Urbaniana
University
Press

Youth, Catholic Church and Religions in Asia

edited by
Fabrizio Meroni

Fabrizio Meroni (edited by)
**Youth, Catholic Church
and Religions in Asia**

Percorsi culturali (n.s.) 26

YOUTH, CATHOLIC CHURCH AND RELIGIONS IN ASIA

edited by
Fabrizio Meroni

Summary

A BRIDGE FOR INDONESIAN YOUTH ACROSS RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES

Heru Prakosa

"Are you a Muslim?" This is the question I am often asked when I introduce myself as an Indonesian. This question is understandable for Indonesia is known to be home to one of the largest Muslim populations in the world, so it is presumed that every Indonesian is most likely to be a Muslim. Islam is certainly embraced by the vast majority of people, but some other religions are also present.[1] In addition to Islam,[2] the other

---

[1] Based on the 2010 census, of about 207 million Indonesians, 87.18 percent identify themselves as Muslims, 4.05 percent as Protestants, 2.91 percent as Catholics, 1.69 percent as Hindus, 0.72 percent as Buddhists, and 0.5 percent as Confucionists. Those embracing the traditional indigenous beliefs (0.13 percent) amounts to 400 thousand, mostly living in Java. The majority of Hindus can be found on the Bali island, whereas Buddhists in some cities on Java, especially Jakarta. Regarding Christianity, Toraja has a significant Protestant population, as well as the provinces of North Celebes and Papua. Most Indonesian Catholics (6.9 million) live in the islands of the East Lesser Sunda and West Borneo (INDONESIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, "Census 2010 – Population by Age Group and Religion," http://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=320&wid=0).

[2] Sunnis are the overwhelming majority among the Indonesian Muslims. In comparison, Shiites are very small in number (0.5 percent), and Ahmadis are even less (0.1 percent). Sunnis follow the Asharite school of theology and the Shafi'ite school of law. The early

Indonesia is known for having a large young population,[6] which, surprisingly, is among the happiest in the world. According to a survey,[7] Indonesian youths ranked the highest on emotional well-being (40 percent), meaning that they are not weighed down by their problems too much, and they do not experience anxiety or bullying, feel unloved or lonely. A significant proportion of Indonesian youths (22 percent) said they get enough sleep, exercise regularly, and devote enough time to rest and reflection. At the same time, however, they are deeply pessimistic about the future of the world, mostly due to worries regarding extremism, terrorism, and conflicts.

The fact that the history of Indonesia is replete with episodes of domestic unrest[8] and violence[9] is undeniable. Indeed, during

for plurality, therefore "our plurality is our strength." (A. HARVEY, "Indonesian President Joko Widodo Urges Citizens to Resist Intolerant Hardliners," *Abc News*, 9 January 2017, www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-09/indonesian-president-joko-widodo-calls-for-unity/8170434).

[6] Based on the 2010 census, young people between 15 and 35 years of age numbered 82 million (INDONESIAN CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS, "Census 2010 – Population by Age Group, Urban/Rural, and Sex," https://sp2010.bps.go.id/index.php/site/tabel?tid=263&wid=0).

[7] "Indonesian Youths among Happiest in the World: Survey," *The Jakarta Post*, 13 February 2017, www.thejakartapost.com/youth/2017/02/13/indonesian-youths-among-happiest-in-the-world-survey.html?fb_comment_id=1338046236255684_1339595866100721).

[8] The confrontation that pitted Muslims and Christians against each other in Moluccas (1998-2000) and Poso (1998-2001) is a major example of communal violence in Indonesia, as a prelude to the escalation of extremism that has occurred subsequently (J. HAYS, "Christians and Muslim-Christian Violence in Indonesia," *Facts and Details*, June 2015, http://factsanddetails.com/indonesia/Minorities_and_Regions/sub6_3a/entry-3995.html).

[9] At the beginning of the third millennium, Indonesians witnessed major terrorist attacks, such as in Jakarta on Christmas Eve (2000)

the last 30 years, several tragedies have occurred, harming the peaceful coexistence between religious groups, as well as the rights and safety of minorities.

The rise of fundamentalism has strained communal relations, and some minority groups have often been subjected to repressive measures that have constrained their religious freedom. All this seems to have touched the hearts and the psychology of the youth, who feel uneasy with the prospects of an increase in extremism.

