

## Building the Spirit of Young Catholics in Urban Ministry

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**Abstract:** This study explores the application of principles from the Synod of Bishops' document, "Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment," in fostering the spiritual growth and active engagement of Catholic youth in urban ministry. Recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities presented by urban environments, this research aims to identify effective strategies for nurturing the faith and vocational discernment of young Catholics. A mixed-method approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative research. Surveys and interviews were conducted with youth ministry leaders and participants across various urban Catholic communities. Additionally, case studies of successful urban youth ministries were analyzed to identify best practices and key factors contributing to their effectiveness. The Synod's document served as the theoretical framework guiding the analysis. The findings highlight several critical elements for building the spirit of Catholic youth in urban ministry. These include the importance of creating inclusive and welcoming spaces, the need for mentorship and authentic adult engagement, the integration of social justice and community service into faith activities, and the use of contemporary communication tools to connect with young people. The study also underscores the value of encouraging personal vocational discernment through reflective practices and supportive environments. The principles outlined in the Synod of Bishops' document provide a robust foundation for enhancing the spiritual vitality and involvement of Catholic youth in urban ministry. By focusing on inclusivity, mentorship, social engagement, and vocational support, urban Catholic communities can effectively nurture the faith and discernment of young people. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of how to adapt traditional ministry approaches to the dynamic context of urban life, ensuring that the Catholic faith remains relevant and transformative for the next generation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Life in modern day city demands a lot of things from every individual who lives in it. However, sometimes these demands do not lead to fundamental-positive things. The demands of this day and age are mostly in the form of a lifestyle that tends to bad things. This modern world offers consumerism and hedonism as the purpose of human life. Almost everyone thinks that their lives will be happier when they have access to fulfill all their desires. The first thing that must be fulfilled in life are worldly desires, not fundamental needs. Wealth, popularity, prestige, and other things are the main topics that become a must in their lives. So it is not uncommon to find families who have instilled in their children the value of living in competition among others in order to get success which often causes injustice and anxiety. In

this way, young people of modern times emerge as individuals who compete with each other on the basis of worldly success.

From the value of radical unconscious competition, young people develop into individuals who are no longer directed at spiritual values. They live in the shadows of worldly leanings. Yet, in their hearts, they themselves felt a longing for the noble and divine, especially young Catholics. From the very beginning of their lives, God has planted a call to a noble, transcendental life. That call is God's invitation to care for others who are suffering because modern times are more concerned with worldly success. That vocation comes about through the work of the Church, which offers young people a charitable ministry. Young people full of enthusiasm and abilities and skills in modern times are needed by the Church as a central figure in the Church's service to the world, including in urban areas. Thus, it is necessary for the Church to build the spirit of young Catholics in the work of the Church's ministry.

However, it is not uncommon to find that young Catholics in urban areas are even carried away by the flow of modern-day life. Their vocation became less apparent, but it was still firmly embedded in their lives. Meanwhile, the Church needs new generations to replace them in the future. It is the young man who is the successor of the Church who now needs special attention. Therefore, "the Church has a duty and responsibility to continue the proclamation of the gospel to the younger generation" (Widiatna, 2022) in the form of spiritual assistance from religious people. Thus, they will also have values and actions that can be given to others, especially those who suffer, in their daily lives. So, the main issue that will be discussed in this paper is first of all what is the life of young Catholics in urban areas and the problems they face? What is the role of religious in spirit building through spiritual accompaniment to young Catholics? And what spirits, values, and actions can young Catholics hold on to in their urban ministry?

