



Pastoral Experience as A Driver of Encounter with God

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Abstract: This research focuses on the experience of God in the pastoral experience of the seminarians of the Society of Mary Montfort (SMM). The research material is a reflection on the personal experience of God. This research aims to explain that the experience of God is a daily experience through simple events. This research uses a qualitative approach. The research material is a reflection on the personal experience of God. This research aims to explain that the experience of God is an everyday experience through simple events. We collected data through face-to-face interviews. The main exploration was personal reflection through pastoral experience. We used Georg Kirchberger's thinking to analyze the data. This research came to the finding that God is experienced in daily events when pastoring, including a) the experience of the Eucharist, b) the experience of brotherhood and cooperation in the pastoral community, c) the experience of encountering the people and pastoring the sick; and d) the experience of mentoring children and Catholic Youth (OMK). These experiences lead to different conclusions about who God is: formator, guide, mobilizer, protector, companion, source and bearer of joy, and many others. The pastoral experience is thus a very rich and complex one. God goes on pilgrimage and history with His people. No matter how simple the daily experience during pastoral care, God is never absent. He is the one who is always there and always with us.

INTRODUCTION

This article offers an exploration and reflection on pastoral experience as a field of experience of God. This experience of God occurs through daily events, such as meeting people, pastoring the sick, undergoing pastoral teamwork, and accompanying children and young people. This research wants to emphasize that the experience of God is not only the experience of big and special events but also simple experiences. Seemingly ordinary experiences are when God is revealing His greatness and closeness to humans.

Reflection and exploration of the experience of God is important for priestly candidates because pastoral experience is an integral part of their response to God's call. In pastoral care, they also get similar questions from the people. People ask questions when they face problems in life, experiences of prolonged suffering, failure in farming, trading, and various other endeavors, and experiences of oppression and injustice. Issues like these raise the question, "Does God exist or not in the experience of human suffering?" (Pasi, 2019). Experiences like this often lead to difficulties in recognizing God personally, "Who is God for me in my daily experience?" In fact, it is not uncommon for such issues to lead to doubts about God's role in

human life. It is rather difficult to convince individuals who are afflicted with prolonged suffering that God is always present in every event of human life. Therefore, who is God really in the experiences of joy and sorrow, happiness and sadness, success and failure experienced by humans? In addition, every believer must always hear and even ask these questions: Who is God? How is God experienced in daily life? This exploration will deal with similar issues. Therefore, this exploration is also important so that each person of faith is open-hearted and sensitive to the events of daily life as an integral part of God's plan for their life. God's presence is evident through the presence of others, creation, and life events.

It is not uncommon for daily experiences not to bring gratitude because one feels that things are going "mediocre" and even experiences the same dynamics of life every day (Bergoglio, 2015). Rom. 1:20 affirms that it is the ugly-hearted who cannot see God. Furthermore, it is only the foolish who say there is no God (cf. Psalm 14:1; 10:4; 36:2) (Firmanto, 2016). Even in the experience of suffering, God is always present, even though many people find it difficult to experience. The experience of suffering is an opportunity to purify one's faith in God (Manullang, 2020). God never promises a smooth path. However, God promises glory after suffering. At least, it was the example of Jesus Christ to His disciples through His passion, death, and resurrection.

Based on these concerns, this research will deal with exploring various issues surrounding the experience of God in daily life, especially when seminarians are in pastoral care. The following are some of the research questions: a) What is the experience of God during pastoral care? b) Who is God according to this personal experience? This research does not pay special attention to the experience of suffering but rather the more complex experience of God in pastoral ministry. Personal experience during pastoral care as a priestly candidate who is on a mission in the midst of the people will be the content of this research.

Generally speaking, research related to the experience of God is always connected to the experience of human suffering. Job's experience is often a reference material regarding the experience of God in suffering. According to Wicaksono, Job's struggle in his suffering is the best example of strengthening the faith of the congregation (people) (Wicaksono, 2018).

Experience is the perception of an object that reveals itself. Objects can be human persons, events, or objects. The perception takes place when a person experiences the object of the event, not reflection afterward. This perception depends on the subject's insight. There are differences in interpretation while experiencing. A farmer who is not highly educated is different from a graduate of economics or environmental studies in seeing the forest. There are two consequences of understanding experience. These two consequences relate to the degree of influence the object has on a person. *First*, the influence of a certain ideology that is so strong can obscure the perception of reality, so it sometimes raises the wonder of why the subject cannot see more clearly. *Second*, the object or reality is so strong and challenging that a person is forced to change their perception deeply and even experience a "conversion." That is, his eyes are opened so that he can then see and experience in a new way.

