

PRESENCE OF CATHOLICS PEOPLE IN KENDARI AMID RELIGIOUS PLURALITY

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ABSTRAK

Pluralitas agama dan kepercayaan menjadi realitas kehidupan bermasyarakat di Indonesia. Berhadapan dengan kenyataan ini diperlukan sebuah keterbukaan di antara pemeluk agama-agama dan kepercayaan. Memang harus diakui, perbedaan itu bagaikan pedang bermata dua. Dari satu sisi, kadangkala perbedaan yang ada dapat menjadi sumber konflik terutama bila berhadapan dengan kepentingan yang saling bertolak belakang antara satu sama lain. Tetapi di sisi lain, pluralitas memiliki potensi positif, terutama bila keanekaragaman yang ada mampu dikelola secara baik sehingga memiliki kekuatan dalam membangun kesejahteraan umum. Atas dasar itulah penulis mencoba memahami bagaimana umat Katolik tetap eksis dalam kehidupan bermasyarakat di Kendari. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode deskriptif kualitatif yaitu dengan metode observasi partisipatif dan wawancara. Penelitian ini memperlihatkan bahwa umat Katolik di Kendari selain membangun keberadaan yang kuat, juga secara aktif berkontribusi pada tatanan sosial, menekankan persatuan, pelayanan, dan kolaborasi dalam konteks masyarakat yang lebih besar. Selain itu, penelitian ini memperlihatkan kendala bagi keberadaan umat Katolik seperti metode penginjilan yang baru, keengganan kaum muda untuk terlibat serta semakin kurangnya tenaga pendidik katolik. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan adanya kerjasama dengan merangkul tokoh-tokoh yang berpengaruh untuk mempertahankan keberadaan dan pengaruh Gereja Katolik di masyarakat.

Kata kunci: Gereja; Katolik; Eksistensi; Perkembangan; Kendari

ABSTRACT

The plurality of religions and beliefs is a reality of social life in Indonesia. Dealing with this reality requires an openness among adherents of religions and beliefs. It must be recognized that differences are like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, sometimes the differences can be a source of conflict, especially when dealing with conflicting interests. But on the other hand, plurality has positive potential, especially if the existing diversity can be managed properly so that it has the power to build public welfare. On this basis, the author tries to understand how Catholics continue to exist in Kendari's social life. The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative method, namely, participatory observation and interviews. This research shows that Catholics in Kendari, in addition to building a strong presence, also actively contribute to the social order, emphasizing unity, service, and collaboration in the context of the larger society. In addition, the research revealed obstacles to Catholic presence, such as new methods of evangelization, the reluctance of young people to get involved, and the growing shortage of Catholic educators. Therefore, there is a need for cooperation by embracing influential figures to maintain the presence and influence of the Catholic Church in society.

Keywords: Church; Catholic; Development; Existence; Kendari

INTRODUCTION

Kendari is the name of the city (municipality) of the capital city of Southeast Sulawesi Province. Southeast Sulawesi Province is located in the southeastern peninsula of Sulawesi Island. Astronomically, Kendari is situated in the southern part of the Equator, extending from North to South between 02°45"-

06°15" south latitude and stretching from west to east between 120°45"-124°45" East longitude with a land area of 38,067.7 km². Established as a city on September 27, 1995, under the Republic of Indonesia Law No. 6 of 1995, Kendari City has an area of 300.89 km², with a population of 404,267 people (BPS Southeast Sulawesi Province, 2022). The city of Kendari borders Konawe Regency to the north, South Konawe to the south and west, and the eastern Kendari Sea. Kendari City has 10 sub-districts: Mandonga, Baruga, Puuwatu, Kadia, Wua-wua, Paosia, Abeli, Lepo-Lepo, Bende, and Kambu.

The original inhabitants of Kendari are the Tolaki people. Over time, people from different regions came to Kendari, making the population more diverse. Currently, Kendari is occupied by people from various tribes and cultures, including Tolaki, Muna, Bugis, Javanese, Toraja, Flores, and Chinese tribes. Intermarriage makes the Kendari community more diverse and also provides a good influence on social life. Intermarriage has also helped create a sense of equality, equality, and unity. Currently, the indigenous tribe of Kendari City, the Tolaki tribe, prefers to live in the village area. The majority of the population of Kendari City in urban areas are immigrants from Flores, Bugis, Toraja, and Chinese. The diversity of tribes and cultures in Kendari City also affects religious diversity. The religions embraced by the residents of Kendari City are Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The majority of the population is Muslim, followed by Christian, Catholic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Confucian residents.

The plurality or diversity of religions and beliefs is an undeniable truth in social life, especially in pluralistic societies. Differences are like a double-edged sword, with negative and positive sides. On the negative side, differences can be a source of conflict, especially when dealing with conflicting interests. On the other hand, plurality has positive potential, which can be managed well as a force to build general welfare. The management of differences must essentially start from the good intentions of all parties, then see plurality as a reality, even seen as a gift from God. This mindset can give birth to the belief that differences will be something so beautiful, build, enrich, and bring harmony to life.

However, reality does not always present these expectations. Differences, especially religious differences, often become complicated issues that cause divisions among religious communities. The utilization of differences is directed at certain interests: economic, political, social, and so on. In fact, the problems that arise from existing differences can be a strength in building a conflict-free nation and society. What is needed is an open attitude and willingness to accept each other as a gift from God.