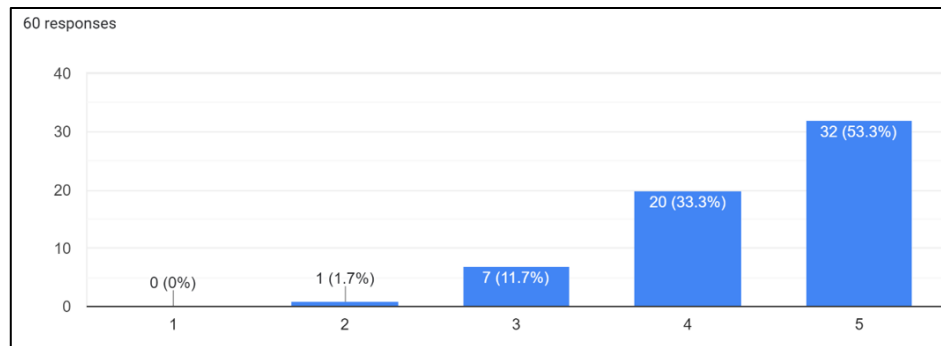
## **METHOD**

The enthusiasm of young Catholics in urban ministry will be discussed with quantitative data approaches and critical analysis of literature. This critical analysis is carried out with a focus on the ministry of young Catholics in the work of the Church. In this paper, the main variables that are closely related are spirit and service. The object of research of this paper is the starting point of young Catholics who need to build a spirit to serve the world, especially people in urban areas, with the Church. In this paper, the author will discuss the main variables that will generate theoretical and practical implications for the object of study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

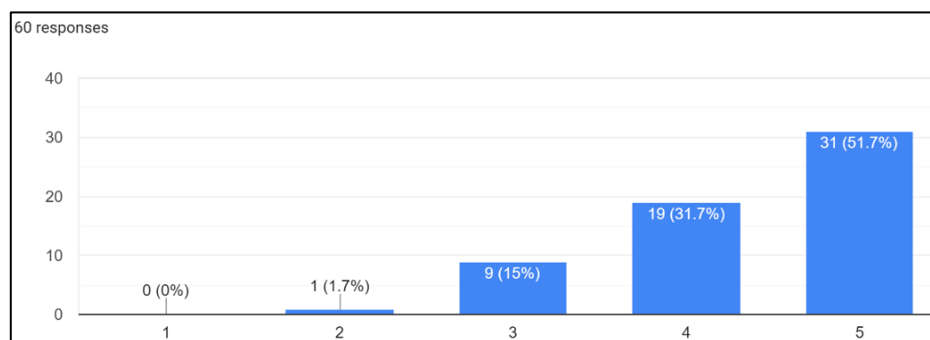
Before starting the important points, the author made a questionnaire to find out the situation and condition of young Catholics in urban areas. The questionnaire contained twelve reflective and critical questions. The results were quite satisfactory because most questionnaire fillers gave answers that led to good things.

The results of this questionnaire were filled mostly by women by 60%, the remaining 40% were filled by men. Almost all fillers are aged 19—30. From these data, it is also known that the questionnaire fillers understood that the Catholic Church is famous for its work in service to the afflicted. Figure 1 shows that the Catholic Church could play a good role in urban society in its ministry. They argue that the Catholic Church has a good impact in cities. From this questionnaire it can be seen that young Catholics still think the Catholic Church is a community that can bring development to the world for the better.



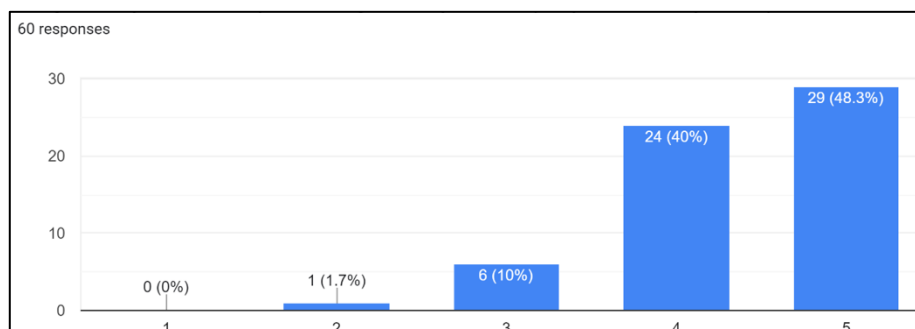
**Figure 1.** Consciunes about the Importance of Ministry

The questionnaire fillers believed that service through the work of the Church could bring useful values to their lives and those of others. Figure 2 shows that the service, which produces these useful values, has a positive impact that is useful in everyday life. However, here it is still unknown whether their daily lives are in the context of service or just ordinary lives without service activities.