Experience is a direct encounter with an object. What, then, is the experience of God? Strictly speaking, it can be said here that the experience of God may not occur because God is not an object or reality among many other objects. God is the transcendent One. God is the horizon for the entire universe. God is the sustainer and mover of the universe. He is not directly present in and through finite objects. Objects are limited in space and time.

The transcendent God is present in every object experienced. Thus, the experience of God is a direct experience that is "mediated". The formulation arises because the transcendent God is truly present but is mediated through the events and elements of this world. This understanding will be aided by the following areas of human experience in which God is experienced.

The Israelites' experience of God can be felt through all four areas of human experience (Kirchberger, 1999). In the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures, the experience of God appears in the story of deliverance from slavery in Egypt. God is real in this experience. God is the One who listens to human complaints, who cares and takes sides. God is the One who liberates. He is always with everyone in difficult situations. He is the war hero who defends the interests of the weak against those who are powerful.

In history, people can also reflect the presence of God. Everyone can sense that there is a greater power behind and within human history that steers history in such a way. Important experiences or events that are constructive and liberating are signs of God's presence and guidance. On the other hand, experiences that disrupt, corrupt, or enslave humankind are a sign of man's abandonment of God's guidance. The Babylonian exile revealed the catastrophe that had to happen because of Israel's wrong way of life. The Israelites felt the presence of God, who built and refreshed new life. He was also there to remind them of their wrong ways. He asked them to return to the right path.

The experience of God occurs when one looks at the whole of creation. God blessed all of His handiwork in the creation story (Gen. 1-2). His work is universal, involving all creatures at all times, for without God's blessing, nothing could exist. He is evident in the fertility of the land and the woman, in the growth of the seed, and in the birth of the child.

In addition, natural phenomena can also be a sign of God's presence. He is present in storms, thunder and lightning, mountain eruptions, and earthquakes. The Israelites reflected on God as a judge. He is the one who shakes people. He cleanses people from all impurities, like the cleansing in the fire, in the rushing waters, or the stormy winds. Psalm 29:1, "The voice of the Lord is above the waters, the Lord of glory thunders, the Lord is above the great waters. The voice of the Lord is mighty; the voice of the Lord is vibrant."

God's presence can also appear through social realities such as the experience of fathers and mothers caring for children, the experience of love between a bridegroom and bride (the book of Song of Songs), marital entanglements (the book of Hosea), and kings and kingdoms. From all of these, it is good to reflect on God's presence in the context of kingship and kings in the dynamics of the lives of the people of Israel. Starting from the experience of seeing kings as great and honorable, God is also a very great king. He is a king who has the power to judge

His subjects. The Scriptures testify to God's commandments that man must obey. Man must serve Him faithfully. The Old Testament Scriptures present God as a king who favors the weak and the poor. God ensures that all people can live in prosperity. Psalm 113:7-8 says, "He brings up the lowly from the dust and lifts the poor from the mire, to seat him with the nobles, with his people." Likewise, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed that the Lord on high will also be with those who are broken and humble (Isa. 57:15).

Inner experience can also indicate the experience of God. The Book of Psalms paints a picture of the outcome of such struggles. The Psalms express the dynamics of human life, joy and happiness, the experience of being freed from suffering, and even complaint. God is reflected as a wise counselor and guide (cf. Ps. 119:162-167, Ps. 1:1-3). He is also a life-guaranteeing deliverer who accompanies His servant in situations when a man has no other hope and help.

An inner experience is also a form of relationship with God. The experience of joy and sorrow is the source of recognizing the presence of a power that transcends the human self. People can have a meaningful new life because the eyes of their hearts are open to feel the infinite goodness of God. One can see it as a sign of God's presence. Everything that grows, such as a more mature way of thinking and acting, is a sign of openness to God's work. It is felt and experienced as a real work within man.

In addition, Job's experience can also be a sign that God is present in any situation. Here, it needs to be emphasized that there are also situations where man must endure hardship, but he believes God is his friend. For many people who have to endure illness and hardship, God becomes apparent as a friend who accompanies and gives strength.

