

Participation of Young Catholics in Church Life as an Effort to Grow Faith

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Abstract: The focus of this paper is the participation of Catholic Youth (OMK) in church life which has an impact on the growth of young people's faith as a form of actual ministry transformation. Young Catholics are a group of young people who are growing in various aspects of personality, have a reformer spirit, and have faith in God the Father through Jesus Christ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The successor and future of the Church is in young people. This research uses qualitative methods with interview techniques and literature studies. This research was conducted on October 11-18, 2023, with 7 respondents who were active in participating in Catholic Youth activities in the St. Joseph Paulundu Ward. The results showed that 7 respondents (100%) were able to explain and express the activities of Catholic Youth and 5 respondents (71.4%) knew the meaning of faith that developed as a form of ministry transformation in church life. Regarding the influence of Catholic Youth activities on faith growth in St. Joseph Paulundu Ward, 6 respondents (85.7%) found that Catholic Youth activities had an impact on self-transformation change in the form of service to each other and 1 respondent (14.3%) had not found the impact of Catholic Youth activities for self-transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Young Catholics abbreviated as OMK are an integral part of the Catholic community who are actively involved in church life and have an important role in continuing the traditions of the Catholic faith. These are individuals typically in the age range from adolescence to early adulthood, who grew up in the Catholic faith and are committed to living the teachings of the religion in their daily lives. There are indeed many notions of Young Catholics, but in this context OMK is a person aged 13 to 35 years, has been baptized or has been accepted into the Catholic Church / single (Komkep KWI, 1994). This age range wants to show that young people consist of adolescence to early adulthood. It is necessary to understand the age details of young people as a form of effective assistance to young people. The categorization is: (1) Adolescent age group (13-15 years), (2) Cadet age group (16-19 years), (3) Middle age group (20-24 years), and (4) Work age group (25-35 years). Understanding this categorization will be very helpful in the process of mentoring young people. One process that needs to be considered is the activity of Catholic youth as a form of faith development.

The activities or activities of young people have their own uniqueness because in the pattern of daily interaction has basic implications as a developing person. The development seen is not only in one aspect but in terms of all aspects. One aspect that needs to be developed is the spiritual life. This is considered important because it relates to one's faith. A good spiritual life leads young people to an understanding of the meaning of life. In the end, young

people are increasingly aware of the transformation of services that really impact the lives of young people. It means that young people are aware of the direction and purpose of life in this world. There is a new life after going through a long pilgrimage process in the world. Then self-transformation is indispensable. How can you arrive at self-transformation? Of course, this is seen from the activities carried out by young Catholics.

Young people grow in a spirit of life and have a very important role in the Church. The Church's view of youth dedicates that the agents of the nation's successor are in young people. It is this foundation that drives the Church not only to direct young people to draw closer to the Church but also to the nation. Because in young people there is a very vital position in development, so that the future of the nation is also determined by the Church. The reason for supporting this view lies in the idea that "associations of young people exist in the Catholic Church. The existence of this association makes it easy to be directed to positive things. The Church through the Second Vatican Council expressed the hopes and views of young people as follows: "Young people are a very important force for today's society. The Church sees the power of young people as a great force for renewal, while renewal is the essence of the Church itself. The Church views young people as a group that plays an important role in the growth and development of society and the Church. Young people are seen as communities that will build lives in the future. The Church gives a more positive view of young people, because they have tremendous potential if developed well" (Rahail, 2020).

Despite the positives, young people in the developmental phase are sometimes influenced by new things that have a negative tone. Ideally, individuals in early adulthood can go through their problems well, the problems they face are used as a way to develop themselves optimally at that stage of development (Kusuma, 2020). This can be seen from the interest of young people in participating in church activities. So exactly what is described in a study that shows that the level of participation of Catholic Youth in joint prayer activities in the Environment is very minimal (Koten, 2020). OMK in the current situation is difficult to find, where the Church is starting to lose a generation that can be relied on to design more vigorous activities and revive the Tmanek Church, 2020). OMK in today's world they are more inclined to their own world, due to the density of OMK activities on campus, as well as at work, which makes it difficult for them to gather together. They even act uncurious, individualistic, an attitude that always seeks benefits for themselves, less willing to sacrifice. Today's young people also belong to the millennial generation, where they live in instant culture and often use technological media. The problem of young people is not a trivial one, but one that has a profound impact on the progress of the Church and the nation. The existence of youth fellowship in the Catholic Church realizes the importance of developing the character of young people. However, with different backgrounds (experiences, upbringings, families, etc.) it is not young for the Church to shape them.

