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# Finding God Amidst the Rubble: Support to Earthquake Victims

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**Abstract:** This article delved into exploring God's presence amidst the victims of an earthquake that struck the Subdistrict of Pronojiwo, Lumajang, East Java, in Indonesia. Amidst the global turmoil caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the residents of Pronoiiwo, who were recently affected by the earthquake, faced amplified challenges. Notably, their economic situation was severely impacted, exacerbating their plight. Nevertheless, the parishioners of Lumajang displayed remarkable compassion by extending their support to assist the earthquake victims, effectively embodying the actions of God in their own lives. This compassionate assistance gave the casualties a profound sense of care and companionship, offering much-needed support and reassurance in their distress. The research methodology employed in this study encompassed phenomenological analysis, enabling a deep exploration of the earthquake event to unveil its spiritual significance. Through interviews, the researchers gathered valuable data presented in a narrative format to capture the essence of the victims' experiences. The study's findings revealed the extraordinary faith of the people in Pronojiwo, characterized by their humility and unwavering belief in God's providence, particularly in the face of the challenging circumstances resulting from the earthquake. Their resilient faith was a guiding light, illuminating their path toward hope and restoration. Overall, this research shed light on the remarkable resilience of individuals in Pronojiwo, highlighting the transformative power of faith and the embodiment of God's compassion through the actions of Lumajang's parishioners. The study serves as a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the enduring presence of God in times of adversity.

### INTRODUCTION

An earthquake measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale occurred in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, on April 10, 2021. The impact of this earthquake extended to various areas, including Pronojiwo, a subdistrict in southern East Java. Pronojiwo is one of the Mary the Queen of Peace Parish stations in the Lumajang district. The earthquake caused damage to approximately 75 percent of Catholic homes in Pronojiwo, ranging from minor to severe damage, with some houses completely razed to the ground. Even the residence of the Our Lady sisters, an old building, collapsed entirely due to the earthquake. The affected parishioners had to temporarily live in makeshift tents made of tarps, with only the clothes they had on during the disaster, as their belongings were lost among the rubble.

News about the catastrophe quickly spread within the social community, leading to the distribution of flyers to raise funds for the people of Pronojiwo station and the sisters of Our Lady. The news rapidly spread throughout Indonesia, and people from all corners of the country, not just Lumajang, showed great enthusiasm in donating to assist the earthquake victims in Pronojiwo.

Among the victims were several Catholic individuals from Pronojiwo. At the same time, other Catholics extended their help to those affected by the disaster. The focus was on providing support and love to those who had lost their homes and possessions. The acts of love demonstrated the values of togetherness, care, and compassion taught by the Church (Firmanto & Adon, 2021). In this instance, the manifestation of these teachings went beyond affiliation to certain religious matters and encompassed physical difficulties. The Church's teachings were realized tangibly, drawing a picture of the Kingdom of God that brings peace and well-being to everyone (Siahaya et al., 2020; Banusu & Firmanto, 2020). For those who were not regularly able to attend the parish center due to their distance, this event fulfilled their longing for connection. It went beyond mere spiritual visits, emphasizing the importance of physical care and concern for one another.

Man is for his fellow man. This passion for human life coexisted with his fellow man from the beginning. Man as a social being is feasible for human beings who constantly establish beautiful reciprocal relationships. The beauty lies in the mutual caring attitude and a high sense of solidarity. Solidarity is one of the inherent elements of human beings as social beings. As a social being, he lives with others and needs a normative order that governs his behavior. It was seen as an attempt at institutional recognition of solidarity between people.

The value of solidarity can support the attitude of all people as a common destiny (Adon & Firmanto, 2022; Sardono & Firmanto, 2022; Sudhiarsa, 2017). Therefore, fraternity, responsibility, and social justice are assumed in living together. Everyone is responsible for all. There should be no attitude that allows others to suffer or let them make money for certain interests.