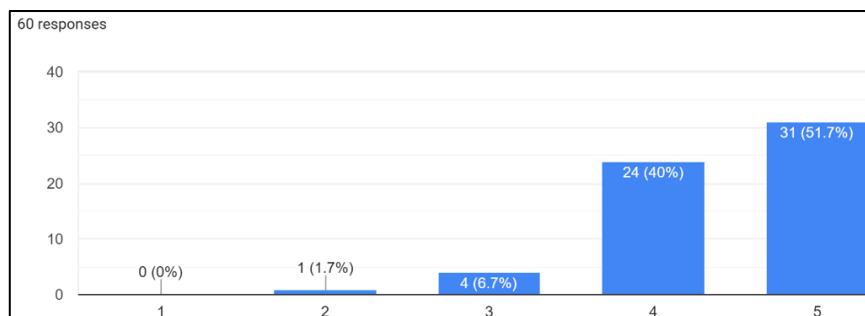
**Figure 2.** Participation in Ministry as Good Experience

Therefore, in the third question, the result follows as shown in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** Positive Impact Through Participation in Ministry

The fact that these values have had a good impact on the lives of young Catholics has become more focused on the Church. This questionnaire shows that young Catholics who believe in values that are useful in their daily lives will certainly need guidance from religious in the ministry. With this guidance, young Catholics still agree to walk with the Church in service to others who are suffering as shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Need for Guidance

This questionnaire shows a validity that is in line with the results of a survey conducted by the KWI Youth Commission. Young Catholics still look favorably at the Catholic Church. They still want to walk together with the Catholic Church in every aspect and aspect, including the Church's ministry to others. The most important point from the survey results is that young Catholics in fact need spiritual guides so that they can thrive.

The comparison between the questionnaire made by the author and the OMK survey led this paper to the discussion. The results of this validity are useful and useful in the deepening that will be discussed next. It can also make it easier to identify the problems of young Catholics and implement spiritual accompaniment, so as to generate enthusiasm for young Catholics in service to others.

The Catholic Church is very concerned about it, because young people are a promising generation for the Church. Young Catholics are the successors of the Church, a productive and creative generation. Young people are a topic that the Church addresses today, especially in Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment art. 80 (2018) as follows: "Speaking of human existence in relation to vocations, it is necessary to highlight some elements that are very important for the development of young people: this means to get rid of the view that they are determined by God's design or something accidental, or also like self-managed private property. If in the first case there is no vocation because there is no recognition of a worthy purpose for its existence, in the second case the human thought "without ties" becomes "without vocation." Therefore, it is important to create the conditions that in all Christian communities, starting from the awareness of the baptism of its members, a culture of true vocation and a constant commitment to prayer for vocations is developed."

From these statements, it can be understood that the call for young Catholics has come to the point of praying for them. The Church has a vested interest in the vocation of young people who are fundamental to the future of the Church and this world. Young people become the central figures to whom their vocation needs to be worked on in the work of the Church, especially in service to the world and others.

The role of young people in building the future of the Church is very important. They have an innovative and creative mindset, close insight into the current era, and a great spirit to be an extension of the Church in capturing all circles (Dewi, 2018). They are the pioneers of the development of the Church, especially their role in the work of the Church. They better understand and know the state and condition of the world today. In this way, they can do much good in the works of the Church for the better development of the world.

That is the true calling of young people, a design God devoted to service. Young people are called by God to carry out mission in this world through the work of the Church. Today, the world has entered an age filled with increasing science and technology. Young people today really feel it. They live in a world that moves forward by leaps and bounds. However, "in enjoying these advances, sometimes humans forget their true identity, unconsciously they are enslaved by modernity which increasingly surrounds and imprisons their souls" (Afidah, 2021). Young people who follow the flow of modern times become individuals who are more inclined to the negative. They live in their own world, which is a free world, mindlessly seek ego-pleasure, and try promiscuity. It is not widely known that young people are one of the problems of society that require more attention.