The character of Catholic Youth as the successor of the Church in the future can be shaped through activities that support the formation of the faith of young people. Through his life, Young Catholics bear witness of Jesus Christ (Watia, 2021). Therefore, the presence of

young people in the Catholic Church greatly determines the quality of life in church today (Sinaga, 2021). Activities that can be done such as faith formation, retreats, recollections, prayer together, and other spiritual activities. All of them are aimed at involving lay people in the work of preaching. In line with what was conveyed in the Second Vatican Council which emphasized the role of the laity to participate in church life. This role is supported by the character of laymen who are truly integrated with the life of the community in general where they live and work (Yosena, 2020). Apart from this, it is undeniable that social activities also have great development for the advancement of young people's faith.

Based on the problem of the relationship between faith and youth behavior, the author tries to solve this problem with several reflective questions, including: To what extent are young people able to involve themselves in OMK activities? What is the reason behind this youth involvement? Can the activities held cultivate faith in the real form of self-transformation? With research conducted by researchers on 7 youth respondents in St. Joseph Paulundu Neighborhood, Wolosambi, Nagekeo Regency makes it easier for researchers to find youth involvement in OMK activities, find out the reasons behind their involvement, and find the impact of OMK activities for youth faith growth as a form of actual ministry transformation in church life.

METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods that focus on a deep understanding of human phenomena and their social context. The goal is to delve into meanings, patterns, and interpretations involving the complexity of observed reality. In this context, this research is more focused on in-depth descriptive data, as well as interpretation and understanding of the social context that affects the phenomenon. The research process carried out to be able to achieve the goals to be achieved is planning, data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Data collection was conducted by in-depth interview techniques with seven respondents who were members of OMK in St. Joseph Paulundu Ward. They are young Catholics who are quite active in participating in youth activities in the Catholic Church of St. Joanne Baptista Wolosambi Parish. In general, interview techniques are carried out through six stages, namely: (1) identifying research problems or phenomena to be studied, (2) developing interview designs including interview questions and interview protocols, (3) conducting interviews with resource persons, (4) transcripts and translations, (5) interview data analysis, (6) reporting (Hansen, 2020). In addition, data is also collected through document analysis. Researchers are facilitated by the current situation of researchers who were also directly involved as members of St. Joseph Paulundu environmental OMK, St. Joanne Baptista Wolosambi Parish so that it makes it easier for researchers to understand in detail the dynamics of the development of OMK activities.

The author conducted research by interviewing using social media as a means of communication to respondents in obtaining valid information and data. The results of the description of the Effect of Catholic Youth Activities on Faith Growth (Young People) in St. Joseph Paulundu's Ward were obtained from interviews with seven OMK respondents on October 11-18, 2023. The use of research instruments is important as a form of clear direction

in describing problems in research. The research instrument prepared is based on three subjects which are then elaborated into six main questions to be asked to respondents

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

OMK (Catholic Young People) is a forum that can gather Catholic youth to continue to serve God and others, as a religious community (Kornelia, 2021). The age range of Young Catholics is those who are 13 to 35 years old, have been baptized or have been accepted into the Catholic Church or are single. The main focus that distinguishes young people from young Catholics is faith. In the Catholic faith, being a disciple of Christ must first receive the sacrament of Baptism, through which a person fully becomes a member of Christ. The involvement of the congregation in religious activities becomes a means of getting closer or united with Christ.

Youth becomes a moment in transforming oneself in a good direction. In the Catholic view, young people are not merely objects of pastoral work, but members of the one body of the Church. Those who are baptized and members of the body of Christ are made people of God and in their own way share in Christ's duty as priests, prophets, and kings, and are therefore fit for their role in carrying out the mission of Christians in the Church and the world. The presence of young people makes strength for the Church in taking a role in the salvation of the world. This is evident in the contribution of young people in the Church who are most dominant in proclaiming God's work in the world. This involvement can occur because it is during this time that young people experience a phase of development in finding their identity. In this way the task of Christ is also present and proclaimed by the existence of the Catholic Young People.