An attitude of openness and respect for differences is not enough to create a new harmonious society. There needs to be continuous cooperation and dialogue from all parties so that no one feels marginalized. In this way, the existence of religious people can be shown while carrying out their duties and responsibilities as religious people and the Indonesian nation. Data from the Center Kendari City Statistics in 2019 shows that the number of Muslims is 318,771, while the number of Christians is 20,118. The Christian religion is divided into two, 12,699 Protestants and 7,419 Catholics. Then Hindus number 2,276 people and Buddhists number 993 people (BPS Kota Kendari, 2023). From these data, the presence of Catholics in Kendari is only about 2.17% of the total population. Nevertheless, the Catholic religion still shows its presence, surviving until now and even growing. This growth can be seen in Catholic works in the city of Kendari, including educational institutions, such as Bruder Kendari Junior High School, and health works such as Santa Anna Hospital.

Based on a number of realities above, the researcher is interested in examining the existence of Catholics in Kendari. Based on this description, the author also formulates the problem formulation, including: (1) how is the spirit of Catholics in establishing relations of plurality of religions and beliefs in Kendari?; (2) How can Catholics in Kendari continue to exist and integrate positively in the context of religious plurality in Kendari? The purpose of this research is (1) to find out the spirit of Catholics in establishing relations of plurality of religions and beliefs in Kendari and (2) to describe how Catholics can continue to exist and integrate positively in the context of religious plurality in Kendari. It is hoped that through this research, a clear mapping of how Catholics can exist in the midst of religious plurality and the challenges of faith life can be found. In addition, Catholics in Kendari have an adequate understanding of the Church's teachings on the existence of different religions in social life. For this reason, this research examines an overview of what challenges and obstacles that Catholic people still experience in Kendari as an effort to realize true brotherhood with society in general.

One of the most important documents of this century that marks the Church's openness to building harmony and cooperation with other religions is the document on human brotherhood for world peace and coexistence. This document was signed by Pope Francis together with the grand imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in Abu Dhabi on February 4, 2019. The document affirms "Religion must not incite people to war, hatred, hostility and extremism, nor must it incite to violence or torture..... We therefore call on all parties to stop using religion to incite hatred, violence, extremism, and blind fanaticism, and to refrain from using the name of God to justify acts of murder, exile, terrorism, and oppression." (Document on the Brotherhood of Man for World Peace and Coexistence 24).

Emile Durkheim once said that one of the functions of religion is to maintain the integrity of society and maintain social integrity.³ However, in reality, society is divided into different groups because of religious differences. Some conflicts arise from religious differences. Although religious leaders and leaders often call for no single religion in this world that teaches hatred, hostility and violence, there are many conflicts between groups in the name of religion. In this case, the true function of religion is not happening. Religion, which is supposed to teach values, norms, and laws of love, does not change the behaviour of its adherents (Kleden, 2004). In other words, religion has not been able to become the dominant culture for its adherents, meaning that religion is not always the main consideration when someone commits anarchist acts.

In 1974, the Asian bishops who were members of the FABC (The Federation on Asia Bishops Conference) organized a plenary synod session in Taiwan. The session then formulated one of the issues of faith that must be faced by the Asian Church, including culture, religious plurality, and poverty (triple dialog). The Church in Asia realizes that the Western traditions were more influencing in Catholic faith and therefore requires new adjustments in Asia. The theology that develops in Asia must be a theology of dialogue. In addition, the Asian Church also realizes that various problems faced by the Asian Church can be minimized and resolved with a dialogue approach. Thus, the Asian Church truly realizes the importance and necessity of promoting dialogue.

The Church has always encouraged its people to build true brotherhood with anyone. Scripture and the magisterium of the Church are the basis for dialogue. Scripture shows three reasons why it is so

important to build brotherhood with all people. First, Scripture teaches how Jesus introduced God as Father (Mt 6:9-13, Lk 11:2-4). God sent the sun for all people (Mt 5:45) and wants all people to be saved (1 Tim 2:4). Therefore, we are called to accept all people as brothers and sisters. Secondly, the law of love is the foundation of true brotherhood. To love the Lord God with all our heart, soul and mind is to love our neighbour as ourselves (cf. Mt 22:37-39, Mk 12:28-33, Lk 10:25-27). The law of love for God and neighbour is like two coins that cannot be separated from each other. Thirdly, the Scriptures very clearly and emphatically ask the faithful to be reconciled with enemies (Mt 5:25). The Apostle Paul also taught that every believer should live in peace with all people (Rom 12:18). Thus, the Scriptures clearly show that building true brotherhood with all people is a command from God Himself.

In the face of diversity, the Catholic Church shows seriousness in building harmony with adherents of other religions in a formal form called dialog. Pope Paul VI in his encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (August 6, 1964) used the term dialog to indicate the relationship that the Catholic Church has built with other religions. Dialogue does not only mean discussion, but also includes all positive and conducive interreligious relationships with individuals and communities of other faiths that are demonstrated for mutual understanding and mutual enrichment.