Concern for those suffering and affected by the earthquake is important in living Jesus Christ's commission: "Help bear your burdens." Jesus' whole teaching was clear: to care for those who were weak, small, and suffering. Jesus healed the sick, comforted the sorrowful, and helped the hungry. All that Jesus has made is the example of His followers. Self-giving for others is a form of willingness to be with those who suffer. Everyone can help others suffering, whether energy, mind, or time, is enough to help ease the burden of those in need. These good deeds indicate man's attitude, which is the image of God. Since God is love, it is fitting for people to pass on the love to others, or in other words, share the love as fellow humans in the image of God.

Man is said to be in the image of God, meaning that in man, there is a cell of God that lives and settles in the person of man. When a man does good to others, he also does for the God in his neighbor. "Whatever you do for My least brother, you do for Me." These words of Jesus are also a sign that good done for others is also done for Jesus. The concept of *option for* 

the poor is intended to help those who are in difficulty. People who are well-off and live in all comforts do not need help in economic and financial terms. They can afford to live without the help of others. They have all the necessities of life that can be used daily, in contrast to the weak and poor, who live in need: they desperately need a helping hand and help.

People who don't care about their fellow people sometimes see sad events and don't care. The more a person does not care, the more the sense of compassion fades. So that care alone does not exist. The ethics of caring have priority in morality. Without a caring attitude, the ethics of justice lose its heart and meaning. People who need help and a helping hand are in situations of deprivation, difficulty, and exclusion. In other words, those who are small, weak, poor, marginalized, and disabled. Given the context of earthquakes that affect residents who lose their homes and property, the victims of this earthquake are neighbors.

The formulation of the problem in this study is what the Catholics do as a unity of the mystical body of Christ together with those who suffered after the earthquake. What is the inner attitude that arises? What is the Church's responsibility as Christ's presence in the world?

#### **METHOD**

The writing method used in this paper is descriptive-critical. Describe the earthquake that hit Pronojiwo. The community text that will be studied is the Pronojiwo community affected by the earthquake in April 2021. How to obtain data includes interviews with volunteers and earthquake victims via mobile phones and looking through the lens of missiology. The object of research is the Pronojiwo people in particular, as well as the Lumajang people in general. The way to describe research is by inductive method.

## RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### **Research** Context

The Pronojiwo area is located in the southern part of eastern Java. People are scattered in the foothills of Mount Semeru. Rural people mostly work as farmers and partly work looking for mountain sand. The natural atmosphere is still beautiful and fertile land. The social life of the Pronojiwo people is very thick with kinship. It can be seen from the style of speech that still uses a lot of fine Javanese. Indicates that respecting others as brothers is very important for the people of Pronojiwo.

Today, the context in question relates to the situation in which Catholic life developed. The case in question certainly includes several things related to humanity: Economic, social, cultural, and political. This aspect is very influential in people's lives wherever they are (Benny, 2021).

First, concerning the economy, humans can choose any job to meet economic needs. In meeting financial needs, humans also have a background mindset. So far, the perspective has been formed through adequate education. The question is: has education provided the foundation for a good human mindset so far? This question is quite basic because it affects human life in meeting its economic needs. Humans who think well will find it easy to manage

the economy. He will easily find job opportunities. Economic life supported by the sand of Mount Semeru is also very promising for some Pronojiwo people. Fertile areas allow people to grow crops (gardening or farming). In addition, nature that is still beautiful makes people also live healthier. In short, the economy of the Pronojiwo community is at a sufficient level.

Second, concerning society, humans are referred to as social beings. So in life, always reciprocate with each other. In this reciprocal relationship, relations related to humanity occur (concern, sympathy, cooperation) (Kristiyanto, 2004). These things are what encourage people to become more sociable. The social spirit seems to be declining, especially in urban communities, in contrast to village communities with a thick family system.

Third, related to culture, humans have their own culture for each region. It is what makes humans unique in each area. The distinctiveness of each part makes the community more interesting to study. The reason is that local people will respond differently to an event from each peculiarity (Wijanarko & Saeng, 2022). So, every culture has its way of responding to an event in life. The cultural life of the village community with a family system is still thick. The culture of mutual assistance is still very visible in every life of the people in Pronojiwo. This culture is synonymous with village people, so, unsurprisingly, all difficulties are overcome together. When a family is in distress, other families do not hesitate to come to help without having to be asked, based on my personal experience as a pastoral worker in Lumajang. Several times leading the word service at the Pronojiwo station, I understood that most of them knew each other along the way. It means that the concern between one and the other is very visible. Also, when people have "gawe" (building a house, marriage, circumcision, or other thanksgivings), they usually work together.