The Youth Pastoral Work Guidelines (PKPKM) hold the view that Catholic Young People are those who are between 13-35 years old and unmarried while still paying attention to the situation and customs of each region. The Church views Catholic Youth not first of all within age groups, but rather as a community that has the potential to grow, develop, and play a role in the solidarity of each other's Church life. Within the Church, Catholic Young People are not only present in the life of the congregation, but are involved in a variety of tasks both in the ward and in the parish. It is this engagement that strengthens young people in accounting for their faith and striving to continue to develop it. In this context, the meaning of "involvement" is more directed towards freedom in following, without any coercion. Therefore, involvement becomes a manifestation of their faith (DKP KAS, 2014).

In adolescence, young people often clash with their faith. Faith has to do with trust. When believing is a relationship, and it is my relationship with my God, it is not necessarily easy and clear (Riyanto, 2013). This relationship develops in various aspects, one of which is in terms of intellectual understanding and it is not taken for granted. Everything will be easily connected to God, whether it is related to personal desires or expectations or events that occur in his life experience. Now the problem is the attitude of self in accepting each event or desire. So it takes a maturity in faith so that everything that happens can be accounted for properly.

The condition of young people in the growth phase is to reflect the main characteristic of "finding their identity". This process of discovery will have an impact on their efforts to resist the help of others to "shape" their personality. The feeling that oneself has potential and ability will of course confirm the belief of young people that they can in various aspects. This is when the recognition of one's potential begins to be realized and have a positive outlook to develop it. In this context, it is not meant that young people lack respect for others, but rather they need guidance and understanding from others.

Young people who are growing up experience different life situations, for various reasons. The main cause, the author relates to their growth process, there are young people who have reached maturity, but some are still in the process of reaching maturity. The thing that makes a difference in the growth process is education: some are educated, some are half-educated, and some are unlearned. The three different life experiences certainly lead young people to different perspectives that have an impact on their ability to understand their identity as young people who truly believe and are able to account for their faith differently. This impact can be attributed to the daily actions of young people, some who are able to understand the rules together well and some who deviate into their own perspective "at will".

Young Catholics take a role in the Church and have duties as laity. The primary duty as a member of the Church is to bear witness to Christian life and strive to realize the values of the Kingdom of God in the midst of the world. If this task can be accomplished, then evidence of "devotion" as a member of the Church can be realized. An understanding of the totality of devotion, will be perfect if everything is carried out without any coercion. This requires patience because it will be faced with various challenges. The biggest challenge experienced lately is the development of technology. Many young Catholics have also fallen into addiction to playing *online games*, making them unwilling to delay to improve their level and are willing to leave their ministry as missionaries in the church (Daniel, 2023). Not infrequently there will be inner upheaval and even indecision in oneself.

The involvement of young people in the environment, first of all a testament to service, Jesus affirmed this to His disciples to always behave "*the lowest of all and as servant of all*" (Mark 9:5). Service can be defined as the involvement of one's love for all people, "regardless of identity, he is rich or poor", but all must receive the same service. This wants to prove that responsibility as believers will be effective when applied in action. This is so that the relationship between God and humans can be carried out and welfare between mankind can be achieved. An intimate relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit leads every human being to a true life. True life is not just a prosperous, peaceful, harmonious life, and there seems to be no problems and suffering, on the contrary, true life is stronger when humans experience suffering which encourages every human being to seek God's mercy love again by being devoted to Him and doing good to others (Dadi, 2022).

Young people have the desire to utilize the talents, abilities and creativity that exist in them. The environment is a suitable place for young people to realize these dreams. Because in the environment, the awareness of social life is very high and has an impact on intensive

recognition of each other. On the other hand, there is a weakness in the environment that there is a lack of awareness of the importance of this group of young people. In fact, if deepened properly, positive things will be found that can build the personality of young people, to be able to arrive at this side requires various approaches. What needs to be known is the approach in digital communication in terms of mobility and political pressure, the spread of lifestyles and patterns of consumption and critical investment, in solidarity and environmentally friendly, forms of commitment and participation in society. Through these approaches, it will be easier to build relationships in the environment.