The Magisterium of the Church, as in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, very clearly encourages the faithful to be actively involved in interreligious dialog. The Church encourages the faithful to be actively involved in interreligious dialog, both interreligious and ecumenical interreligious dialog. The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* is the main basis for building relationships with other religions. The Church values all elements of goodness, truth and holiness in other religions and sees them as paths that can lead to salvation (LG 16). The Decree on the Missionary Work of the Church, *Ad Gentes*, encourages Christians in hope and love to unite with others, realize themselves as members of society in their neighbourhood, and participate in cultural and social life through various ways of human life and various activities. The Church also encourages its faithful to recognize the religious traditions of the communities in which they live (AG 11). The Declaration of the Church's Attitude towards Non-Christian Religions, *Nostra Aetate* is a historical and theological account of the Church's dialogical attitude towards other religions. The Second Vatican Council unequivocally views other religions positively while looking for aspects that can lead to dialog and reconciliation. The Church shows appreciation for the salvific values demonstrated by belief in the supernatural powers of nations, Hinduism and Buddhism (NA 2), Islam (NA 3), and Judaism (NA 4). Ecumenical interreligious dialogue or the dialogue relationship between the Catholic Church and other separate Christian Churches is explained more clearly in *Lumen Gentium* 15, *Decrees Orientalium Ecclesiarum* (On the Catholic Eastern Churches) and *Unitatis Redintegratio* (On ecumenism: Dialogue relationship with other Christians).

The leaders of the World Catholic Church, through their apostolic and encyclical mandates, encourage Catholics to be actively involved in building dialogue with people of any religion. Pope Paul VI in 1974, issued his apostolic mandate *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World) to underline the Catholic Church's basic stance of appreciating and respecting non-Christian religions. Referring to the documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially AG 11 and LG 17, Pope Paul VI revealed that religion is an echo of man's efforts over thousands of years to find God. The Church therefore views everything that

is good and true in other religions as seeds of the word (EN 53). John Paul II, in 1974, published the encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (RH: The Mystery of Christ's Redemption as the Basis of the Church's Permanent Mission to the World). Pope John Paul II reiterated that the Church's self-awareness must be manifested in a positive and dialogical attitude towards other religions (RH 11). In 2020, Pope Francis issued the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* (FT: On Fraternity and Social Friendship). In chapter VIII, Pope Francis speaks specifically about the role of religion in the service of world brotherhood. Pope Francis states that different religions, by virtue of their respect for each human person as a creation called to be a child of God, make a meaningful contribution to building fraternity and defending justice in society. Dialogue between adherents of different religions does not take place only for the sake of diplomacy, particular considerations or tolerance. In the statement of the Indian bishops, "the purpose of dialogue is to build friendship, peace and harmony, and to share spiritual and moral values and experiences in the spirit of truth and love" (FT 271).

The motto of Msgr. John Harun Yuwono, Bishop of Tanjungkarang Diocese is *non est personarum acceptor Deus* (God does not discriminate between people). The quote also answers the question: what is the biblical basis for the Second Vatican Council's view on moderation. Stepanus Sigit Pranoto is interested in using this motto quoted from the Book of Acts (Acts 10:34) as one of the foundations of the Catholic Church's perspective on the reality of plurality of religions and beliefs. In simple terms, it can be understood that all people have the same value before God (Pranoto, 215). Although there are differences for each person, these differences do not prevent God from giving His grace and love. In verse 35 of the Book of Acts 10, it is expressed more clearly: "Everyone from any nation who fears Him and practices righteousness is pleasing to Him." God does not discriminate between people because God is the Father of all people "who gives sunshine to the evil and the good, and rain to the righteous and the unrighteous" (Mt 5:45). Based on the above view of the Second Vatican Council, God the Father "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:4). For these reasons, the Catholic Church believes that we are all called to accept all people as brothers and sisters, regardless of their background.

Indonesia is indeed very rich in differences. Tribes, races, religions, languages, cultures, animals, forest products, and so on are so unique. Many nations in the world envy Indonesia for being so rich in diversity. It is extraordinary if seen from the point of view of faith, how diversity actually shows the omnipotence of God the Creator. Benjamin Yosef Bria (2007) says that it is not faithful to God who, for example, is only able to create white or uniformity. This kind of God feels very petty (Bria & Joseph, 2007). So the difference or diversity mentioned above is something that is desired or intended by God. Why? Because God wants each person to receive from others what he or she needs. Whoever has a special "talent", then let him use it for the benefit of others in need. These differences reinforce each other and often require people to be noble, generous and willing to share. This stimulates cultures to enrich each other. In other words, Benyamin Yosef Bria (2007) asserts that diversity should be one of the foundations or driving elements of solidarity.

METHODS

The research method used is qualitative descriptive research, namely by participatory observation and interview methods (Sugiono, 2012). The two methods used by the researcher are intended to

complement each other, so that the data obtained by the researcher is more holistic. The descriptive method is intended to record, describe, describe, and report on the thoughts, attitudes, actions and behaviours of Catholics in the plurality of religions in implicit reality. Qualitative research emphasizes in-depth, holistic, and interpretive research. The use of this method is to make it easier for researchers to understand the subject of research. This study emphasizes more on efforts to understand the phenomenon being studied by relying on direct observation. The analysis used is a SWOT analysis that looks at *the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats* of Catholics' efforts to exist in the midst of religious plurality in Kendari.