Interpersonal relationships can occur in everyday life when involved in fighting for the interests of others. It is referred to as solidarity. This interpersonal relationship illustrates the presence of God. The most basic is the relationship between parents and children. Children can feel the presence of their parents as those who love, guide, and support their lives. This experience of parental presence is also indirectly the presence of God, likewise with friendship. If the friendship is intense and truly deep, it becomes a symbol of God's relationship with man. God is also present in the mutual trust between people. Trust shows respect for the individual. It is opposed to suspicion, which can damage relationships with others. Without trust in one another, life is meaningless.

Kirchberger emphasizes the experience of God in the New Testament in three parts. Jesus proclaims God as an embracing love because he is the Father. Central to every experience of Jesus is the experience of God as Father, as *Abba*. In his habit of prayer, Jesus expressed simplicity, spontaneity, and trust. He also came to do the will of his Father (cf. Luke 22:42, John 4:34). God's kindness and openness towards humanity knows no bounds and does not demand any conditions. Jesus described God's active presence in seeking the lost (cf. Luke 15).

The disciples' experience of God in the New Testament is related to their experience with Jesus Christ, the Master. *First*, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God. God is present for anyone who needs Him. His approach to humanity is definitive because He cannot stop until

everything in God's plan is completed. God Himself has bridged the gap between God and man. He is the hope and salvation of all people. *Secondly*, Jesus' miracles occurred in the context of the presence of God's Kingdom. The Kingdom of God is the liberation of humanity from the power of demons as seen in possession, disease, and sin. *Thirdly*, Jesus was present for all people, even with the outcasts of His day. He sat with sinners; He ate with them (Mark 2:15-17). He dismantled the isolation created through discrimination against certain individuals or groups of people. *Fourthly*, although it seemed confusing to the disciples, Jesus' death was the way of salvation. *Fifth*, Jesus' resurrection was an enlightenment and purification of the disciples' views. The apparitions showed that Jesus was not allowed to remain in the world of death. He lives because He is the life itself.

The experience of God is an experience that is "mediated" in the four major areas of human experience (Kirchberger, 1999). Kirchberger states that the experience of God's presence through nature is always "open" to a "sensitive heart". An open and sensitive heart can see and experience the universe as a gift from God. The experience of enjoying the beauty and abundance of nature can be an experience of God as the giver of these gifts. Nature that is so rich and enchanting presents a power. It shows an intensely personal experience of nature as a gift that occurs when a person is in a certain boundary situation. A person recovering from asthma, for example, will breathe in fresh air as a gift of life from God Himself. Farmers who experience the arrival of rain after a long drought will see rain as a gift of fertility and new life from the Creator. Such experiences can happen through a sensitive and open heart that sees nature as a gift from God.

These images can be slightly or even completely different when people experience shocking and deadly natural events, such as earthquakes, landslides, storms, or other natural disasters. The effect can be profound on the concept and view of God as a terrifying and deadly force.

The history of life contains a series of events. It is not just a collection of actions and reactions without meaning and purpose. Humans always expect history to have a positive purpose. However, man never knows whether a history leads to a positive or negative goal. That is why man's experience of God is ambivalent and unclear, whether God guides the history of man's life with His wisdom so that it leads to happiness or God is indifferent and lets the history of man's life pass in chaos and meaninglessness. Therefore, man's image of God through the experience of nature is ambivalent. Man cannot overcome such ambivalence based solely on his experience of nature.

For Christians, the events of Jesus of Nazareth are a guideline and guide in interpreting the experiences of God in history. During his life, Jesus displayed openness and acceptance towards all people. He lived in every form of human event, even living with those who hated and later crucified him. Jesus offered a life free from violence and oppression. He presented the Kingdom of God in which people experience peace and prosperity, even though He suffered a terrible fate, being crucified by the very people to whom He preached the Kingdom. His disciples, however, believed that, after all, they experienced the living One.