The involvement of Catholic Youth is inseparable from its role in taking on the task of serving God as a preacher of the faith. The form of proclamation of faith will be able to develop if it is supported by activities that support the increase of faith in young people. The activities that the author refers to here are the activities of Catholic Youth. These activities certainly bring young people to the awareness to continue to feel the change or transformation of themselves. Moreover, if supported by the enthusiasm of young people, the Catholic Church will really develop because of the role and presence of young people. Moreover, the Church seeks to get attention, so, it is necessary to design various programs and activities to prepare the Church, OMK is the Church of today (Sinta, 2023).

Further, the words "faith" and "trust" have a relationship but cannot be equated with each other. The relationship between the two lies in the view or understanding that faith is an act of believing in God's revelation so that people no longer rely on their own strength. In this sense, faith is an attitude of trust in God. Regardless of the notion of faith, "believe" has the understanding that the person puts in trust for a certain period of time and refers to the truth. For example, "a formator believes in his formandi" or "a monk believes in God. In this sense belief can be interpreted as the relationship between fellow humans and humans with God, while in this sense "faith" is only used in relation to God. In other words, it can be interpreted that believing is not necessarily faith but faith is definitely believing.

Faith in the Catholic Church is an attitude of surrender to God (DV 5). The attitude of surrender is always associated with the aspect of openness, thus enabling God's work to work in man. This shows that faith is inseparable from God's work, it is always related and has direction to God. Because the view is always directed towards God, it requires a response to God's revelation. Faith in Jesus also strengthens our hope (Situmorang, 2023). These responses can be spiritual actions or activities. In line with the understanding of faith, the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms that faith is a belief as free approval of the truth of God's revelation (CCC, 150). In this sense, there is a new meaning that in faith a freedom is needed without any compulsion. The purpose is that God's work truly exists in every human person who has sincere love for God. When this goal is achieved, then the growth of faith in man will develop day by day.

The Growth of the Catholic Young Faith will be described below as an answer to the third variable. The purpose of the third variable is to increase understanding or awareness that faith has a very significant role in human life, especially young people. This aspect is very

important because it is directly related to the life of faith and especially the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic which also has an effect on the faith of Catholic Young People. The passion of OMK is experiencing a difficult time because at a young age, OMK still likes to obey personal egos and has not realized its role as a member of the Church (Juniati, 2022). Faith opens horizons and thus broadens understanding. In understanding the growth of faith, there are three main things that must be further elaborated, namely: understanding of the growth, faith, and growth of faith of Catholic Young People and the characteristics of a growing Faith.

First, growth is a process towards maturity with changes in thoughts, emotions and more mature skills. Growth is not intended to recognize an age limit, because growth lasts a lifetime. Survival is a fact that growth is always forward-looking and cannot be repeated. The meaning of growth broadly refers to the overall process of changing from the potential possessed by individuals and appearing in new qualities of abilities, traits, and traits (Dasmita, 2009). An understanding of growth presupposes that all aspects of oneself exert a great influence on the individual. Therefore, it can be said that growth is a process in a better direction seen from various aspects in the individual.

Second, Faith is the work of God's Spirit working in man. It is God who has revealed Himself and opened man's heart to draw closer to Him. Therefore, personal communication is needed as a form of complete involvement in faith. This process of communication is peculiar to faith because it contains the mystery of God. It can be said that in faith, an individual receives great grace. All this is made possible thanks to the work of the Spirit, which enlightens the human heart. Faith is not only a prerequisite for salvation but part of salvation itself, because in salvation there is a union of life with God. So, there is clarity in understanding faith. Faith contains salvation, without faith there is no salvation. Then be thankful for faith.