To help better understand the Indonesian context, certain questions are here addressed: How does extremism actually occur in Indonesia? And, why has it become such a big concern? How can it be analyzed and reflected upon? What can be done for the Indonesian new generation, especially young Christians and Muslims, to build a culture of dialogue in such a context? What kind of challenges to the testimony of faith are young Indonesian Christians facing today? And, what can they expect in the future?

Youth Extremism and the Suffering of Minorities

The growing militancy of the hardliners in Indonesia has sparked major turbulences throughout the country, creating an unhealthy atmosphere for the religious minority groups. For example, Churches have been shut down with the excuse that they were devoid of proper permits to warrant them as places

and in Bali (2002 and 2005), with many casualties. Places of worship, hotels, and public spaces became regular targets of bombing explosions. The surge in violent extremism resulted in tremendous problems for the police forces, and attacks were even directed against them in several cities on Java in 2016 and 2017.

of worship,[10] while life has become increasingly difficult for both Shiite and Ahmadi Muslims.[11] The events that led to the incarceration of Jakarta's former Christian governor, Basuki Purnama,[12] sentenced to two years in prison for blasphemy,[13]

[10] Cf. A. STERLING – D.B. SOLOMON, "Indonesian Christians Pray in Protest after Government Shuts Down Churches," *The Global Post*, 11 May 2015, www.pri.org/stories/2015-05-11/indonesian-christians-pray- protest-after-government-shuts-down-churches.

[11] Although they belong to the same community of believers, Shiite and Ahmadi doctrines are considered unpure or unorthodox by some parties within the Sunni majority (B. HERRY-PRIYONO, "Tolerance Caught between Hybridity and Purity," *The Jakarta Post*, 28 January, 2014, www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/01/27/tolerance-caught-between-hybridity-and-purity.html).

[12] In the run-up to the Jakarta 2017 gubernatorial election, Purnama encouraged the Muslim community to vote in favor of a renewal of his mandate, despite the Surah al-Maidah (5:51), which states: "Do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies." Purnama's appeal sparked outrage among Muslims, who organized continued mass demonstrations against him for several months. Amid polemics and tensions, he was eventually convicted on charges of blasphemy (C.A. WIJAYA, "Ahok's Speech Not Blasphemous: Expert," *The Jakarta Post*, 21 March 2017, www.thejakartapost.com/news/2017/03/21/ahoks-speech-not-blasphemous-expert.html).

[13] Indonesia prohibits blasphemy by its Criminal Code. The Article 156 (a) targets those who deliberately, in public, express feelings of hostility, hatred, or contempt against religions with the purpose of preventing others from adhering to any religion, and targets those who disgrace a religion. The penalty for violating Article 156 (a) is a maximum of five years imprisonment. Article 156 (a) is the complement to a decree enacted by the first President, Sokarno, and implemented by the second President, Suharto, on the Prevention of Blasphemy and Abuse of Religions. Article 1 of the decree prohibits the "deviant interpretation" of religious teachings, and mandates the President to dissolve any organization practicing deviant teachings (S. SIDDIK, "The Origin of the Indonesian Blasphemy Law and its Implication towards Religious Freedom in Indonesia," October 2016, www.researchgate.net/publication/306394534).

were the peak of an escalation of tension which has disrupted interreligious coexistence in Indonesia.

Therefore, nowadays, a number of Indonesian Muslims seem to have difficulties associating themselves with other Indonesians from a different religious background; however, behind the domestic incidents and instability of the last few decades there are also reasons unrelated to religion as such: Socio-economic disparities, gaps in development, and political interests. Therefore, religion in Indonesia often serves as a cover for other motivations, and young people can be mobilized easily to that effect, as proved by the increasing number of them joining armed groups, including ISIS.[14]

To explain the causes of extremism among the youth, it is possible to speak of three voids: a void in the head, a void in the heart, and a void in the stomach.[15] The void in the head takes place because of the limits of critical thinking in understanding conceptual discourses, which mostly results from a lack of education. A young person suffers narrow-mindedness in many of areas of knowledge and perception, in such a manner that their horizons are extremely limited. In responding to the challenges of the times, they tend to see their world very simplistically, without being aware of the importance to develop a culture of openness and to build a critical attitude, including toward the omnipresent messages and content in the media. In

[14] N. NURANIYAH, "How ISIS Charmed the New Generation of Indonesian Militants," *The Middle East Institute*, January 9, 2015, www.mei.edu/content/map/how-isis-charmed-new-generation-indonesian-militants.