The experience of the disciples is the basis of hope for the Church that human history will ultimately be won by God's goodness and not by the power of evil. The event of Christ's resurrection is an affirmation of human history, leading to perfect well-being in the Kingdom of God. This hope is the foundation for every follower of Christ to take part in seeking the well-being and peace of all people. Thus, the experience of God is not only about experiencing God's goodness and action in one's life, but God also invites everyone to take part in the struggle for the lives of others and the preservation of creation.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative study. We collected data through interviews with informants. Five informants are seminarians (future priests) of the Company of Mary who had just completed their pastoral year (August 2019-July 2020) and, for six months (August 2020-February 2021), underwent the Montfort Mission Orientation Year (TOMM). They are Seminarian Dominikus Siong (Pastoral Year at St. Antonius Padua Parish PIR Butong of Palangkaraya diocese and TOMM at SMM Mission House-Monastery, "*Deo Soli*" of Apparition of God Parish Sayut of Sintang diocese), Seminarian Lorensius Fura (Pastoral Year at St. Antonius Padua Parish Mbeling of Ruteng diocese and TOMM at SMM Mission House-Monastery, St. Montfort Menyurai, Sintang), Montfort Menyurai, Sintang), Seminaris Daniel Dagur (menjalani Tahun Pastoral di Paroki Maria Ratu Rosari Lebang Keuskupan Sintang dan TOMM di Biara-Rumah Misi "*Deo Soli*"), Seminaris Agustinus Asman (menjalani Tahun Pastoral di Paroki St. Petrus Kanisius Kandui, Palangkaraya Diocese and TOMM at the Monastery-Mission House of St. Montfort Menyurai, Sintang), and Seminarian Hironimus Aryo Dominggus (serving the Pastoral Year at the Parish of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary Putussibau, Sintang Diocese and TOMM at the Monastery-Mission House "*Deo Soli*").

These SMM priest candidates pastored in two different situations, namely before the Covid-19 pandemic and during 2020. The Covid-19 pandemic limited pastoral direct encounters with the people. Two important things explored by them through interviews are: a) How they experience God in pastoral care and b) From that experience, who is God for them. It is an attempt to find their reflection on their personal experience of God through their mission in the midst of the people. The interview data were described and reflected upon or explored with the thoughts and reflections of Georg Kirchberger in his book entitled "God: Experience and Reflection in the Christian Tradition".

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The candidates for the priestly ministry of the Society of Mary of Montfort (SMM), who are the subjects of this study, admit that they experience God in the simple events of life. What is simple for humans is that God is actually doing something big for human life, personally.

The following are the informants' experiences of God during the pastoral year. We have retained the typical expressions of the research subjects. We also present Kirchberger's reflections to assess these experiences.

Kirchberger emphasizes that prayer is an occasion in which the individual experiences signs of God's presence (Kirchberger, 1999). The priestly candidates had a similar experience in pastoral life. The experience of the Eucharist (and the experience of a life of prayer), which is celebrated every day during pastoral care, is a major source of strength in the ministry of the people. The experience and awareness of Christ, who is truly present in the Eucharist, is a step towards a reflection that the love of the Lord God is very deep for each person he chooses for the service of the people.

The Eucharistic sacrifice is proof of His great love. It is this experience of God that becomes the main strength in carrying out pastoral duties. Furthermore, this experience is also a very significant driving force in the proclamation to the people of the Eucharistic mystery, in which Christ is visibly present. Therefore, the provision of the experience of God in and through the Eucharist becomes material for proclamation and witness, for example, when the word service always emphasizes to the people that the communion they receive is Christ himself. Thus, the Eucharist is a special opportunity to experience God's presence more tangibly.

The experience of God through the Eucharist is part of an inner experience and a deep personal conviction that God, through His Son, is addressing these priestly candidates intensely. This experience occurs through a personal relationship that cannot be denied because the experience gives inner strength to give oneself entirely to the service of the people. There is a realization that after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, there is a mission to share life with others. In many cases, such an experience gives a strong impetus to go out and share it with the people served, for example, through family visits and care for the sick.

God is also present in community life through the presence of priests and employees. The priestly candidates recognize that apart from being confreres who walk together, the priests are formators who always guide and educate them in pastoral care. The priests become educators through words and examples of maturity in life. Their role (the priests) is so great in providing examples of service or good pastoral care. Their words and examples are a form of teaching. They also educate these priestly candidates by giving them trust and freedom of pastoral creativity. Their care is also evident when they dare to sincerely and honestly reprimand me when a mistake is made and, through the rebuke, radiated great love and care.

Experiences such as cooperation, attention, reprimands, and greetings are human experiences. However, when contemplating it more deeply by realizing the whole process of forming oneself into a Montfortian monk (later as a priest and pastor of the people), it is found that behind this event, there is divine intervention. God always educates and shapes his chosen ones through the presence of others in one house, one community. God Himself is the driving

force and soul of all these experiences. God is present through the priests as educators, mentors, and guides.