There are two stages carried out by researchers in collecting data, namely participatory observation and interviews (Sugiono, 2012). The first step taken by the author is to go directly to the research site, in this case the parishes in Kendari become the *research locus*. In the field, researchers carry out participatory observation methods, namely direct observation by taking part and actively participating in the dynamics of the life of certain communities or groups observed (Sugiono, 2012). While making observations, researchers also do what data sources do. This method is carried out to obtain more complete, sharp data and to know the level of meaning of each observed behaviour. The author focuses on certain Catholic communities or groups in parishes in Kendari and tries to find out the problems that occur.

The next step of research is interviews. The interview in this data collection is open, meaning that the informant knows that they are being interviewed and also knows the purpose and purpose of the interview. Some of the informants came from Brothers, Depas (Parish Pastoral Council), ward heads, heads of categorical groups, and parishioners in parishes in Kendari. The interview conducted is a semi-structured interview, meaning that the interview is conducted more freely compared to a structured interview. The author prepared interview questions but did not rule out the possibility of improvising during the interview. The purpose of this interview is to find problems more openly, where the interviewee is asked for their opinions and ideas in response to the problem that the researcher is studying. The data from the narrators are as follows.

Table I: Data of Research Informants

It	Name	Age	Parish Origin (Quasi-Parish)
1	Euphebius Anasara	76	Saint Francis Xavier, Sadohoa
2	Devita Lucia Rumat Series	59	Saint Francis Xavier, Sadohoa
3	Sicilia Elim	50	Saint Francis Xavier, Sadohoa
4	Frans Celsius S	71	Saint Clement, Mandonga
5	Bernardinus Nyoman Suyatno	58	Saint Clement, Mandonga
6	Susanto Anthonius	71	Saint Clement, Mandonga
7	Yulius B. Pasolo	65	Saint Clement, Mandonga
8	Yanurius Parinta	71	Saint Mary Ascended to Heaven, Andonuhu
9	Antonius Budi Utomo	60	Saint Mary Ascended to Heaven, Andonuhu
10	Erna Deri Pakanan	52	Saint Mary Ascended to Heaven, Andonuhu
11	P. Bagyo Martopo	65	Mary's Joyful News, Ranomeeto
12	Leonardus Latu	60	Mary's Joyful News, Ranomeeto
13	Patric Pasassung	58	Mary's Joyful News, Ranomeeto

14	Efrem Bala Muda HHK	38	-
Source: <i>Processed by Researcher, 2024</i>			

The author conducted research at the Kendari Catholic Church, Southeast Sulawesi which focused on Catholics in the city of Kendari as a whole. There are four parishes in the city of Kendari, namely Saint Francis Xavier Kendari Parish, Saint Calmes Mandonga Parish, Santa Maria Ascended to Heaven Andonuhu Parish, and Maria Ranomeeto Evangelical News Parish.

The data analysis carried out during the research and after the research was carried out included several stages. The first stage is data collection. The author collects the data that has been obtained through participatory observation, interviews, and literature. The second stage is data reduction. The data obtained from the field in the form of field records is then reduced. Reducing data means summarizing, choosing the main things, focusing on the important things, and looking for the right themes, and patterns (Sugiono, 2012). The third stage is data display. Data display is the presentation of data into a pattern. Presentation of data in the form of brief descriptions, such as chart forms, relationships between categories, and so on (Sugiono, 2011). The purpose of displaying data is to make it easier, to understand what is happening, and design work to the next stage. The fourth stage is conclusion drawing/verification (Sugiono, 2011). After the researcher has carried out the above stages, the last stage is conclusion and verification. This conclusion is the answer to the formulation of the problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are described in the form of several questions answered by the narrator. These questions directed the informants to provide expected data related to the existence of Catholics in Kendari City to provide a special picture to the researchers about the actual situation on the ground. The author then dialogues between the results of the question and the discussion related to the condition of Catholics in Kendari City. These questions, quoted from Fauziyah (2022), are spread over four SWOT analysis methods, including strengths, weaknesses, *opportunities*, and *threats*.

Religious Plurality in Kendari

Plurality is a word that is often used to describe a situation that contains plurality or diversity. Plurality, like 'society' is also a development of the root word 'plural'. Plurality comes from the ancient Latin *pluralitatem* or *plurality* which means "of or belonging to more than one." Plurality itself is often aligned with the term pluralism. Pluralism itself has become an understanding that departs from the fact of diversity or 'plural'. In terms of etymology, pluralism also comes from the root words 'plural' and 'ism' which refer to an understanding.

Plurality is not an ideology, but a state of being. Unlike pluralism, plurality is not an ideology. Plurality is a 'state of being more than one', a situation that allows for diversity or difference. Plurality demands an acceptance of the reality of differences that exist in society.

Diversity or plurality in Kendari is reflected in various forms, such as ethnicity, culture and religion. It has been explained earlier that the majority of Kendari city is now inhabited by various immigrant tribes, namely Bugis, Muna, Java, Toraja, Flores and Chinese. This diversity certainly results in cultural plurality

in social life. Not only that, the plurality is also greater with the existence of mixed marriages among the population. This creates a sense of equality, equity and unity, which are important elements in plurality.

