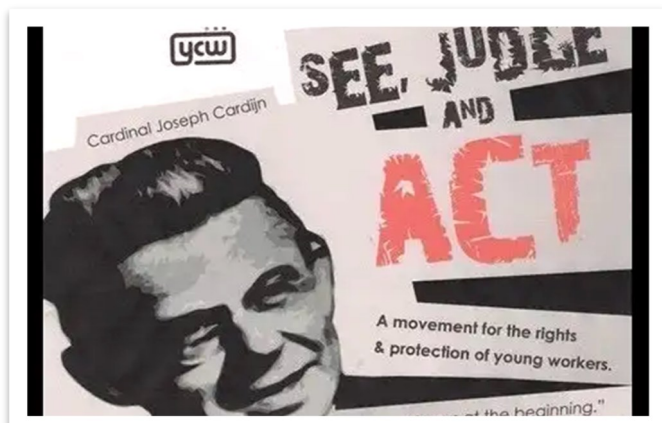


History of the Launch Out Formation Programme

Catholic Lay Movements – The Genesis

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries Catholic lay movements were beginning to emerge. The most prominent was Catholic Action, a movement started by Fr, later Cardinal, Cardijn of Belgium in the 1920's. He promoted the See, Judge, Act philosophy of Catholic Social Teaching (CST).



Copied from : <https://www.ucanews.com/news/cardijn-taught-the-church-to-see-judge-act/17650>

These movements included Young Christian Workers; Cursillo movement; RENEW International; Legion of Mary; various sodalities and the Christian Family Movement.

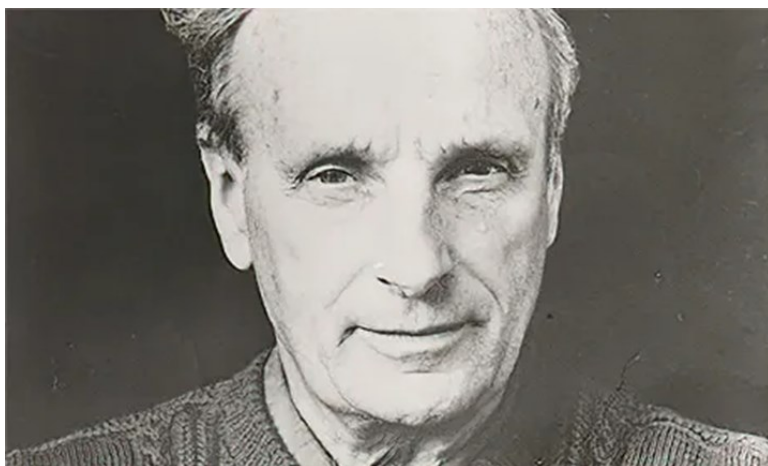
They built on the social teachings of Pope Leo XIII, especially his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, 1891. On its 40th anniversary, in 1931, Pope Pius XI wrote *Quadragesimo Annus*, continuing the theme. In 1991, on the centenary of *Rerum Novarum*, Pope John Paul II wrote *Centisimus Annus*, updating questions about the dignity of man, and especially of work.

These movements arose on a background of a papo-centric and hierocratic structure within the church. The popes of that era had mixed responses to the emerging lay movements. While often being supportive, they considered, on the whole, that the movements should work under the guidance of the clergy, especially bishops, while often grudgingly acknowledging that the laity should be given more of a share in the governance of the church.

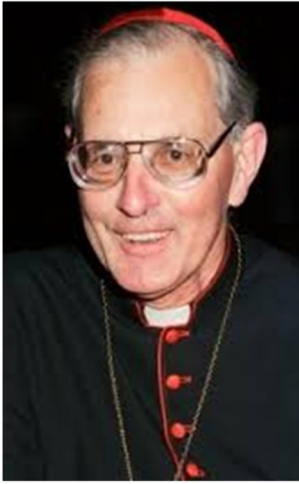
The New Zealand situation was rather different from that of Europe. Catholicism had arrived relatively late to a colonised country; the Catholic education system was well developed leading to well-educated Catholics. CST lectures were well attended and the population was kept well-informed through Catholic newspapers.

