THE DYNAMICS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN INDONESIA

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Abstraksi


Key words: changing concepts of mission, chaotic situation, specific mission, post Vatican II, Indonesian context, victims, lamentation, paschal mystery, The Kingdom of God.

This is a good occasion for me to explain “The Dynamics of the Indonesian Catholic Church” as suggested by Prof. Karel Steenbrink, although, it is not an easy task. There are some possibilities to explain the topic:
- showing the coat of arm of the Indonesian bishops’ which show their efforts inculturating the message of the good news into their specific regions,
- showing various publications which reflect how the dynamic of translation, adaptation, and inculturation happen in the Catholic Church in Indonesia,
- showing various events which reflect the Catholic Church involvement during the current of time in Indonesian society.

I prefer the last point. I would like to explain mostly of the period after Suharto’s resignation in May 1998. It is an important and interesting period since Suharto had governed Indonesia for 32 years. Therefore, the period after Suharto’s resignation is a transitional one.

Introduction

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In explaining the history or the dynamics (of mission) of the Catholic church in Indonesia, there are at least two factors which are necessary to put into consideration. First, the changing concepts of mission as it is formulated in various documents of Vatican Council II. As an aggiornamento of the Catholic church, Vatican Council II has greatly influenced to the theological concepts of mission as well as in praxis. Second, the specific situation of Indonesia in which the Catholic church is Indonesia exists in a pluralistic society consisting of various factors such as ethnic, language, religiosity, etc.

The documents on mission after Vatican Council II are continuously developing. They come from the universal church as well as from the local church. The Vatican Council II renewal influences mission at two levels. First, on the theological concept of the church, as it is formulated in the dogmatic constitution of the church, Lumen Gentium, and the pastoral constitution of the church, Gaudium et Spes. These documents formulate a new concept of the church and her involvement on mission. The image of the church refers to the experience of the Chosen People, as People of God in a pilgrimage with others to the eternal life. Second, at the practical level, the Vatican Council II offers institutional reforms in the organization of missionary activity. On Ad Gentes, the document on missionary activities of the church, the renewal is not only on the theological concept. The document refers to all the faithful --clerics, religious members, and lay people-- under the guidance of the bishop bear the task and responsibility to do missionary activity. The renewal stimulated by Vatican Council II, followed by other documents, e.g. Evangelii Nuntiandi, Redemptoris Missio. These last two documents include the task of new evangelization and the new situation on various matters of mission, e.g. the frontiers of mission, new possibility of missionary activity through the new perspective. Whereas, documents from the local church give perspective on the nature of the local church and its realizations through various concepts of dialogue, inculturation, etc.

Besides, there is also another factor which gives influence on mission that is the recent and rapid change in Indonesian situation stimulated by local factors e.g. conflicts in various area stimulated and labelled as a religious conflict, or ethnic factor, as well as the changing situation caused by the international factors as an impact of globalization which includes the changing in various dimensions of the society. Based on the recent situation, this paper will see the possibilities and propose what could be realized in such situation.

Where the Indonesian Church Stands

Giving consideration to Indonesian context, John Prior (a missiologist from Flores) writes a phrase “Out of Chaos”. As the Indonesian people expects, he expects that the Indonesian crises would end soon. During the chaotic situation of 1999 and 2000, he refers to the apocalyptic prophets of Ezekiel and Daniel as comforts. Similar to John Prior’s expression, Gerald A. Arbuckle writes a book under title Out of Chaos discussing to re-found the Religious Congregation after Vatican Council II. Arbuckle’s proposal is based on the liminal theory of Victor Turner, in which a renewal process should pass some phases of separation, liminality, and reaggregation to enter in a new situation after passing the chaotic situation. This dynamic of the process could explain various changes in the current of the church history, as well as of the world history. Could it be applied to the Indonesian situation?
The last two decades were a crucial moment for the Indonesian Church. There are many factors from various dimensions of the society life come to the surface, and challenge the daily life of the Indonesian people. The Indonesian Church which integrates herself to the Indonesian society could not escape from this reality. At the same time, globalization and its impact force the church to formulate her existence and involvements. They challenge the Indonesian Church to redefine its existence and to evaluate her involvements as manifestation of her mission in the dynamic of the struggle of the society.