The experience of community life in the parish rectory community of St. Petrus Kanisius-Kandui experienced by Seminarian Agustinus Asman, for example, provides valuable experience in interpreting brotherhood in community life. Despite all the shortcomings in living together, it is still found that the spirit of service, brotherhood, and cooperation that is lived is fueled by the gift of God's love. Mutual correction, mutual reminders, humility, openness of heart, and mutual understanding and respect for one another are the keys to being able to live together as a pastoral religious community. The presence and encounter with these confreres ultimately reveal a deeper and higher experience, namely the experience of God. God speaks in many ways through our shared experience as brothers in the community, such as through our greetings, through the guidance, direction, and guidance of the priests, and the spirit of their lives.

One of the special things experienced during pastoral ministry is the encounter with the people. After a long time living in a house of formation, pastoral care is a time to experience an encounter with the people. People with various backgrounds in terms of economy, education, culture, ethnicity, character, and age have given their colors in the experience of daily encounters. In this encounter with people with various backgrounds, God shapes these priestly candidates in His simple and unique ways.

Seminarian Dominikus Siong said, "The testimonies of life that the congregation presented, the experiences they shared, were a kernel of wisdom that gave importance to my growth and development as a Montfortian religious." These experiences are God's creative way of addressing these future priests. Seminarian Lorensius Fura continued, "God brought me to meet these people. And from their distinctiveness, uniqueness, and wisdom of life or the testimony of their life, I found the love of God."

Seminarian Daniel Dagur said, "I also felt the presence of God when praying with the people at the stations. I am truly convinced that, "where one, two or more people gather in the name of the Lord," God is truly present there. The experience of God's presence in this collective prayer also seems to be felt when looking, paying attention to the way the people pray, which is so simple but really deep because it comes from the heart." Seminarian Hironimus Dominggus admitted, "Even though the people did not have complete liturgical knowledge, the way they lived the prayer was extraordinary and helped me to feel the encounter with God. From this simple and frequent experience, it became clear to me that God is God who is present in simple hearts that are open to Him."

Apart from praying with the people, God's presence is also felt during home visits (family pastoral). Being present in the midst of the people, listening to the sharing of their hearts, struggles, and experiences of faith, becomes something very valuable. There is an experience of awe when meeting the people. Seminarian Daniel expressed his experience, "I was so amazed by the way people live. It turns out that the people have a big life struggle. Their

lives are not smooth. But in the midst of this situation, they cling to God. God is always their guide."

In addition, Seminarian Lorensius revealed, "There are indeed among the people when experiencing such a heavy struggle, they sometimes also question the presence and presence of God. However, from experiences like this, I remain convinced that they are still aware of God's presence for them." From these home visits, the priestly candidates realized that God is historical. God is with and present in all the struggles of the people they meet and serve.

A special experience in this parish visit was the pastoral care of the sick. Seminarian Daniel, like many others, admits, "During my pastoral, I had the duty to visit the sick (pray for them and deliver communion to them) every Tuesday and Wednesday. This activity was part of the Legion of Mary's weekly program when I was pastoral there (Maria Ratu Rosari Lebang Parish, Sintang)." Seminarian Siong said that one of the important parts of pastoral care for the sick is, "Besides praying together, I am also present to listen to them, especially when they tell me a lot of things, be it the history of their illness, their family experience, or various other things." The spirituality of presence applied in pastoral care also gives encouragement and joy to people who are struggling with suffering and other life issues.

The people of Maria Ratu Rosari Lebang Parish, for example, according to the testimony of Seminarian Daniel, said, "In addition, they are very impressed because this is the first time they have regularly experienced visits from fellow parishioners and the pastoral team, especially since the motive of the visit is to pray for them, deliver holy communion, and be present to comfort and listen to them." Such events are where God is experienced. God is not only evident in the people visited, especially the sick, but is also (even first of all) present and moves the pastoral staff (these priestly candidates) and other parishioners to care for their suffering neighbors, comfort them and bring them closer to Christ and draw strength from Christ Himself through the holy communion received.

