of Completion, Archbishop Paul's endorsement letter and a summary of learning from the formator and manager.

Telesia has finished a New Zealand Certificate in Christian Studies- Christian Ministry Strand (NZCCS-CM), New Zealand Diploma in Christian Studies- Christian Leadership Strand (NZDCS-CL) and two papers in Pastoral Counselling and Liturgy in the Bachelor of Divinity, all from Te Kupenga, the Catholic Theological College.

The event was the first of its kind. We thank Jude McKee for the inspiration of this event and for the support of Archbishop Paul. Many thanks to the family of Telesia for the hospitality.

Congratulations Telesia. We are proud of you.

- Maya Bernardo



How Do You Solve the Problem of Maria?

By Cecily McNeill
Pastoral Mentor

The Proverbial Question of Women's Ordination

This article is a continuation of a three-part series on the role of women in the Church. The previous two articles can be gleaned from:

Martyrs, Witches, Mystics and Rebels: The Role of Women in the Church. [August 2023](#)

Holy dissenters: Women who fought against the misogyny in the Church. [October 2023](#)

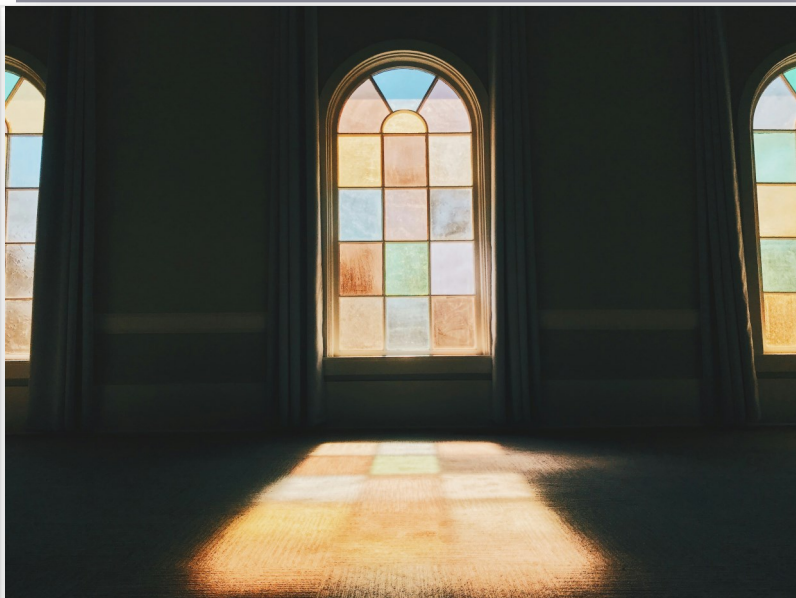


Photo by Daniel McCullough on Unsplash <https://unsplash.com/s/photos/church-windows>

Women have long been instigators of change in the Christian church, in the face of sometimes prohibitive institutional opposition.

As we have seen in the previous two articles, from the beginnings of the Christian church which Paul the apostle wrote about and in the Acts of the Apostles by the writer of Luke's gospel, women have been leaders, often simply responding to a need for community worship, particularly during the Roman occupation when followers of Jesus the Christ were punished.

With the initiation of the second Vatican Council (1962-1965), women began to be more accepted in the leadership of the church. Pope John XXIII exhorted the council to throw open

the windows, let in some fresh air and expose the church to what was going on outside. Here the participation of the laity, which included religious congregations, became important in the renewal, or *aggiornamento* as Pope John called it.

One of the great catchphrases of the second Vatican council was "the signs of the times". Members were encouraged to look out and see the signs and one such signal was the fact that women comprised more than half the church congregation. Then, as now, it is difficult to walk into a church in this part of the world and miss the women preparing for a liturgy. In these days of small numbers of priests, many women lead weekday parish liturgies. They are also well represented in other pastoral roles: hospital and prison chaplaincy, parish-based educational, theological and spiritual discussion groups.

Catalysing these roles is the universal call for women's leadership skills to be recognised in the Catholic Church through priestly ordination.