Third, the growth of faith of Catholic youth. Faith growth is a process of formation, change and progress in life beliefs that occur in one's heart. Based on this understanding, it can be interpreted that Faith experiences growth if it is based on a process of change "progress", from bad to good. So true faith is proven in deeds (Pareira, 2012). Faith must be evident in concrete actions. This is the basis for faith. Because, it would be very contrary if it is said to have faith but in his life does not show the fruit of his faith. So it is precisely what is written in the counsel of the Apostle James (cf. James 2:17) which affirms that Faith without works is dead. In understanding the growth of OMK Faith will be very easy when viewed from their daily behavior. Awareness of OMK activities is needed which is intended as a manifestation of the growth of faith of young people.

Youth becomes a time to develop yourself in various aspects. This is when young people strive to develop themselves and find their true identity. During this time they tend to do things they enjoy and limit themselves to things they don't like. (Primary, 2021). In fact, young Catholics doing things are more likely to make decisions with hobbies and pleasures in mind. It is these hobbies and pleasures that eventually create problems such as: drugs, drunkenness, sexual harassment and others. It is these problems that close Young Catholics to spiritual life, and darken the hearts of Young Catholics to the right life, a life that is in

accordance with the teachings of the Catholic religion to become a true Catholic (Leo, 2022). The way to achieve mature self-development is by participating in Catholic Youth activities. This activity is certainly God-oriented and has an impact on the growth of faith of young people. The situation in the activities of OMK should be created properly and appropriately. When the situation and activities created are able to bind the attractiveness of young people to participate in OMK activities, then naturally the benefits of participating in OMK activities will be achieved. This presupposes that Catholic Youth activities are carried out through careful and structured preparation.

The St. Joseph Paulundu neighborhood is a very suitable place in promoting the growth of the faith of young Catholics. Faith that has been ingrained from childhood will develop by participating in OMK activities. This is supported by the participation of people in the Paulundu Ward who support all activities carried out by young people both inside and outside the environment. The activities held are not only in increasing understanding of God, but also increasing social spirit, especially in social interaction. There is a continuity between the activities of young people and the growth of faith, because what is done in the activities of young people has a direction to Catholic teachings.

Catholic Youth Activities carried out in St. Joseph Paulundu Ward are compulsory evenings (rosary prayers) every night of the week, choir practice, recollection, pilgrimage, *Camping* young people, exercise together, dig funds (work together to get sufficient results for the improvement of the OMK financial economy) with activities to dig funds, the income for OMK cash comes from their activities together. In relation to this OMK activity, it has one goal, namely the growth of young people's faith. The interesting thing is that all activities in St. Joseph Paulundu Ward always begin with prayer, including when starting sports and fundraising activities together. Of course, the improvement of spiritual life will grow, even with simple things, let alone the prayer leader takes place alternately.

St. Joseph Paulundu neighborhood is under the auspices of St. Joanne Baptista Wolosambi Parish, Nagekeo regency, Flores, NTT. The neighborhood has 40 Catholic Young People. The background of young people in terms of education is that some have just finished college, some are still in the process of finding a job, and some are even already working. Then in terms of age, Catholic Young People in St. Joseph Paulundu Ward range from 17-32 years..

Understanding the activities of Catholic Youth becomes important as a form of awareness from within. This awareness is important because young people are the future of the Church, therefore young people need to be prepared to assume the responsibility for the future of the Church and its nation (Laboa, 2022). Through awareness always presupposes proper understanding and is accompanied by responsible action. In this case the author provides two supporting questions as a method in gaining the level of understanding of young people about the activities of Catholic Young People. Based on the results of research on the influence of the activities of young Catholics in the St. Joseph Paulundu Ward on their faith growth, overall 100% can understand who young Catholics are and their roles and positions in the Church.

Broadly speaking, respondents can explain the understanding and role of young people in the Catholic Church. Respondents expressed well that Catholic Young People are a group of young people who are in their infancy and have a reformer spirit, Catholic Young People have faith in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the communion of the Catholic Church. The thing on which young people are called Catholic Young People is based is Faith. In this case, respondents tried to relate to the content of faith from various religions which basically have differences, indeed some are the same but at least have very striking differences. There is an awareness that if there are differences in faith, then Faith becomes something distinctive and needs to be confirmed from day to day as a form of expression of love for the faith that has been adhered to.