Cultural plurality in Kendari city indirectly creates plurality in religious life. The residents with their different tribes have created a plurality of religions that also participate in social life. Based on the data presented earlier, it is clear that followers of Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism coexist in Kendari city. The diversity of religions and beliefs is the foundation of religious plurality in Kendari, especially in inter-religious relations.

Development of Kendari Catholics

Knowledge of the history of the emergence of a particular community will give those who belong to it a sense of belonging and close bond. This is what several Catholics in Kendari then felt who knew the development of the Catholic faith with several challenges. A glimpse of the first Catholic Church built in Kendari City shows St. Francis Xavierius Sadohoa Parish as the first parish there. According to the statistical data of the faithful, before the 1960s, Catholics in Kendari did not have a permanent priest servant in the sense that the Kendari area was still part of the service coverage area of St. John the Baptist Raha Parish, Muna Regency. In short, at that time Kendari was part of one of the stations of Raha Parish which was served by a priest from the CICM Congregation, P. Breces CICM (Sutedja, 2011). Of course, in this situation, there are not so many people in Kendari. In the Andonuhu area itself, according to Budi (personal interview, August 23, 2024), until 1990 there were only five Catholic families. The officially established station church in the area was only established in 1993.

The development of faith in Kendari previously had a very conventional basis. The people at that time considered that any activity carried out was part of the imam. Susanto (personal interview, August 23, 2024) emphasized that what makes the slow growth of religion is the lack of availability of facilities and infrastructure as well as a very limited spiritual community. The arrival of missionaries, especially from CICM (Congregatio Immaculati Cordis Mariae), actually shows the faith of the people who are starting to squirm. The establishment of the parish church in Kendari originated from an event where a parishioner willingly donated a piece of land belonging to the Church council, in this case the Diocese to be used for the construction of the church building (Sutedja, 2016). This was also the forerunner of the existence of the first parish church and the development of Catholics there. The church building in question is St. Francis Xavierius Sadohoa Parish.

St. Clemens Parish itself is an expansion of Sadohoa Parish. Based on the information obtained through the results of the interview, it was noted that the Parish of Saint Clemens Mandonga was definitively officially established around the beginning of 2000, precisely on February 22, 2000 as stipulated in the Decree of the Archbishop of Makassar, Mgr. John Liku Ada' Number: 2202/D-4.24/2000 (Profile of Mandonga Parish, 2024). The parish also takes the name of the patron saint Clemens I, a Pope and martyr whose celebration is celebrated every November 22. One of the main reasons for consideration why Clemens Parish was designated as a parish is not solely the factor of the number of people, but the service area (*geography territory*). The span of the service area is very wide from Sadohoa Parish at the beginning of its establishment where to the South it reaches 60 KM and to the North it can reach 200 KM. It feels too

far away so the expansion of the second Parish Church, St. Clemens Mandonga Parish (Susanto, personal interview, August 24, 2024).

The Church realizes that to be more accepted in society, it must increasingly show its existence as a form of witness of faith. Therefore, the presence of works such as social, educational, and health strongly supports the existence of the Church in society. This is also an important history of the existence of the Catholic Church in Kendari so that it can be known to the public until now. It also includes that the presence of this work is part of the Church's response in answering the problems of the people in particular and society in general, so it can be said that the Church's pastoral forum is also expanding (Bernardinus, personal interview, August 24, 2024). In the field of education, the Catholic Church in Kendari shows its existence through the establishment of schools. One of the schools that is quite widely known to the Kendari community is Kendari Brother Junior High School. On the initiative of Bishop Nicolaus Marthinus Scchneiders, CICM in collaboration with the local government, Brother Kendari Junior High School – formerly Brother Kendari Junior High School – began to be established in 1969, not long after the Sadohoa Parish church was established (Brother Kendari Junior High School, 2020). As a Catholic school in general, faith and character education is very emphasized in this school so it is not surprising that, apart from coming from Catholics, many students who attend school here come from other faiths. Another educational institution that participates in the development of the Catholic faith in Kendari is the Rainbow Catholic Elementary School. Established in 1983, Pelangi Catholic Elementary School is a school under the auspices of the Makassar Paulus Foundation, Archdiocese of Makassar, while Brother Kendari Junior High School is under the management of Brothers Servants of Christ. In addition to the establishment of the school, the Catholic Church is present in Kendari with health work. Santa Anna Hospital, located in Sanua, West Kendari, was the first Catholic hospital to be established in Kendari under the management of the Sisters of Jesus Maria Joseph (SJMJ) which was established in 1968. These works have also influenced the development of the people in Kendari, especially how the community increasingly knows Catholic because of their presence through these works that focus on serving love to others.

The Role of Catholics in the Community of Kendari

Frans (personal interview, August 23, 2024) said that the existence of Catholics in Kendari was initially accepted because of the presence of Father Clemens Lemes CICM, a Catholic priest and military member. Being one of the pioneers of the development of Catholics there, Father Clemens is often involved in community activities, including assisting in the form of cement for the construction of mosques. Because of his strong influence in society, Dr. Clemens became one of the figures who grew up in society. His influence also brought Catholics in Kendari to become a community that is known to have a good influence on society. The great influence of Father Clemens CICM placed him as a central figure in the history of the development of Catholics in Kendari. For his work that made Catholics grow even more, when Sadohoa Parish was expanded into two parishes, Mandonga Parish took the patron name from Father Clemens, namely Saint Clements became the patron of the Mandonga Kendari parish. This is expected, in addition to the Catholic community to emulate St. Clements, so that Catholics in this parish have a militant spirit like the figure of Father Clemens who has a burning spirit in giving testimony to the Catholic faith as well as building the Catholic faith in Kendari.