Another side effect, modern times create a society that tends to be materialistic, individualistic, rationalistic, formalistic (Afidah, 2021). Young people become more pursuing worldly desires than more meaningful values. They also become more egocentric, only selfish and less sensitive to others. They need a reasonable proof to make them believe that they are called to serve others in the work of the Church. If there is no rational proof, they are skeptical of the topic of their vocation in the Church.

The modern world offers many secular inspirations to young people, such as popularity, academics, degrees, positions, wealth, hedonism, etc. More and more young people today cannot escape the busy pursuit of these worldly dreams. With this routine, young people gradually lose interest and attention to spiritual matters, especially their own vocation in the Church. They are always treated to the reality of activity that creates distance between themselves and the Church.

On the other hand, this modern age that gives freedom of action gives a mentality of "just want to be happy" to young people who can actually develop more sensitively. Young people are more attracted to hedonistic and consumerist lives. The goods that the world has to offer are seen as more attractive than the works of the Church, which seem to waste time on them. This problem of young people facing the Church needs to be addressed, so that it can be addressed. Young people in modern times can become such as to be caused by two factors, namely internal factors and external factors (Damianus, et al, 2020). These two factors are crucial and deeply disruptive to the lives of young people of modern times.

Internal factors are things that come from themselves. First, many young people experience an identity crisis. Young people seek out their true selves by trying everything, but they fail to attain mental and spiritual maturity in life. Second, even young people are unwittingly less able to control themselves. They don't really care what they do is good or bad;

Do something as long as they are happy, but they are more likely to be attracted to negative things imitated from others.

External factors are things that come from outside himself. First, the main and most important thing in their lives first comes from the family. The family becomes a queen for a young person, as well as instilling values that are useful for life. However, the family is even a bad place for them, because the family itself does not give positive affection for their children. Second, the environment of friends also affects the lives of young people, because they will tend to turn to their friends which may lead to a bad attitude. Third, the influence of technology, especially the internet, offers young people a variety of destructive information in the form of race, pornography and pornoaction, crime, and others. It can inspire them an act of violation of norms.

After looking at their problems, it can be seen that young Catholics in urban areas really need attention from the Catholic Church. "The Church is obliged to pass on the wealth of Christian faith and values lived to this day to its young people. The younger generation needs to be guided, accompanied, and given a delegation of responsibility or delegation as successors to the baton of the Church" (Widiatna, 2022). They are the future of the Church and the development of the world for the better. Therefore, young people need to get spiritual assistance, in order to get the right way, upright direction of life and firm faith, not easily shaken. (Damian, et al, 2020) This is in accordance with the statement revealed in *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment* art. 97 (2018) as follows: "Spiritual accompaniment is a process aimed at helping a person to gradually integrate the various dimensions of his life to follow the Lord Jesus. ... Those who accompany should be patient, ask correct questions, and recognize signs of the Spirit in the answers of young people."

As mandated by the Church, young people in urban areas receive urgent attention. They are part of the Church that can have a profound influence on the development of a world that requires the development of a spirit of service in the form of spiritual accompaniment. They are followers of Christ whose duty is to serve others through the works of the Church. Of course, assistance is something that is needed by them. Good assistance can only be obtained from those who really pay great attention to the problems of young people, especially religious.

According to Damian, et al (2020), Catholic religious are exemplary figures as well as directing the spiritual life of young people. Religious life has been filled with spiritual values that have been firmly ingrained, radical, and solid. They daily fill their spiritual values with prayer, abstinence, and service. From the values they hold, they get a special charisma that is visible in their daily lives. Then, Damian (2020) added again that religious can be categorized as charismatic authorities, namely charismatic leaders of people according to the official authority of the Church, thus becoming figures of ecclesiastical hierarchy. They bind themselves to the Church and dedicate themselves to the works of the Church, which is none other than serving others in the name of the Church. They hold this commitment firmly for the sake of the Church. Thus, they are worthy and appropriate figures in the task of mentoring young Catholics in modern times.