Below are some factors which challenge and call for the involvement of the Church in Indonesia:

1) One of the traditional involvements of the Church to the Indonesian society is through schools and various health care institutions i.e. hospitals and clinics. These involvements are in a critical situation in two aspects. First, the practical-operational aspect. In the 1980 (nineteen eightieth), as the impact of oil boom, the Indonesian government built schools from primary to the high schools, reaching into the remote areas. This development gives influences to the Christian schools in which they lost their students. On the other side, the government cut its supports, no longer giving teachers to Christian schools. It means that the Christian schools would face financial problems. Second, the legal aspect. In 1989, the government launched a new policy on education law. The policy abolished certain items which give specific christian vision to the Christian schools. In such situation, educational involvement through institutions was in critical situation which is necessary be handled through vision and management.

2) Prior to the resignation of Suharto in 1998, the government had lost its legitimacy since the moral degradation of the commitments among the government officers personally and institutionally, even its bureacratical system, as the bureacratical system is corrupt, and unjust. This situation gives no support for the social life of the society in reaching an ideal in which the government maintains and assures the welfare of the citizen. The crises of the government and its various governmental institutions continue until today.

3) The hidden conflict as historical burdens of the impact of the national tragedy in 1965 come to surface. Since the problem was suppressed and was kept under cover during Suharto’s regime, it creates social unrest at the last moment before he resigned.

4) Various conflictual situations is upsurge and come to surface in the name of religious and ethnic factors. Hundreds of churches were set on fire and were destroyed during the last two decades. Thousands of people have been injured, killed, or displaced. These are some of the various problems without mentioning problems on economic and political dimensions.

Chances for the Indonesian Church:

In these critical situations, how should the Church redefine its identity and her mission? YB Mangunwijaya writes the characteristic of the Indonesian Church through the concept church in diaspora, small in number, spreading in various and remote areas among various beliefs and cultures. There are some proposal how the Indonesian Church has chances as well as the challenges of the universal church. The Asian bishops, through FABC documents, mentioned about threefold dialogue: dialogue with other religions, dialogue with cultures, and dialogue with the poor to
realize the church mission in Asia. JB Banawiratma (an ex Jesuit theologian) writes in various articles, showing what kind of chances the Indonesian Church has. He proposes some agendas which are necessary to do by the Church as the involvement to the issues in the society as realization of the Church mission. Mentioning some activities, he lists some activities in various fields: social justice as the empowerment of the poor, involving on gender’s issue as an equality struggle between man and woman, environmental movement, formation on values consciousness, and building the Basic Ecclesial Communities.

Similar to the previous proposal of the Church agenda, at the international level, the universal Church has the same possibilities. There are some megatrends which become chances and challenges for the universal Church in order to realize her mission. Those are resurgence of cultural traditions, revival of religious experience, basic ecclesial communities, problems in ministerial structure, the Western Church in crisis, globalization, the poor as the new evangelizers, new presence and importance of women, new frontiers for mission, co-partnership with earth. Facing these challenges and chances, it is the local Church which become the executor of the programs.

What is the Specific Mission of the Indonesian Church?

Prior to the Indonesian Independence, there were some missionaries who stood for the sake of the native people in confronting the colonial government. Hendrik Kraemer and Fr. van Lith, SJ were some of the figures who represented the position. As the Indonesian Church joined into the new Republic of Indonesia following its proclamation of independence on August 17, 1945, Mgr. Soegijapranata called the faithful to join into the dynamic of the Indonesian society, state and nation to show the Christian spirit in the daily life. He realized his call through various actions and was honored by the Indonesian government as a national hero.

Responding to the renewal of Vatican Council II, a theologian of the Indonesian Bishops’ Conference formulated how the Indonesian church should involve itself in the dynamic of the society. "... berdasarkan situasi konkret merumuskan tanggapan Gereja: Apakah tepatnya yang dapat disumbangkannya ? Bagaimana Gereja menjalankan peranan profetisnya?" Continuing in the formulation of the church’s role it is stated, then, "Development in post Vatican II ecclesiology rightfully emphasize the importance of particular churches as the concrete presence and realization of the universal church and its salvific mission." How are Christians to respect whatever positive values are found in ancient cultural and religious traditions, in Indonesia adats, and to help people become aware of those value heavily challenged today by modernization and technological progress? What contribution can the church render to society, so that the inheritance of cultural and religious value will be preserved, and new value disclosed in all efforts for development and social welfare. It was, then, continuously realized through various programs and were evaluated annually through the annual meeting of the Indonesian Bishops’ Conference.

One of the prominent figures of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Justinus Darmoyuwono, as the Archbishop of Semarang and the Chairman of Indonesian Bishops’ Conference continued the policy of his predecessor, Mgr. Soegijapranata,
involved to the dynamics of the state and nation. His last notes after resigning as the
Archbishop of Semarang, the Cardinal remarked how he had delayed the
implementation of the renewal of Vatican Council II because of the impact of the
1965 tragedy. In time of chaos, the Cardinal proposed not to join into violent
action. He chose to involve on behalf of the victims. His principle in doing
mission was proclaiming the Good News through concrete actions in order to balance
the apostolate of the word, which otherwise could be trapped into lip-service.