Fourth, concerning politics, humans have needs and interests. From each of these needs, man strives to fulfill. Three aspects are for men (patrilineal context): property, thrones, and women. These three things are often mentioned in politics. Indeed, these three things are the most important part of political life for men. Either way, a man will struggle to fulfill these three things. Humans who have reason are directed to be wise in meeting the needs of life. But some people use their camps for personal gain, namely the pursuit of power for personal comfort. The political life of the Pronojiwo people is still not very visible because, as rural people with good and peaceful lives, it is certainly the main thing for them. They do not seek positions or prioritize their personal goals (e.g., the kinship of the village community). Political life in the village is certainly only limited to managing a safe and peaceful life.

### **Earthquake Casualties' Experiences**

Particularly, the earthquake disaster in Pronojiwo was complicated because Catholics were quite affected. After all, the station chapel and halfway house owned by sisters of Our Lady were damaged. After understanding the context of the Pronojiwo community, it is clear that the family take between them is quite good. Especially the disasters experienced together so that the family spirit is tighter. The earthquake victims with no place to live are certainly in direct need of help. Some of them live in tents. Mr. Sukini said since his house collapsed due

to the earthquake last Saturday (10/4/2021), he and his family used the goat shed behind the place to live because he had nowhere else to stay; his goat was deposited at his brother's house (Donartono, 2021).

These are the people who need a helping hand of love. The law of love that Jesus taught His people will be real and contextual in social service activities and mutual assistance to help the people of Pronojiwo affected by the earthquake. Regardless of primordial background, of course, the most important thing is the sense of humanity that has been increasingly eroded by the development of modern times.

Doing love by helping earthquake victims has been done by several volunteers from the special team of Lumajang parish. They sent clothing and food, which were the main needs of the earthquake victims. Through this assistance, the victims certainly get attention. They don't feel alone because they still have caring relatives. "Help bear your burdens, and you fulfill the law of Christ." Helping one another is a measure of worthiness for followers of Christ, and the law of Christ is the law of love (Verbum Domini, 20, 10). So it is clear that the mission of this law is to do love, especially in this case for the people of Pronojiwo who were affected by the earthquake.

One of the earthquake casualties in Pronojiwo was named Mrs. Yatinem. I had asked about the earthquake that hit her house. First, what is felt after the quake? Mrs. Yatinem felt confused and panicked because the family was incomplete (the child was in Jogja and Surabaya), and the house was damaged. Family members at that time were not at home, living in another city. So this incident happened when Mrs. Yatinem was alone at home. This lone person is a weak fellow in the face of such a situation. Moral support and material mean something to Mrs. Yatinem.

This mother said "Gusti mboten sare" meaning God does not sleep. God always gives salvation to his children. The simplicity of faith and hope in the God who always held their lives was quite touching. The simple life of the villagers makes them live an attitude of surrender and resignation. His message to others is to be careful of everything because bad things can come at any time. They can only try to live and fix the broken house when life continues. Keep life as usual, but you must be careful because you are worried about aftershocks.

One of the families affected by the disaster is the family of Mr. Tego and Mrs. Soinem. Experiencing this, they felt sad and could only cry watching the buried houses and objects. They panicked because they didn't know how they could fix the house. The earthquake damaged many homes. Then they panicked even more because there continued to be aftershocks. Their suffering was prevalent before the earthquake, namely many problems that occurred at that time: mothers were seriously ill, not feeling well, and children were out of town to work. It is this difficult person who desperately needs attention. The spiritual meaning that can be taken from this event is that the universe never forgets to pray, remains alert to everything that will happen in the future, and continues to be enthusiastic for a better life.

The empathetic attitude shown by the people of Lumajang deserves appreciation. Amid a difficult economy due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, they are still working with what they have to help people suffering more. The mission to save the suffering seems to be not just the government's or religious leaders' duty. It is clear that, in this case, the volunteers are directly related.