As can be seen from the quantitative data above, young Catholics strongly agree that they can walk with the Church in urban ministry. They also agreed to receive guidance and assistance from people who could teach them how to act in the service of the Church, namely religious and catechists. From there, it can be seen that young people, who seem to have complex problems as described above, are eager to need such guidance and assistance. Religious people have also been mandated by the Church to develop in their members an adequate understanding of the reality of the people of his day as well as of the needs of the Church; it is that they may be able to judge in the light of faith and wisely the reality of today's world, and kindled by the apostolic spirit to be able to help people more effectively (PC 2). Young people are figures who need help from religious people, so it is appropriate for these religious to pay special attention to young people. They are the right people to judge as ministry topics, because they are the future of the Church who will work in the service of the Church.

Furthermore, in *Perfectae Caritatis* art. 8 it is explained that "the essence of religious life itself includes the activity of charity and charity, as a sacred service and a special work of love, which the Church entrusts to them, and must be carried out in the name of the Church." The religious have been entrusted by the Church to take care of young people as their ministry. Young people need the apostolic work of religious people for their spiritual development and service to others. Wilhelmus (2019) affirms that every potential and ability in young people in urban areas is a gift and blessing of God. Therefore the Church is always present to young people and is called to give special assistance to young people. Young Catholics living in this modern society understand more about today's world. In addition, they have a great many abilities that can be useful for Church service. The potential that can have a major influence on the development of a better world is within them. Therefore, religious, who are characteristically serving, should put their attention and interests in the service of young people.

The basis of this religious ministry must be seen from its theological aspect. Religious should see these young people as those who are "called to project themselves forward without cutting off their roots, establishing autonomy but not in solitude" (*Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, art. 65). Young Catholics have solid roots in Christ. They have a calling to serve and a very intense longing for it. They have freedom about it; Regardless of age, they can serve if they have a strong will. However, these people must not be left in an individualist or secularist state. They need guidance and assistance to overcome these problems.

The guidance and accompaniment that young urban Catholics get from religious people must be consistent with these three things: "an attitude of listening to life, an encounter with Jesus, and a mysterious dialogue between God's freedom and man's own freedom" (*Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, art. 97). It is not only their own lives that need to be listened to, but above all religious people educate, direct, and form a person who is sensitive to the lives of others who suffer, and instill a culture of life in them. Through sensitivity, young people can feel empathy for the fate of others, so that they too will be moved by love and solidarity to serve others who desperately need help. It is with that service that they

can encounter Christ, and gain confirmation of their calling, which is to love Christ in the form of the little people they serve. It is from there that they will learn that the freedom they have as autonomy over their own lives needs to be used also in the work of charities for the development of the world and the Church.

Religious people always need to build the spirit of young people in urban areas, so that they are enthusiastic in the work of Church service, and pass on values and actions based on the teachings of the Catholic Church. They take on the role of guides for young people and the role of friends based on love, who unite them and confirm their faith. Young people are heirs of the Church's work of service to the world, as well as co-workers of the Church in the proclamation of the good news to man that they carry out in the cittarian ministry. Thus, they always need encouragement from religious people in building a spirit of service.

The world, especially in cities, faces a variety of sufferings, which are often seen in poverty. The modern world has entered into a very bad logic, in which the rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. The hedonic world threatens many pilgrim souls in this world. Proof of this can be seen from the news of poverty spread throughout the world. This will continue to continue stably, if not immediately confronted and resisted. The world needs a figure who can free them from the breakdown of this order of life.

The church is one community that can be a support for the world in facing its problems. The Church can give her precious and beneficial strength and aspirations to the world. This is the calling of the Church and the young Catholics who walk with it in this millennium, as stated in *Evangelii Gaudium* art. 114 (2013) as follows: "To be the Church is to be the people of God, according to the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we become God's leaven in the midst of mankind. This means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which is often lost and needs to be supported, given hope and strengthened along the way. The Church must be a place of freely given mercy, where everyone can feel accepted, loved, forgiven and supported to live the good life of the Gospel. Everyone who follows Christ is called to be salt and light to others (cf. Matt. 5:13-14). So do young Catholics who receive spiritual assistance from religious who have the opportunity to manifest the values and actions gained in the service of the Church to others in need of help and assistance. Wilhelmus (2019) explains that young people as the Church who live, are present and bear witness to love in society and the world; they are God's gift and blessing to the Church, society and the world. Thus, the Church has such a great opportunity to serve thoroughly and massively through young people.