The existence of Catholics in Kendari also cannot be separated from the existence of the Kendari Fraternity Junior High School and the Santa Anna Kendari Magic House. Since its establishment and began to be known by the wider community, Brother Kendari Junior High School has become increasingly popular, not only by Catholics, but also by the community in general. Another thing that makes Brother Kendari Junior High School widely known is because of its different level of discipline from public schools in Kendari (Efrem, personal interview, August 23, 2024). So it is not surprising that many officials in Kendari City have been educated at the school. In addition to education, health facilities are also developing well in Kendari. Santa Anna Hospital, which was established in 1968, also has a great influence on the community in terms of health services. These two things, education and health, are felt to be one of the fields used by Catholicism in Kendari in.

Due to the history of togetherness in the past with the community, Yulius said (personal interview, August 23, 2024), there was a friendship between Catholics and the people of Kendari city in general. Their presence is also quite taken into account in society. Several community leaders such as Mr. Bagia and Mr. Patrik are often involved in community organization activities, such as BKM (Community Welfare Agency) and PAKEM (Community Committee). This shows that the presence of Catholics in Kendari is widely known because of the works that are submitted. Catholics are also considered to have a diverse view of the development of society so that they can easily socialize with the community. Even though their dominance is transmigration, the community feels a bond of brotherhood that is strong because of their testimony in the work carried out (Yanuarius, interview, August 23, 2024).

To describe the tolerance that is so familiar in the city of Kendari, Devita (personal interview, August 23, 2024) likened it to a lulo dance. The lulo dance is a typical dance of joy in Southeast Sulawesi. This dance is performed by forming a circle and the dancers hold hands while swinging their legs and hands to the rhythm of the accompanying music. Lulo itself is touted as a friendship and unifying dance because this dance is performed together by everyone regardless of background (Jumriati, 2024). Because of the strong meaning of brotherhood in this lulo dance, Devita uses it as a picture of a form of tolerance in Kendari. This, one of them, is manifested in the implementation of activities involving the community in general where Catholics always have a place in it. In addition, gatherings often occur among religious people there. In some big religious celebrations, such as Eid al-Fitr and Christmas, interfaith people do not hesitate to visit each other and congratulate each other.

Large capital (Strength) of the Kendari Catholic Geraja

The main strength of Catholics in Kendari so that they continue to exist is first of all because of the faith they believe. For them, the Catholic faith is their main identity because it has a special characteristic that leads to self-visualization (Euphebius, personal interview, August 24, 2024). According to the people of Kendari in general, as emphasized by Euphebius, Catholics are known to be unemotional and carry out their lives, both social and religious, calmly. The presence of Catholics does not bring unrest to the surrounding community (Susanto, personal interview, August 23, 2024). Instead, they show concern for others with social service activities that are often carried out by the parishes there. This situation has given rise to familiarity between Catholics and the community in Kendari.

The faith of the people in Kendari, as in parishes in general, is also inseparable from the involvement of categorical groups. In the two major parishes in Kendari, Mandonga and Sadohoa, the development of categorical groups is very much felt by the people there. These groups include SEKAMI (Pontifical Society of Missionary Children), REFRANXA (Francis Xavier Youth), MBA community (Let's Read the Bible), OMK (Catholic Youth), Divine Mercy Group, PDKK (Catholic Charismatic Prayer Fellowship). Especially in Mandonga Parish, the MBA community has another term, namely AMA (Let's Read the Bible). These categorical groups are the strength of Catholics in Kendari City.

It is undeniable that most Kendari Catholics are immigrants from outside Kendari. One of the things that makes many immigrants there is that the resources available in Kendari and its surroundings are quite adequate compared to other areas. Their arrival was also accompanied by the faith that they brought and developed there. This diversity is a strength in itself for Catholics in Kendari (Bernardus, personal interview, August 24, 2024). For example, this Religion by St. Clement Mandonga Parish was then strengthened by the implementation of the inculturation mass of each culture which is routinely carried out every month there.

Another strength possessed by Catholics in Kendari is works that not only touch Catholics, but also society in general. In addition to the education and health works mentioned earlier, another work that exists in Kendari is the presence of *Credit Union* (CU) which is a microfinance institution to empower the community under the auspices of the Social and Economic Development Commission (PSE) of the Archdiocese of Makassar (KAMS). In the Southeast Sulawesi area, which is still a member under the administrative jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Makassar, the CU that moves is specifically named CU Mentari Kasih, while in Makassar and West Sulawesi CU Mekar Kasih and Toraja CU Sauan Sibarrung. Established in 2017, CU Mentari Kasih has 5 Service Places (TP) in Southeast Sulawesi, including TP Unaaha, TP Labasa, TP Pomala, TP Kendari, and Kendari Head Office. The existence of CU Mentari Kasih in Kendari provides great benefits for the community in general, especially in terms of economic development. During the Covid-19 pandemic, CU Mentari Kasih succeeded in helping many people in Southeast Sulawesi, including Kendari to get out of economic problems due to the pandemic (Muhammad Haryanto, 2022). CU Mekar Kasih is considered the most developed cooperative in Southeast Sulawesi and has great potential to develop in the future because from the beginning it has played a role in supporting the regional economy. Even though the general public is not aware of it, Catholics still exist in Kendari because of the existence of CU Mentari Cinta. Of course, the existence of Catholics is not only seen from their religious life, but also from their influence in society. This is also what has happened to Catholics in Kendari. Their involvement in CU with the community has increased their existence.