The role of the Lumajang parishioners in the center of the parish is very real. They mobilized others to collect material, food, clothing, and medicine. The mission of the Church is for the salvation of souls. Speaking of this mission of salvation, it does not look at who is helped or who is in need. However, more than that, all forms of assistance and assistance must penetrate the barriers by grouping according to the background of tribes, religions, social classes, and groups. Indeed, it is also good to foster militant attitudes towards their respective groups. Still, for humanity, this is no longer the main thing, but the main thing is the flag of humanity. Faith without works is dead. All kinds of good must bear fruit in action and charity. The Church has existed for thousands of years, and one of the missions of the Church is to spread evangelical values. The earthquake that hit the Pronojiwo community is one of the events of faith that aims to remind every community to show real love in life.

#### **Inner Attitude**

People often feel sad and moved to watch their brothers suffer. The current situation experienced by the people of Pronojiwo is the loss of property and houses. Those who were victims of the earthquake were others. Each person's presence should be meaningful to the other, and so should our presence. The meaning of presence must also be a manifestation of love for others. We live not for ourselves.

Human beings living side by side will continue to relate reciprocally. It is not a matter of profit and loss but humanizing others. Man has essentially the same dignity and degree. Starting from this similarity, everyone should see others as a reflection of others. The understood law of karma also has something to do with the law of love. What I make for my brother, then I will take it back. The care I give to others will certainly have a good impact on the person who cares.

First, it is an attitude of care and concern for others, not because you want to be recognized or get appreciation from others who see. When your right hand gives, it should not know. It means that all forms of kindness should not be boasted or shown to others that I am good. Let kindness itself bring and make us human beings who truly care about the suffering of others.

Humanitarian missions have never raised religious, party, or other flags. But the most important thing is the flag of humanity (Sholehuddin, 2018). Sometimes, the background of tribes, religions, social classes, and groups fades humanity. So, in helping people, they sometimes choose who is following their group or has similar backgrounds. Every human being has been provided with the right ethical teachings and supported by sound reason, so everyone is expected to be wise. Be wise in responding to a life event.

The neighbor who suffers is our other self. It means that virtuous humans understand the meaning of brothers so that with the earthquake that hits, efforts to help each other and help by themselves become a heartfelt movement as a form of compassion or good teachings from every existing religion. Man *for others* is not just a sentence. However, it will be very real when humans help each other overcome the problems of life at hand. The issues of life are quite diverse. In this case, the earthquake that hit the people of Pronojiwo is a common problem where humanity is challenged. Has the community cut its human aspect? This question is a question for everyone.

Ethnic, religious, racial, or inter-group backgrounds have made people live in groups with exclusive people. If it is not a stream, there is no match; if not, look for the same wave. It is one of the problems faced in today's world. The sense of concern naturally disappears, and empathy or sympathy also fades. The strength of groups suspect this, so they close themselves to certain groups of society.

Faced with difficult situations, humans will certainly live in distress. They certainly expect a helping hand from others. These other people are all of us, different people in this multi background. Suppose they are still strong in their respective groups. In that case, the suffering brothers will not be saved immediately because of their selfishness and individual attitude.

Every religion teaches goodness, not division. Therefore, everyone has a good will. This kind soul will certainly be moved when there are others in need. The people in need today are small, weak, poor, marginalized, and disabled brothers (Juhani & Firmanto, 2021; Syukur & Firmanto, 2021). The earthquake that hit Pronojiwo made people weaker and poorer. They lost their possessions as well as their homes. They cannot continue living without clothing, food, and shelter to sustain themselves.

Tribalism, or living according to one's tribe alone, is certainly not the goal of human life (Sudhiarsa, 2004; 2018). Indonesia consists of various tribes. The existence of these tribes is not an obstacle to making movements for people outside the tribe. In Lumajang parish itself, there are diverse ethnic backgrounds and social statuses. Coexistence against such a background is not an obstacle for everyone to do good. Kindness is not waiting for a group leader to encourage you to do good. However, as a human being, caring to help others is a form of self-giving for others who need a helping hand (Wijanarko, 2015).