Young Catholics in urban areas have entered a critical period of time. They enter into a vocation that makes themselves leaven to others capable of lifting the burden of their suffering. They became heralds and bearers of God's salvation to the world by persevering in charitable ministry. They are the hope of the Church to be a vessel of mercy and liberation in this world overshadowed by suffering. This vocation of young people is reinforced by Nugroho's explanation (2019), namely "The Church is a fellowship of people who have been called out to be witnesses in the midst of this world." Young Catholics are called to proclaim the witness of charity through the work of the Church's ministry. Their existence and presence



in the midst of society should have a positive impact (Nugroho, 2019). They should indeed be serious about this, so they need encouragement from the Church.

The Church needs to encourage its young people to have concern and solidarity for the poor. They are encouraged by being taught to help each other and pay attention to the economic situation of church members, as well as the community around them who experience and feel poverty (Nugroho, 2019). They are taught to pay attention to and draw closer to new forms of poverty and vulnerability, where we are called to recognize the suffering Christ, even if this does not seem to provide any tangible and immediate benefit (EG 210). Young Catholics in urban areas are invited to explore a little deeper into the fundamental basis on which they act in the service of the Church. As revealed in *Evangelii Gaudium* art. 209, "Jesus, the great Evangelist and the personal Gospel, equates Himself primarily with those who are despicable". It reminds us Christians that we are called to care for the weak on earth. Thus, their Church ministry is not only based on compassion and empathy for the little ones, but rather a starting point of love for Christ Himself who is present in them. The primary concern of young Catholics in the service of the Church is now central to love for Christ Himself. This is reaffirmed by Widiatna (2022), "in service to others who are poor and suffering young people find a way to meet God. Young people live out and respond to the call of Jesus Christ who identifies with the small and weak, as Jesus said in the Gospels, 'Everything you have done for one of my least brethren, you have done for me'" (Matt. 25:40).

By looking at Jesus present in these suffering people, young Catholics no longer only see that they must give service, but they must also pay attention to their dignity. "The dignity of the human person and the general welfare have a higher standing than the comfort of those who refuse to renounce their privileges. When these values are threatened, the prophetic voice must be shouted" (EG 218). Because dignity and well-being are at a high level, young people should leave their own comfort behind to go directly to the defense of those who need them by shouting a "prophetic voice" defending those people.

The suffering of those who suffer is now included in the priorities and needs of young Catholics. This is in line with Saebani's (2015) explanation, ".Although poverty is inherent to individuals or individuals, it does not mean that it is solely the responsibility of individuals, but must be the work of all components of the state (nation), or stakeholders (all elements of society ranging from bureaucratic institutions / government officials, private institutions, and to all levels of society)." Thus, this suffering needs to be borne together and become a common crisis in the unity of mankind in Christ. When viewed from the cause, world suffering is often caused by the order of society that does not have justice and peace accompanied by a corrupt government and a hedonistic and discriminatory society. Therefore, "how important is the involvement and role of Catholics in building a just, peaceful, anti-corruption and non-discriminatory society" (Supriyadi, 2017). Young Catholics enter a realm where they must instill noble values in them to build a better society.

Their ministry must be carried out in the framework of God's mission in the world, namely the presence of God's government in the world (Para, et al, 2020). They should see

their service as being faithful to others based on compassion. Their ministry is no longer just doing charity done by the Church but making changes to humans in the system and structure of life (Manullang, 2018). So, they present the Church which is the executor of Christ's commission in this world that needs to be actualized, so that the role as salt and light can be seen in the community (Nugroho, 2019). The actualization of their service is contained in the value of solidarity, as expressed in Fratelli Tutti art. 115, namely: "Solidarity is shown concretely in service, which can take various forms in the way we are responsible to others. Service is 'mostly, keeping people fragile. To serve means to care for the weak in our families, our communities, our nations.' In this commitment, each is able to 'put aside his needs, hopes, desires for power before the real gaze of the most fragile people. [...] The ministry always looks the brother in the face, touches his flesh, feels his closeness to the point of 'feeling the pain', and strives for the brother's progress. Therefore, service is never ideological, because what is served is not an idea but a person."