Respondents understood correctly the role and position of Catholic Youth in the Church. In terms of Church growth, young people realize that they are the successors of the Church. As successors of the Church, young people feel that performing duties in church life is not easy. There are various reasons raised, one of which is fear of being ridiculed by friends. Challenges like this make young people feel that developing a spiritual life in this millennial age is indeed not easy, because the mindset of young people is different from the past "now feel that prayer is a futile thing". For this reason, young Catholics feel that spiritual activities in young people are the right solution. It is so that young people who are successors of the Church can properly account for their faith.

In understanding about faith growth. There are two questions that researchers ask: what is growth and what is faith. These two questions aim to be solutions in obtaining information about the level of understanding young people have of faith growth. Data shows that 100% of respondents can define development. For young people, development is a change emotionally, physically, in a more mature direction. The meaning of development is difficult to measure and from a human aspect it is more about maturity of character and attitude to life. Furthermore, in understanding the meaning of faith, data shows that not all respondents can explain the meaning or meaning of faith, only 85.7% are able to explain faith. Respondents revealed that faith is the belief of each person who is believed to be true according to their respective religions. In this case, faith is more about the relationship between man and God.

Understanding faith growth, 71.4% can best define faith growth as a development in aspects of behavior from bad to good. Respondents gave an example: when previously rarely attended the Eucharist celebration because they stayed up late at night, now they are diligent in going to church or other examples are increasingly diligent in following the obligatory evening prayer. For young people, the growth of faith is first evidenced through action and naturally the growth of faith in oneself will be easily realized by the individual.

All aspects of change in the Catholic Youth referred to above are forms of transformation of ministry. The transformation referred to here is more focused on an inner awareness that the activities of Catholic Youth have an impact on the growth of individual faith and individual behavior. In young people there is already a change when there is an awareness

of subjectivity. It means that there is an inner impulse to begin to realize what is good as a young Catholic and what is not to be done.

With regard to the influence of youth activities in St. Joseph's Paulundu Ward on faith growth, respondents were able to find an influence among the youth activities they had participated in for faith growth. Data shows that 85.7% of respondents are aware of growth in spiritual life that has an impact on faith growth. There is an awareness in respondents that the activities that young people do, lead young people to get closer to God. A very simple thing is found in the activities of Catholic Young People which are always preceded by a joint prayer. With regard to prayer leaders, respondents said that 100% of young people in St. Joseph Paulundu Ward have had their turn to lead prayers.

The realization that the faith of young people is developing lies in its realization in real life. Respondents realized that closeness in relationship with God is not enough if it is not applied to daily life. The goal is for young people to be better, more responsible, and experience development in terms of honesty. While 14.3% of respondents said that the activities of Catholic Youth did not affect faith growth. It is realized that respondents feel mediocre. This feeling arises as a result of lack of awareness in oneself and feeling that OMK activities are followed just for fun. In this context, respondents have their own views about OMK activities which are seen as a necessity not on the basis of personal will but because of the compulsion that as a young person in the environment, I must participate in OMK activities.

CONCLUSION

Research conducted on Catholic Youth in St. Joseph Paulundu's Ward in relation to the transformation of ministry as a form of faith growth provides a new understanding of the role of young people in the Catholic Church. The realization that young people are in communion with the Church, the role of young people as the hope or future of the Church is indispensable. For this reason, OMK activities are needed that support faith growth in young people. The activities referred to here are the obligatory evening (rosary prayer) every night of the week, choir practice, recollection, pilgrimage, *Camping* young people, exercise together, dig funds (work together to get sufficient results for the improvement of the OMK financial economy). From the various activities carried out, of course, it has a purpose, namely the existence of self-transformation that is seen concretely in behavior, and the realization of faith in real life.

Most respondents understood about Faith. Faith which is a completely devoted belief in God. In this context, young people surrender all hopes, prayers, and ideals to the hand of God and let His work work in the lives of young people. All of this can happen if there is a growth of faith in young people. This growth process can be seen from the behavior of young people who from before were not good to better, from those who were previously lazy to pray to be more familiar with prayer. In St. Joseph Paulundu Ward, young Catholics realized that the activities they participated in in the OMK group had an impact on faith growth. This was found through respondents' answers that OMK activities provide a positive side in spirituality.

In this case closeness to God becomes more harmonious and gains a new understanding of the Catholic Faith.

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