The 20th century has seen women ordained in a variety of Protestant traditions (1). Yet, in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions where the persona of the priest is paramount, there are seemingly insurmountable obstacles. However, in 1992, the Church of England finally voted to accept women priests. One Anglican priest's reaction sums up the general receipt of this news. "We burned them before, we can burn them again".

A public exchange of letters between Archbishop Runcie of Canterbury and Pope John Paul II crystallised the issues. Debate over the question of women's ordination within the Catholic church had been discouraged so it is likely not many in the church's faithful were aware of the issues. Nevertheless, Pope John Paul pointed out that there had been an 'increase in the number of Anglican churches which admit or are preparing to admit women to priestly ordination' (2). The pope spoke of the 'progress in communion' between the two churches and said that 'in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church' such ordination places 'an increasingly serious obstacle to that progress'.

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On receipt of the papal letter, Archbishop Runcie held a year-long consultation with all bishops of the Anglican community. His reply admitted that differences persist on this issue but those churches which have chosen to ordain women have done so for 'serious doctrinal reasons'.

Six months later, the Archbishop wrote a much more detailed letter to Cardinal Willebrands outlining, in seven points, the reasons. The Church of England statement started with the growing conviction that there exist 'in scripture and tradition no fundamental objections to the ordination of women'. Among the reasons are statements that there is nothing in 'divine law' to forbid women's ordination. On a positive note, the correspondence speaks of the 'most substantial doctrinal reason which ... actually requires ordination: the fundamental principle of the



Christian economy of salvation – upon which there is no question of disagreement between Anglicans and Roman Catholics – is that the eternal Word assumed our human flesh in order that through the passion, resurrection and ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ this same humanity might be redeemed and taken up into the life of the triune Godhead' (3). Runcie also points out that in presiding over the Eucharist, the priest represents the complete humanity of Christ which is all the more perfectly expressed in a priesthood open to both women and men (4). He says that those churches that have taken the step of ordaining women have found it 'generally beneficial'. He closes his letter saying that he would prefer to wait for an ecumenical consensus but hopes this dialogue will continue between the churches.

In his reply, Willebrands discounts any cultural or sociological argument saying the place of women in secular society has no bearing on the solution of a theological and sacramental issue. He goes on to say that the priesthood represents Christ, the head of the body, and 'we can never forget that Christ is a man'. He refers to the bridal imagery of the scriptures and to the role of Mary as model of the church.

Photo by Sylvain Brison on Unsplash <https://unsplash.com/s/photos/church-windows>

In outlining this debate, Mary T Malone points out that one obvious missing ingredient in the Roman Catholic discussion is that of the voice and experience of women. At no stage in the debate were Roman Catholic women consulted, at no stage was it even a matter of consideration that their experience might be integrated. The debate was conducted as though women were entirely irrelevant to the arguments" (5).

The vast body of scholarship of women theologians goes beyond their experience as Christian women into their exegetical, theological, historical work and their work as liturgists and canon lawyers and this changes the debate dramatically. There has grown a theology based on women's experience.

Unfortunately, space precludes my delving into this valuable body of (women's) work. Suffice to say that such giants in the field as Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, who has searched the scriptures exercising her 'hermeneutic of suspicion' and reading against the text for values and visions leading to transformation and liberation. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Elizabeth Johnson are other leading feminist theologians whose work has challenged the status quo in the church. It is to be hoped that these women writers will capture the imagination of young women students of history, theology, archaeology, canon law to carry on this valuable work until one day...

Reference:

- (1)Malone, Mary T, Women and Christianity Orbis, 2003, 226
- (2)Ibid, 231
- (3)Ibid, 231
- (4)Ibid.232
- (5)Ibid 233-4

Welcome, accompany, support, integrate Pastoral Care for our Migrants and Refugees

By Bridget Taumoepeau
Pastoral Mentor

The Pope's Prayer intention for June is: *We pray that migrants fleeing from war or hunger, forced to undertake journeys full of danger and violence, find welcome and new opportunities in the countries that receive them.*

These monthly prayer intentions are an opportunity to not only join the Pope in prayer, but also to reflect on the topics he is raising – this year he draws our attention to the terminally ill; new martyrs; the role of women; formation of religious and seminarians; migrants and refugees; the sick; political leaders; the cry of the earth. A wide range of topics; a rich array of issues for us to address, and to examine ourselves as to how we support these intentions.