## **Church Attendance**

A relief rally was announced for the victims of the Pronojiwo earthquake every Sunday mass at the Parish church of Mary the Queen of Peace. Assistance can be in various forms, including necessities, clothing, and food. Also included are diapers, baby food, and other specific things needed by earthquake victims. Even before the official gathering was announced in the Church, people help and lighten each other's burdens. Food aid and clothes were poured into Lumajang parish. Volunteers and deacon Fajar Ary immediately moved to the location a few days after the earthquake. They visited his people affected by the earthquake. There, they

immediately reviewed and evaluated the impact caused by the earthquake and distributed the necessities collected.

The attitude of mutual help is inherent to human beings of conscience (Wijanarko, 2021). One way to promote mutual benefit is to show love to others who are suffering: others in distress, who, in this context, are victims of the earthquake in Pronojiwo. Every time you hear the word natural disaster victim, what comes to your heart is naturally the shabby situation of the refugee camp. They are like a flock scattered without a shepherd. They need attention from us. By far, the main concern is helping in the form of clothing, food, and medicine. Coupled with the pandemic that has not yet ended, all forms of assistance are also in the form of medical equipment such as masks, hand soap, and *hand sanitizers*.

How long this difficult situation is over, no one ever knows. It is important to keep sending help to save the souls of those plagued by grief. One of the things that needs to be done is to help others with moral and mental support. Directly, the victims, their minds, and souls are depressed to experience all this: their homes and possessions are not saved. While life continues, they need everything, such as clothing and food, to sustain their lives. Because of where they live, they can still ride to neighbors and relatives or live in tents provided by volunteers.

The most necessities are clothing and food because many do not bring possessions. It did not escape the observation of the volunteers, so what became their focus at that time, besides collecting necessities, was collecting clothes suitable for use, ranging from infants to adults. In this case, the enthusiasm and caring spirit of the people in collecting clothes suitable for use is quite large. Until now, there are still residents who still participate in donating clothes for victims of the earthquake disaster in Pronojiwo. Visits by parish priests, volunteers from Lumajang, the Bishop of the Diocese of Malang himself, and NGO Karina KWI have been carried out many times while distributing aid. It has a huge impact on increasing moral spirit for para. A sense of solidarity and empathy for others in need is a form of care (Tinambunan, 2014).

## **Merciful like the Father**

Every human being has equal dignity, which must be recognized as equality. Man cannot be higher than other humans, for functions and responsibilities may differ. Still, in God's eyes, man is the same, both creations. Recognition of human dignity is a fundamental right of belief and involvement, as is recognition that human beings have a conscience. It invites humans to account for their actions, meaning humans must treat and trust others fairly. This belief in others indicates that when someone suffers, a form of help is a form of trust (Hidayat, 2016; Rahardjo, 2010) —believing that I am not alone. There are still brothers who care about the situation of suffering that is currently struck.

A dignified human being is a being of a higher degree than other created beings. Therefore, man can make an orderly order because man has a reason. Man's nobility is rooted in the fact that man is intelligent. When witnessing the suffering of others, people with a

conscience will certainly be moved by compassion to increase their concern to help and work hand in hand to overcome all the misery and suffering that is being faced (Tinambunan, 2021).

Respect for human dignity has implications for freedom in society. Based on respect for human dignity, man has the right to do anything that concerns his responsibility to society. Man can contribute to his involvement in the community because he has dignity as a human being (Sumual, 2022; Mali, 2023). Respect for dignity has implications for respect for individual work in society. A man enters a natural order of society, meaning that man has certain human rights from birth: the right to freedom, equality, and personal sovereignty.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The experience of loss, though not frightening, serves as a valuable lesson, highlighting the significance of receiving support from others. It underscores the importance of love and its various aspects, such as compassion, empathy, and selflessness. For those who follow the teachings of Christ, caring for those in need becomes a fundamental measure of their worthiness. As people coexist with fellow human beings, people inevitably come across numerous individuals who require a helping hand or a dose of love. This reality calls for active engagement and support for others, not only in terms of emotional support but also through tangible assistance. Encouraging others to participate in providing material aid becomes crucial, as it enables those in need to continue their lives and fosters a sense of community and solidarity. Ultimately, the understanding that loss can be transformed into an opportunity for collective growth and the reinforcement of bonds of care and love reinforces the importance of extending a helping hand to those around people.

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