Weaknesses of the Kendari Catholic Church

Currently, Catholics can be said to have developed very much. Although the figure of 2.17% is still very small, in terms of the number of adherents, Catholicism is increasing more than in previous years. They come from various ethnicities that have inhabited Kendari since the beginning, including Tolaki, Toraja, Flores, Bugis, and Chinese. Even so, developments in terms of living a life of faith are sometimes not paid attention to by Catholics who inhabit the city of Kendari. One of them is that it is quite difficult for the people to accept the renewal both from within the Church itself and from outside. This sometimes

makes it difficult for Catholics, even lay leaders – in this case a priest – to visualize themselves as Catholics (Patric, personal interview, August 23, 2024). The point is that they have a hard time showing their identity as Catholics.

Because of the difficulties in accepting the renewal mentioned earlier, the people's understanding of the Catholic faith is still very small. Catechesis activities of the people are not often carried out. Most people understand the life of faith only by attending mass on Sunday and practicing the teachings of love. The importance of understanding the teachings of faith seems to be ignored by the people. This concern is also accompanied by the pastoral apostolate of lay apostolates that has not been maximized. In some Church activities, such as taking part in the celebrations of the Eucharist, the participation of the faithful in terms of taking a role is not given much attention. The people who take part in an activity are only certain people - generally those who have often participated in Church activities. Likewise, the faithful consider that being present at the celebration of the Eucharist is enough to be considered as part of active participation.

The above situation also causes another phenomenon within the scope of the Church. Bagyo (Personal Interview, August 23, 2024) admitted that within the scope of the Church in Kendari, especially from the parish where he came from, several differences in the people tend to give rise to the seeds of new groups within the scope of the Church. Because of the incompatibility between the groups in the people, they choose to take part in the Church. The multicultural characteristics of the people in Kendari – in this case Mandonga Parish is quite highlighted, which is shown by the regular implementation of Inculturation masses – in addition to being a strength in the Church, which can be a source of weakness for the people. The similarity of the region of origin makes the people tend to get along and be together with their colleagues and are reluctant to join the people from other regions. Regarding the faith that prevails in society, of course this will have an impact on community life. The restriction of association in the Church also contributes to influencing people to limit themselves to associating in public life.

Catholics often hear that the life of a good priest also has a good impact on the people. Catholic people feel this in Kendari. However, the faithful feel, as Sicily said (Personal interview, August 3, 2024) that the pastoral tendency is *pastoral*. In this case, a pastor tends to take many roles in the pastoral life of the parish without involving the potential that exists in the people. The parish priest does not empower the people well. For example, in terms of liturgy, a priest, both a parish priest and a vicarist, is a figure who is considered to know very well about liturgical life. But in its implementation, of course, it is not only the priest who takes a role in it, including all the preparations. In this case, it is important also to involve the people in the implementation of this liturgy, both in the implementation and in the design of activities. Therefore, the presence of liturgical driving teams, such as liturgical commissions, is very important for the smooth running of the liturgy that touches the people.

As mentioned earlier, social work in society is an important aspect of the development of the Church in society. The Catholic Church in Kendari gained strength through works such as schools and hospitals. One of the works that has not been mentioned before is the dormitory. This is because this work only lasted for a moment and its impact is not felt until now. Erna (Personal interview, August 23, 2024) emphasized that the existence of this dormitory is very helpful for the local Church to show its existence in

society. How could it not, the existence of the dormitory not only provides space for Catholics but also non-Catholics who want to enter the dormitory. Especially in the city of Kendari at that time the Catholic dormitory was quite well known as one of the places that was able to educate students well. However, the dormitory is currently no longer operating. The cessation of this dormitory is considered one of the weaknesses of the Church in Kendari in showing its existence in the community.

Being directly involved in practical politics for the people of Kendari in general is something that is considered quite foreign. This is seen in the lack of involvement of Catholics in trying to take a role in practical politics (Yauarusus, personal interview, August 23, 2024). They consider that entering into practical politics is not the spirit of Catholics so it needs to be avoided. The Church views involvement in practical political life as a space for the Church to fight for the common interest (*bonum commune*) as part of the Christian vocation of life (cf. GS art. 73). Pope Paul VI in his apostolic letter, *Octogesima Adveniens* article 46, affirms that in the fight for the common good, those involved in practical politics seek to solve the problems of human relations because all the choices made in them should be by the Gospel. Therefore, Pope Paul VI encouraged the people involved in politics always to realize that political life is a special calling that must be carried out with full responsibility. It has become clear, then, that Catholics should not be allergic to political violence.