In addition, the experience of God happens through people who are always willing to share what they have. God is present and involved in people who always pay attention, support, love, are sensitive, and care about the lives of pastoral officers in the rectory community. During pastoral care, there are always people who are moved to pay attention to the survival of the pastoral community. Their attention is very real by sharing the result of their hard work, such as vegetables, rice, sweet potatoes, side dishes (fish, meat), and fruits. Their concern was felt during the Covid-19 pandemic. Seminarian Daniel said, "During the Covid-19 pandemic, so many people were attentive to our needs in the rectory community. Even when there was no communal Eucharist, apart from the necessities mentioned, people also collected weekly collections. Inadvertently, I heard their reasons. We in the rectory community have no fields. Due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have no income to fulfill our needs in the kitchen. For me, this is an extraordinary love and care."

These experiences provide a strong belief in God as the sustainer and organizer of life. God does not allow pastoral workers to be hindered in their ministry by material shortages, especially food needs. God is the main driver or motor that drives and moves the hearts of these

people. Seminarian Hironimus emphasized, "God actually cares, loves, and pays attention to our lives through the people. It was very strong during the Covid-19 pandemic. God was fully involved in the lives of me and my confreres in the rectory." Therefore, seminarian Hironimus is convinced that God is a God who loves, notices, cares, and is sensitive to the lives of His people.

In general, the parish priest entrusts the altar boys and catholic youth (Orang Muda Katolik/OMK) with the accompaniment. Seminarian Daniel accompanies the altar boys in four stations. He said, "Every Monday to Thursday afternoon, I am present with them for faith formation activities. This activity is interesting to me, even though it requires extra struggle and sacrifice. I have an interest in instilling Christian teachings or values in the children. In addition, children also often make me happy, rejoice, or laugh. They are funny and love to joke around.

On the other hand, it is challenging because managing children who are entering their teenage years is not an easy thing. There are times when the children are very active and times when they are bored. When they are bored, they don't attend the meetings. Some of them are stubborn children. In this case, I have to be creative and patient, have a heart to engage with them and embrace them with love. I learned from this situation." Other seminarians also had similar experiences. Seminarian Daniel said, "God who is present in these children is also a formator for me who always educates me to be creative, patient, and willing to be involved in the lives of children or anyone I serve."

Seminarian Lorensius felt the same joy when accompanying OMK in St. Antonius Padua Mbeling Parish, Ruteng Diocese. He said that it is not always easy because the world of young people is very unique and different. They are unique and different not only because they are discovering their identity but also in terms of faith; they are very changeable and vulnerable to various problems. The influence of the environment and technology can disrupt the growth and maturity of their spiritual life. Therefore, mentoring young people (OMK) requires patience and perseverance as well as pastoral creativity that can help them to grow as individuals who truly believe. A pastoral officer must be present with the tenderness and love of Christ Himself so that young people do not drift away from church life. Through this experience, God is also present and teaches pastoral workers to be embracing and nurturing individuals. God teaches pastoral workers through the uniqueness of the lives of young people in the parish.

The experience with children and young people (young Catholics-OMK) led them to reflect on Jesus himself. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, for they are my friends" (cf. Mark 10:14). Children are indeed the best of friends. They can be trusted. The vocation of seminarians becomes stronger when they are with children who are innocent and simple. In and through children and young people, God is present as One who is simple and near. A valuable learning through them is the simplicity and humility of God. Jesus once said, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will not enter it". How noble and precious little children are before God.

The experience with children also gave birth to a deeper awareness and concern when looking at the fact that today, not a few parents kill their children in various ways. Children are often victims of violence and sexual abuse, and some even resort to abortion. It is the reality that children are weak and unable to defend themselves. God, who is simple and humbled through children, also appears as a person who needs acceptance and protection. God loves every human being because humans are His most perfect creation. God is especially close to little children because it is through them that God reveals His Kingdom. It is how God works and touches the hearts of people by revealing His presence so that people do not become predators or monsters to others. Like Himself, everyone must be present as a protective friend.

Discussion

These priestly candidates do not experience God directly "*face to face*". They "truly experience God" through various concrete experiences, especially in the course of their mission and service among the people. They experience God through daily events, namely in the Eucharist and communal and personal prayers, in pastoral teamwork, in visiting parishioners, in the care of the sick, and mentoring children and youth. Their experience is more of a personal relationship with God.

From the experience of God in pastoral care, there are three areas of experience of God, namely the experience of God through the Eucharist, cooperation in fraternity, and encounters with all the people in all their backgrounds.