As young Catholics serve, they also cultivate a strong value of solidarity within themselves. They learn to live the lives of those they serve, that is, to make their lives share the suffering of the world. The solidarity that grows within them makes them a radical altruist. They no longer pay attention to themselves, who may have previously contracted the ills of the modern world that make them hedonistic, individualist, and selfish individuals. They began to open their eyes to see the situation and life around. Not only opening one's eyes, but also opening oneself to dare to help others in need in their suffering.

Through lived solidarity, especially with those who suffer, young Catholics discover that authentic freedom is born of a feeling of acceptance and flourishes by making room for others (Young People, Faith, and Vocation Discernment, 74). From that solidarity, too, they draw the true and valuable value of freedom, namely freedom that is an atmosphere of love and peace with others. As they live more and more of their experiences of service that foster the value of solidarity, they grow in a love that "does not expect any results or immediately expects anything in return" (FT 139). This statement was reaffirmed by Anastasia and Singgih (2018), "solidarity is a human attitude that wants to respond to the difficulties of other people's lives on the basis of a sense of solidarity with others. Sensitivity relates to a feeling that touches one's heart toward a situation faced by another. A sensitive human being means a person who is touched by the situation of his fellow man, who ultimately has a concern and is willing to help others to ease the burdens that are being borne by others."

From the experience of service that fosters their solidarity, young Catholics in urban areas are no longer individuals who only feel a cry for mercy to others. They become more valuable and qualified individuals as a human being. Not only that, they also become individuals who feel more Christ's presence in the midst of this world; they act in the service of the Church solely out of love for Christ. They completely surrender themselves to Christ by serving others regardless of feathers and without thinking of themselves. Solidarity, then, is the spirit, value, and action that is very appropriate for young Catholics in their lives of service.

## CONCLUSION

Building the spirit of young Catholics in ministry takes a lot of effort and time by looking at the current state of modern times. Young people born into an instantaneous world offer dreams that are skewed towards secularism, which will fall into hedonism, consumerism, and individualism. They become individuals who pay less attention to the circumstances and conditions of society outside their scope. They are more concerned with themselves with a rational-selfish mindset. They prefer things that make them happy temporarily. They become one of the problems in society, especially in urban areas. However, they are also not the main subject that can be blamed for other life-threatening changes in social order in society. They are also counted as victims, when viewed in terms of causes and reasons they live in such a mindset. In doing so, they need a spiritual accompaniment, so that they can return to values that are nobler than pleasures that temporarily disappear.

The spiritual assistance that young Catholics need, of course, can only be given to people who focus on Christian values, especially religious. Young Catholics are the future of the Church who will be the main figures who build this world ever more glorious and worthy before God. That is why they always need spiritual renewal through the assistance of religious people, so that they too can let go of lifestyles that tend to hedonism, consumerism, and individualism. Through such mentoring, religious people should educate young people how to listen to their own lives and others, how to encounter Jesus in the suffering, and how to exercise freedom, which is man's own autonomy in the world, with the aim of creating a better development of the world and the Church. In doing so, religious people build enthusiasm in young Catholics to serve the small, poor, poor, and disabled with a loving Church. Religious should be present with young Catholics as guides and companions in the journey of the Church's ministry.

This spirit building through spiritual accompaniment will boil down to the values and actions that exist in young Catholics. They will be actively involved in the Church's service to others who suffer. In that service, they build a noble and noble value and action, namely solidarity. Their spirit of service is solidarity, a value and action that is self-ignorant and altruistic. They become more sensitive to others who need help and assistance, in this age they are people who live in poverty because of a lifestyle of hedonism, consumerism, and individualism. With the spirit of solidarity in young Catholics, the Church will increasingly have more opportunities to create a world of peace and love. The Church can also establish a social order that is more cultured and without life-threatening suffering. Young Catholics are the main actors and the next generation of the Church who can proclaim God's love through service. Therefore, young Catholics must always be given special attention through the building of the spirit of the religious and others who make it possible for the better development of the world and the Church.

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