In New Zealand knowledge of the lay movements was spread through lectures by Fr J A Higgins sm. In the years leading up to the

Second Vatican Council (VCI), Fr John Curnow became the leader of these groups in New Zealand, starting in Christchurch. In the Wellington region Catholic Action was established in the 1930's and 40's, taking the form of study, intellectual and social activity, with several groups set up eg. Youth, homemakers', culture groups etc.



Fr. John Curnow led many social-justice oriented Catholic groups and promoted the idea of social analysis <https://cathnews.co.nz/2020/07/16/john-curnow-priest-prophet/>



Thomas Williams, later the Cardinal Archbishop of Wellington, was a young lay leader at the time. He was active in Catholic Action movements and this interest was to continue after he was ordained a priest and had a significant influence on his leadership of the Archdiocesan synods of 1988 and 1998.

Following VCII (1962-65), The Archdiocese of Wellington (ADW) promoted the laity as laid out in the Council documents. A Lay Congress was held with support from Archbishop McKeefry and Bishop Sneddon. However, by the 1970's the lay movements were changing. They became more social, and involved in political issues.

The relationship with bishops became somewhat strained. VCII had emphasised the importance of individual conscience and there was a reduction in church authority over the everyday conduct of Catholics.

There were more opportunities for lay people to be involved in the church, including prayer groups, parish councils, liturgy committees, National Committee for Laity etc. This rather detracted from the Catholic Action movement and by the mid 1980's the original lay movements had ceased to exist.



Copied from <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/jesuit-says-confusion-over-vatican-ii-normal-even-50-years-later>

Archdiocesan Synods – The Voice of the People

Wellington is unique in New Zealand in its tradition of regular synods. The first recorded one was in 1870, which was a very clerical affair with the doors closed to laity after the opening Mass. The modern Synods began in 1988. Cardinal Williams outlined the reasons for holding a synod, including the desire to “Communicate the vision of Vatican II in the Archdiocese and to implement more fully its teaching.”

From 1988 onwards the Synods followed a pattern of thorough preparation; significant lay participation; publishing the outcome; and having follow up implementation of the decisions. In preparation for the 1988 Synod Sr Ethel Bignell wrote a background paper entitled “Ministry – Lay and Ordained.” She refers to the importance of VCII and its teaching that the Church should be equated with the People of God. She elaborates on the vocation of the laity - to make the church present and fruitful. In her paper she also outlines the qualities required in a priest, including the ability of the priest to facilitate the ministry of others so that all can succeed in ministry.



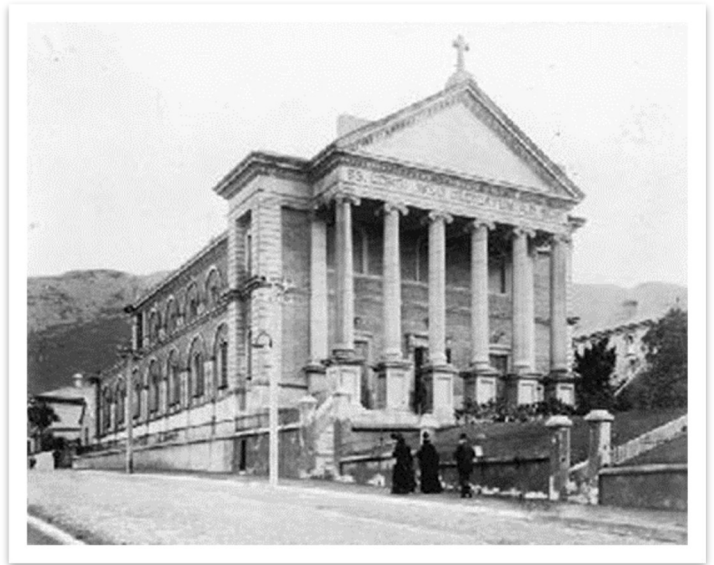
At the time of the 1988 Synod there were 16 pastoral assistants working in the Archdiocese. Most were religious sisters. Many other lay people were involved in ministries such as readers, eucharistic ministers, musicians etc. In the preparation for the Synod, 'The laity' was 10th on the list of priorities to be discussed.