Continuing the spirit to work among the victims becomes the principle of
Sandyawan Sumardi, S.J. who participates to work with the young people and various
non government organizations’ members to assist the victims of various incident
during the movements prior to the resignation of Suharto. It is known as Tim Relawan
Penolong Korban Insiden 27 Juli 1996 (Team of Volununter Rescuer of Incident of 27
July 1996) then becomes Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan (Team of Volunteers for
Humanity). They are participants in a democracy movement. On his plea, defending
himself on the court during the last trial since he was accused of giving an asylum to
activists who were under a military operation’s target, Sandyawan explains his
spirituality, that is spirituality of the victims, victims of developmental ideology cost,
victims vis a vis political power. Sandyawan puts his efforts on the horizon of
presenting the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is in this spirituality that the
mission of the church becomes an inclusive action. Such activity is part of realization
of the dialogue of life and dialogue of action. It is in the same spirituality that is
fighting for justice and liberation on behalf of the victim, a Moslem lady, Mrs. Karlina
Leksono, who was the chairperson of Tim Relawan untuk Kemanusiaan finds that her
involvement is to realize that one function of religion is to give the spirit and power
for life. Amidst the conflict situation, it is the duty of religious leaders to bring hope,
spreading the image of hospitality to other adherents. Based on moral convictions, she
commits with her efforts to assist the victims of various conflicts.

In recent situation, conflicts in various areas continue. There are victims, those
are refugees who wait and look for assistance. In Sumatera, Java, Madura, Bali, Nusa
Tenggara Barat, Timor, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, the Moluccas islands, and Papua,
there are refugees spread in various places. Tempo magazine noted, totally, there are
1.305.690 refugees. There are refugees from Aceh in various places in Sumatera. In
Aceh there are 18.095 refugees; in Sumatera Utara (North Sumatera) 37.590 refugees;
in Riau 3.135 refugees; in Jambi 2.103 refugees; in Sumatera Selatan (South
Sumatera) 1.700 refugees. There are various refugees from Aceh, Kalimantan Barat
(West Kalimantan), Maluku, Papua spread in Jawa Barat (West Java) 9.275, in Jawa
Tengah (Central Java) 12.335. in Jawa Timur (East Java) 161.566. In Madura island
there are 97.300 refugees from Kalimantan Tengah (Central Kalimantan). In Bali,
there are 2.974 refugees from East Timor. In Nusa Tenggara Barat, there are 13.013
refugees from East Timor. In Sulawesi there are refugees from Poso and Maluku,
39.785 in Sulawesi Utara (North Sulawesi), 58.005 in Sulawesi Tengah (Central
Sulawesi), 36.104 in Sulawesi Selatan (south Sulawesi), 161.226 in Sulawesi
Tenggara (Southeast Sulawesi). In Maluku Utara (North Maluku), there are 212.000
refugees. In Ambon, there are 300.091 refugees. In Papua, there are 16.600 refugees.
Those people are victims of the conflicts. Who cares for them? It means that there are
still various chances to realize the mission of the Church. Assisting the refugees is one
among the many.
Working in the Chaotic Situation: On Behalf of the Victims

Involving in the chaotic situations on behalf of the victims is very relevant for the church to realize her mission. Referring to the experience of Jesus who lived under the repression of Roman colonial, Jesus himself lives and works among the ordinary people. Though there were various movements in the society, Jesus did not join the parties which tried to get independence from the Roman colonial. His intention is proclaiming and showing that “the Kingdom of God is at hand” (MK. 1, 15). Jesus realizes his mission until the end of his life through the Paschal mystery. It is in the Eucharist that the spirit of the Paschal mystery of Jesus is repeated and invites to the faithful to realize it on the daily life.

There are various experiences in the conflict situation, how the people fight for their fate and their future. They struggle from their misery, they fight against the trauma. Even they become the reconcilers with the oppressors. Since 2000, various dioceses in Indonesia set up a new commission namely Justice and Peace. One of the tasks from this commission is to promote reconciliation among the victims of various conflicts. Budi Hernawan, a Franciscan Brother as the director of Justice and Peace Commission of Merauke diocese writes his reflections on his involvement among the papua people against the deforestation on the region. They have fought against the multinational corporation actions on the area.