For this month let us turn our minds to migrants and refugees. I wonder how often we ponder on how welcoming we are and what opportunities we offer those who have made New Zealand their home. In our Launch Out community we have high numbers of recent migrants (me included,) or those who are descended from migrant families. There have been many reasons for us landing on these shores – we each have a unique and fascinating story of how we came to be here. No doubt we will have stories of how welcomed we felt, or what opportunities were offered to us.

My own journey has led me to two migration experiences. To Tonga where I was obviously 'different', especially at work, being the only palangi and only woman doctor. However, that was a great experience of welcome and support, and the opening of significant opportunities for me, which I probably would not have had if I had stayed in my home country. When I return to Tonga, I am always welcomed both by family and those who remember my work there. Always a feeling of warmth and belonging.

The second migration was to New Zealand – a very different experience. I moved for professional, educational, and economic reasons. I was not entering a family situation, as I had done in Tonga, although the health services community, as well as the Church, became my substitute family. I had to fend for myself more – finding my way for both me and my little family. I was fortunate that I was housed and well paid; I had wonderful teachers helping me develop my professional skills and for some years I lived in both worlds – Tonga and New Zealand, before making the more permanent move to Aotearoa.

So, I have very little to complain about, although I did experience some racism, particularly with Government



Photo by [Katie Moum](https://unsplash.com/photos/building-with-refugees-welcome-signage-uHDbnG-Avpc) on <https://unsplash.com/photos/building-with-refugees-welcome-signage-uHDbnG-Avpc>

Departments, due to my name, and some unsympathetic attitudes at work to the fact that I was a 'solo' mum (my husband being overseas) and the difficulties I had juggling family, work, and study.

However, all that pales into insignificance when one thinks of the experiences of some who come to our country. Their experiences are beyond our imagination, and we do not know what trauma they have suffered. Even those who are not strictly speaking refugees but have come seeking work and a better lifestyle for their families, may have had to make sacrifices and still have the obligation to support their families back home, which may weigh heavily on them.

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Photo by [Katie Mowm](https://unsplash.com/photos/everyone-is-welcome-signage-7XGtYefMXiQ) on <https://unsplash.com/photos/everyone-is-welcome-signage-7XGtYefMXiQ>

One feature of the Catholic Church that I love is its diversity and universality. I remember being very struck, when I was in Fiji over 50 years ago, (having come from a very monocultural background), by the presence at Mass of people from so many countries and cultures. And today in our churches we are indeed very multicultural. But does this universality translate into inclusion and respect for all those who are gathered together in faith?

Do our Parish councils reflect the ethnic makeup of our parishes? Similarly, does the music ministry include migrant communities, who are often more joyous in their use of music? Is the parish prepared to learn expressions of faith in other languages, particularly the language of tangata whenua? Do we acquaint ourselves with the serious issues that are facing the countries of origin of our migrants, such as climate change on small Pacific islands, crippling poverty, and lack of work opportunities?

Synodality emphasises the importance of listening. Are we really listening to the migrants in our communities? Some years ago, we had a short series of presentations in our parish, by people for various communities, explaining their journeys, or the journeys of their parents, to New Zealand. It was heartbreaking to hear the struggles they had had – loneliness, language barriers, lack of recognition of their qualifications, difficulty finding jobs and accommodation, anxiety about their visa situations, obligations to support their families back

home, trying to cultivate a sense of belonging in a new place, finding our liturgy strange. Many of these issues we were not really aware of, let alone seeing ourselves as in a position to help. And all these issues draw on Catholic Social Teaching – the dignity of all, especially the dignity of work and considering the common good in all that we do. Even the less well-known principle of subsidiarity (allowing things to be handled at the most local level) applies, by giving respect to the migrants in allowing them to have a voice in how they adjust, rather than imposing our own ideas on them.

Some years ago, Pope Francis outlined his thoughts about how we assist migrants – ‘Welcome, accompany, support, integrate.’ So, when we consider this month’s prayer intention, let us also ponder on those words of Pope Francis and consider whether or not we are incorporating those principles into the way we engage with our migrant communities.