The Synod was considered a great success and reflected the teachings of VCII. In the Report of the Synod, it was stated that each parish should have a Parish Pastoral Council; that John Paul II's Exhortation on the Vocation and Ministry of the Lay Faithful was to be studied; and that an

Archdiocesan Pastoral Council was to be created. Mention was also made of the importance of priests motivating the laity to be involved in ministry. Formation of laity was already being undertaken through courses at the Catholic Education Centre.

In 1998 there was again good preparation for the Synod of that year. By that time there were 19 pastoral assistants, mainly religious sisters and brothers, as well as catechists for children not attending Catholic schools. The issue of training Lay Pastoral Leaders was now first on the list of topics to be discussed. The importance of collaborative ministry was included in the preparatory documents for the Synod. An important outcome of the Synod was the resolution to develop lay leadership, rather than promote another ordained category of leader (deacons).

Cardinal Williams announced, after the Synod, that Lay Leadership would be established. The Archdiocesan Pastoral Council Task Group was established to progress the formation of Lay Pastoral Leaders (LPL's), which included the study of VCII and other papal documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Christifidelis Laici*, *Pastores dabo vobis* and *Novo millenio inuente*. The formation programme included Spiritual, Pastoral and Theological formation. The Archdiocese was fortunate to have an excellent educational establishment and teaching staff. And so, in 2001, Launch Out (LO), the Lay Pastoral Leadership Programme was launched with Joan McFetridge as its manager. In 2019, Joan retired and was replaced by Maya Bernardo, the current formator and manager.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholic_Archdiocese_of_Wellington#/media/

Photo taken by Catherine Gibbs during Joan's farewell mass on 04 May 2019. Joan McFetridge passing on the Launch Out light to Maya Bernardo.



Launch Out – Past, Present and Future



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

The three strands of Launch Out formation entails the candidate receiving formal spiritual direction; undertaking theological study, currently through Te Kupenga, and preparing and presenting pastoral projects within their own parish. The pastoral element of formation requires the candidate to have a mentor. In a review of LO in 2018, a comment was made that Pastoral Projects could be improved to provide a better learning experience for candidates. The Covid pandemic has presented

further problems in undertaking these projects.

After a further Synod in 2006, a resource was written which outlined that parishes should be under the joint responsibility of the parish priest and the LPL. And again, after the 2017 Synod, there was a section addressed to parish leadership and ministry teams, and their need to plan for succession, encouraging the laity to discern and offer their gifts in new and existing leadership roles. Emphasis was laid on collaborative ministry.

In terms of numbers, there have been 31 candidates since 2002 up until 2023, including 8 current students at various stages of their formation. The numbers are smaller than originally



anticipated. 3 are currently working in parishes; others have worked as chaplains or as staff in the Catholic Centre. The programme has been greatly supported by the Cardinal Archbishops of Wellington – firstly By Cardinal Tom Williams, who supported the recommendations of the 1998 Synod, which established the programme, and subsequently by Cardinal John Dew, who has attended all the Launch Out presentations over the years, and has contributed to the formation of candidates.

In 2021 Pope Francis established the Ministry of Catechist in a document called "*Antiquum ministerium*". The title reflects the fact that the 'new' ministry has ancient origins, as well as being promoted in the Vatican II document, *Ad Gentes*, 17. There are many similarities between Lay Pastoral Leaders and the Pope's vision of Catechists. This may influence the development and evolution of the Launch Out formation programme, with the possibility of it being extended to other Dioceses in New Zealand.

About the historian:

This history is written by Bridget Taumoepeau. MB, ChB, FRANZCP, BTheol., PG Dip Theol.

Bridget grew up in a Presbyterian family, becoming a Catholic aged 21. After graduation from medical school, she lived and worked in Tonga for over 10 years, before coming to New Zealand to undertake specialist training in psychiatry. In her retirement she has studied for a bachelor's degree and a post graduate diploma in Theology, her main interest being Church History. She is active in several parish and diocesan ministries, including lay faith formation, and writes for various Catholic publications. She is also a mentor to Launch Out Candidates and a regular contributor to the Launch Out Letters (LOL). This history is drawn from her dissertation towards a Post Graduate Diploma in Theology from the University of Otago.