There is a PBHK sister in Ambon who works with other women from various communities, promote to built a community which work for peace movement, curing the trauma after the conflict and violence in Molluca region. In Flores, there are communities of coffee’s farmers who fight peacefully against the land conflict against the land lords. In Kupang diocese-Nusa Tenggara Timor, there are resettlements for the refugees from the Timor Leste conflict previous to the independence of Timor Leste.

These are movements in various places who live under the suppression, bearing the trauma since they lost their family members who fight for their fate and build for their better future based on the Paschal mystery, freeing themselves from the trauma and become the reconciler with others. They do this effort through a process of curing from their trauma and make a mechanism which invite the oppressors to confess their faults and propose to do conversion. This mechanism refers to the spirit of Paschal mystery.

Similar to the experience above, Gerard A. Arbuckle proposed a lamentation rite of various tribes in the world as a process to set free from trauma and get a new spirit of life. He refers to lamentation process as the experience of the Chosen People on their exodus and exile. It refers also to the experience of the women in front of the empty tomb until they meet the risen Jesus. It means that through lamentation, the women reach to the experience of Paschal mystery.

Inspired by the various experiences and reflections, there is a chance to involve in the misery of the refugees who are victims of conflicts. The resettlement program of the government usually think of practical issues, and give no concern to their traumatic burden. The refugees still bring with them their traumatic burden. Using the lamentation process in assisting the refugees, there are three aspects
psychological - set free from psychological burden, social - to invite the solidarity of others, and theological - to give a meaning of the experience in eschatological horizon which could be applied to help them to set free from their traumatic burden. As well as, it creates the people to find a new spirit of life. It is the message of the Paschal mystery. It is also a change for the church to create an atmosphere of life in the horizon of the coming of the Kingdom of God.

5. Gerald A. Arbuckle, Out Of Chaos, New York, Paulist Press, 1988
6. Separation refers into a stance in distance from the status quo of the ordinary life; liminality is a phase in which there is no structure, a situation anti-structure which difference from the ordinary life where people live in consensus among various structure of the society; and reaggregation in which people is integrated in a new situation in the society in which they lived before where there are changes though they stay in the same old structure but it has various new values. Gerald A. Arbuckle, Earthing the Gospel, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1990
11. Robert Cribb has predicted that the impact of the national tragedy kept problems for the future generation. "Problems in the Historiography of the Killings in


12 One of the analyses of the riot in Banyuwangi 1998 refers to the revenge of the national tragedy in 1965.


14 YB Mangunwijaya, Gereja Diaspora, Yogyakarta, Kanisius, 1999


17 A. Bellagamba, Mission and Ministry in the Global Church, New York, Orbis Books, 1994


20 “...Based on the concrete situation, the church formulates her role: What is the contribution of the church? How the church realize her prophetic role?” R. Hardawiryana, “Panggilan Gereja dalam Masyarakat Indonesia” in Spektrum, 8: 3-4 (1978), pp. 261-446


22 “Penutupan Konsili Vatikan II di Indonesia dibarengi dengan meletusnya G30S, yang membawa ekor cukup panjang. Maka selama beberapa tahun hasil-hasil Vatikan II belum dapat dijabarkan dalam pengembalaan.” (The closing of the sessions of Vatican Council II, in Indonesia, waas happened at the same time as the tragedy of 30 September Movement with its implications. Therefore, for some years after, the constitutions and decrees of Vatican II could not be applied yet in pastoral
When there was a military action to make a screening of the membership of the Communist Party, the Cardinal asked the lay people to support the action with a prerequisite not to involve in violence action. A letter of Mgr. J. Darmoyuwono, the Archbishop of Semarang to the priests of the Archdiocese of Semarang dated January 6, 1966

Some of his policies showed how his commitments to his option. The Cardinal appreciated the faithful who took care of the families of the victims. The Cardinal asked some priests to give pastoral services on prisoners camps. Together with other adherents, the Cardinal started a foundation which takes care to the families of the victims. It known as Program Sosial Kardinal, which becomes an ecumenical activity.

"Without apostolate of work, the word apostolate easily deteriorates into lip-service, a kind of phariseeism". Cardinal J Darmoyuwono, ATThe Role of the Church in Socio-Economic Development of the Countries in South east Asia®, in Misereor Far East Colloqui, Baguio, Philippine, 18-20 June 1969

I. Sandyawan Sumardi, SJ - Benny Sumardi, Belajar dari Mistik Perjuangan Korban, Jakarta, 1998


Budi Hernawan, in Rohani magazine


Aleida, Kolektif Memori Para Pengungsi Timor Leste, unpublished Tesis Program Magister Ilmu Religi Budaya Universitas Sanata Dharma, 2007