Opportunities for faith development in Kendari

The development of Catholics in Kendari with the various strengths of its people has given a positive reaction from various circles. In addition to being known for their calm nature, Catholics are known to be very tolerant. This condition makes Catholics have *Imege* which is so good among Protestants that they have great respect for Catholics (Susanto, personal interview, August 23, 2024). Not infrequently, in addition to Protestants, Kendari officials are very open to gathering with Catholics in various religious activities. This situation is certainly a great opportunity for the people of Kendari to give testimony to the community. In particular, the model of work carried out by the Church is slowly being adopted by other Christians because they consider what the Catholic Church is doing to show a real witness to the faith in society truly. So it is not surprising that schools, hospitals, and CUs owned by the Catholic Church are chosen by many Protestants, even Muslims.

The very rich cultural background is a huge opportunity for the people of Kendari to develop their ministry work so that they can truly become a society (Frans, personal interview, August 23, 2024). As mentioned earlier, the existence of an inculturation mass attended by a large number of Catholics from various tribes shows the spirit of faith that the people have in the life of faith. The number of tribes that enter Kendari is not without reason. This is of course due to the wealth of natural resources in Kendari attracts many people to make a living there. This phenomenon certainly provides an opportunity for the Church to develop more in society because it is supported by its increasing number of members.

The Biggest Challenge for the Church in Kendari

Several possibilities and opportunities that Catholics have in Kendari have invited reactions from the people of other Church denominations. They then developed a new style of evangelization that often caused conversation among Catholics and society in general (Susanto, personal interview, August 24, 2024). In addition, it is also difficult for people to distinguish between the Catholic Church and

Protestantism. Despite having the same faith in Jesus Christ, this similarity sometimes misunderstands some people. The style of evangelization carried out by many parties from the denominations of the Church sometimes has an impact on the Catholic Church which is also considered part of the activity. The Catholic Church uses the method of testimony more in showing its faith to the public. This is considered a very relevant way of contextualizing the teachings of faith in society.

Therefore, as expected by Euphebius (Personal interview, August 24, 2024) in the scope of the Church in Kendari today, it is very necessary to have a figure, in addition to the parish priest, who can move the people in general to increasingly show their existence in society. These figures are expected to be able to regenerate among the people to a role in society increasingly. Today, what is both a concern and a threat to the Church is the reluctance of young people to engage in community activities. They lack the awareness to live a life of faith through public relations. Young people tend to be preoccupied with their world, as if the life of faith is no longer cared for. As a result, many young people who due to the cultivation of insufficient faith values do not succeed in maintaining their faith when they have entered the community, or even abandon their faith for certain reasons, one of which is marriage.

Another problem felt by the people of Kendari is in the field of education. They realize that religious education is so important that it needs to be inherited, especially in educational institutions (Susanto, personal interview, August 24, 2024). However, the facts show in the field that Catholic religious teachers in Kendari are currently very lacking, especially in public schools. Because there are no teachers of this religion, many students do not study religion at all or even choose to take religious lessons from other faiths. Another situation is that Catholic education today seems to compete with other educational models. The emergence of better private schools and learning methods that are starting to be applied by public schools today seems to threaten the existence of Catholic education in Kendari. This certainly has a big impact on Catholic education in the future because the decline in the quality of Catholic education can make the existence of the Church in the community also threatened.

CONCLUSION

The presence of Catholics in Kendari is a testament to their resilience and dedication to the faith. Starting from simplicity, the establishment of St. Francis Xavierius Sadohoa Parish marked the first step of Catholicism in the region. Over time, the community grew, eventually leading to the formation of the Parish of Saint Clemens Mandonga in the early 2000s, the Parish of Santa Maria Ascended to Heaven of Anduonohu in 2023, and the Parish of the Annunciation of Mary Ranomeeto. Through the establishment of schools such as Brother Kendari Junior High School and Pelangi Catholic Elementary School, the Catholic Church is increasingly embedded in society, emphasizing education and character development. In addition, the presence of Santa Anna Hospital, managed by the Sisters of Jesus Maria Joseph, highlights the Church's commitment to health care and community service. Important figures such as Father Clemens Lemes CICM played an important role in fostering community acceptance and engagement, which further strengthened the presence of Catholics in Kendari.

The strong Catholic presence has influenced the social landscape in Kendari in various ways. Schools such as Brother Kendari Junior High School and Rainbow Catholic Elementary School have further deepened community bonds through education and character-building initiatives. The provision of health

services at Santa Anna Hospital, managed by the Sisters of Jesus Maria Joseph, is an example of the Church's commitment to the well-being of the community holistically. The impact of the Catholic community goes beyond religious activities, as can be seen from the existence of Credit Unions that support local economic development. Therefore, the researcher found that overall, Catholics in Kendari have not only built a strong existence but also actively contributed to the social order, emphasizing unity, service, and collaboration in the context of the larger community, thus demonstrating a harmonious communal spirit and cooperation.

Catholics in Kendari face challenges, such as the emergence of new evangelistic methods from other denominations that can blur the distinction between Catholics and Protestants, affecting perceptions in the community and society at large. The reluctance of young people to be actively involved in social activities is a threat, as it can lead to a decline in the practice of faith. In addition, the lack of Catholic educators and the competitive nature of the education system in Kendari can jeopardize the quality of Catholic education, which has an impact on the presence of the Church's in society. Embracing figures who can mobilize the community and foster active participation among young people is essential for the Catholic community in Kendari to maintain its existence and influence in society.

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