In the Eucharist, the experience of God can be experienced differently by the people: God as healer or physician, teacher, guide, reprover or reminder, love, and inner strength, the Merciful One, and many others. Pareira emphasizes the experience of God in the Eucharist even when the priest says the greeting: "The Lord is with you," and the people respond, "And with your spirit." The greeting "God with you" is an expression of faith in God's presence and inclusion. It is God's inclusion in human life (Pareira, 2016). Until the end of time, this inclusion will not change because God is Immanuel, God who is with His people. God is so close.

Furthermore, Marsch said that in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, God becomes a healer or physician (Marsch, 2016). Through the Eucharist, God also provides inner calm and peace (Tukan, 2020). The Eucharist brings transformative power to the lives of God's people. God becomes the driving force of pastoral work. The care and sacrifice for the lives of the people would be meaningless without the spirit of the Eucharist flowing visibly in daily life. The power itself comes from Christ, who gave Himself first to be eaten. The Eucharist develops spiritual maturity (Hidayat, 2017). This spiritual maturity is very useful in pastoral care, especially when present in the experience of suffering. The power of the Eucharist, which is the power of God Himself, can have a positive influence on the lives of others who suffer through greeting and listening with fidelity. For St. Teresa of Calcutta, the Eucharist is an incomparable spiritual resource. It strengthened and nourished her life and confirmed her service to God, who is present in the poor and weak. In the Eucharist, she experienced union

with God, and that union flowed into her union with the poor people she served (Cahyadi, 2003).

God's love happens in the mutual trust that exists in community life. Mutual trust is a milestone that determines the continuity of pastoral work in a team. Indeed, God is not only present in pastoral teamwork among priests and candidates for the priesthood or among religious. God is present and works when cooperation involves the laity in accordance with the renewal spirit of the Second Vatican Council. Through the laity, God reveals the particularity of His presence in developing the faith life of the people. This cooperation, therefore, will not be complete without opening ourselves to God's work through the presence of all the faithful.

The experience of encounter takes place in three forms, namely, encounter with people in general, pastoral care of the sick, and accompaniment of children and youth. This experience of encounter is not only in the sense of ordinary meetings but also when a concern arises for the welfare of others or the people. Bergoglio (Pope Francis) says that God will listen to anyone who fights for the interests of others. He is not a God who is deaf and insensitive to the cries of human suffering. God is present in the daily experience of humanity, for example, revealed in the experience of the psalmist. God listens to the laments and complaints of people who cry out to Him (Sia, 2016). In our daily experience, God is a faithful listener. A faithful listener expects sensitivity to listen to the complaints and sufferings of others.

Seminarian Daniel, as well as other seminarians, expressed, "The presence of God, which is said to last until the end of time, is indeed real. God is not just a promise. The description of the time "until the end of the age" shows that Jesus' words of encouragement and promise do not only apply to Jesus' disciples but also His disciples today. God is present and involved even though in "disguise". God's presence is "disguised" because the original form of God who is present is not visible, but His power, influence, power, spirit, grace still works through simple events or things that I often encounter during my pastoral work."

The ministry of the people is part of the effort to fight for the good and welfare of others. God, who is involved in human history, is fully involved in every pastoral work. The experience of God, therefore, includes the call to sacrifice oneself and one's interests in order to work for a better common life. The experience of God takes place in the field where he works.

No human being is created for himself. This realization is important for followers of Christ always to be willing to give or sacrifice themselves for the common good (people), like Christ's example (Cahyadi, 2007). When the heart is moved to sacrifice oneself for the benefit and common good (people), that is the time when God acts as a driver and guide for each person. God is the One who whispers all His goodness and wisdom for everyone to do good, especially for those who are suffering, poor, and marginalized. Jesus Himself said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40). The spirituality of presence can be an invaluable contribution in nurturing and strengthening their vocation to be good and holy priests.

CONCLUSION

The experience of God is a *face-to-face* encounter in life and work. In the ministry of the people, this experience of God is "mediated" through various events and encounters in daily life. God goes on pilgrimage and makes history with his people. No matter how simple the daily experience during pastoral care, God is never absent. He is the one who exists and always accompanies.

Seminarians experience God in a) the experience of the Eucharist, b) the experience of brotherhood and cooperation in the rectory community, c) the experience of encountering the people and pastoral care of the sick, and d) the experience of mentoring altar boys and catholic youth (OMK). These experiences led to different conclusions about who God is: He is the formator, guide, mobilizer, protector, companion, source, and bringer of joy.

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