[15] B. GALIH, "Terorisme soal Kekosongan Isi Kepala, Hati, dan Perut (Terrorism is Related to 'Voidness' in terms of Head, Heart and Stomach)," *Line Today*, 3 March 2017, https://today.line.me/ID/pc/article/f6251bb4f310c43435a1133d6291a931ac66f781e4ed9b4a8daa1a e282b7bed3.

this regard, education is a strategic instrument to developing critical thinking amongst the youth. Religious schools should thus reform their curricula to include non-religious areas of study, along with the proper methods to put into practice new knowledge in a plural society. Interreligious studies should also be introduced as a mandatory subject from childhood.

A void in the heart can take place due to the fact that a young person is incapable of dealing with the differences that are encountered outside of oneself. Anything that is different from what they uphold as true is regarded as unacceptable, and cannot be tolerated. There is no space open for any different view. Their hearts are closed off to other people. As a consequence, the supporters of religious extremism tend to disregard those who do not follow the same line as they do in a merciless way.[16] Ultra-conservative teachings and traditions introduced by fanatical spiritual leaders can add fuel to that harmful and prejudicial behavior.

A void in the stomach is undoubtedly related to socio-economic circumstances. It is not difficult to figure out that an unemployed young person can be lured into carrying out a terrorist attack for financial reasons. In the midst of the numerous difficulties and frustrations, a person tends to accept any promise that may improve their situation blindly, even if the reward is death. Indeed, poverty and inequalities in Indonesia have created a fertile ground, where violence and extremism can flourish.

[16] On January 14, 2016, when a bomb went off near the Sarinah shopping mall in central Jakarta, a young gunman shot aimlessly at the surrounding people without showing any fear or hesitation (JAKARTA GLOBE, "Sarinah Bombings and Shootings," 14 January 2016, http://jakartaglobe.id/eyewitness/sarinah-bombings-shootings).

Youth Extremism, Globalization, and the Role of the Media

The growth of extremism is additionally influenced by external events through globalization. Globalization is "the compression of the world".[17] It is a phenomenon that covers all aspects of human life, and consequently cannot be understood narrowly in economic terms. In the context of globalization, the advance of communication and computer technology, and the availability of the internet, enable us to have information at our fingertips.

Indonesia has seen wider internet access in recent years, and the young generation are active participants on social media. Indonesia comes fourth globally and first in south-east Asia for the number of Facebook users: 111 million (both active and inactive). The country has 24 million users on Twitter, one of the highest in the world, and 8.9 million are on Instagram. Nearly 90 percent of users are below the age of 34, and 54 percent are under 16 and 24.[18]

Apart from the fact that a time-space compression has brought positive impacts in improving the quality of human life, the advance of communication and computer technology can also bring with it negative effects. One of them is the growing hoaxes on social media, including fake news, hate speech, and intolerant discourse. All these can strain relations among people in a multicultural society. The youth, in particular, are

[17] R. ROBERTSON, "Globalization and the Future of 'Traditional Religion'," in M.L. STACKHOUSE (ed.), *God and Globalization: Religion and the Powers of the Common Life*, Trinity Press International, New York 2007, 53-54.

[18] M.Z. RAKHMAT – D. TARAHITA, "Social media and Consumerism in Indonesia," *Fair Observer*, 21 May 2017, www.fairobserver.com/region/asia_pacific/indonesia-social-media-facebook-twitter-instagram-coldplay-concerts-asian-news-44903.

not always ready to handle a great deal of information and opinions, which often convey very different ideas which are in conflict with each other.

This can lead to relativism, according to which one's perspective is considered as just one among many, in a way that any viewpoint can be questioned. As a consequence, relativism can produce a feeling of insecurity, along with its by-products: perplexity, disorientation, distrust, anxiety, frustration or fear,[19] which in turn may push young people at risk to embrace radical views and violent extremism.

Building a Culture of Dialogue among the Youth

Living in a plural society, like the one found Indonesia, needs a spirit of respect and openness. The engagement in the public sphere of our brothers and sisters from different religious backgrounds can give us an opportunity to deepen or mature our faith. This applies to everyone, including the young people. As the survey quoted above demonstrates, however, it seems that the case is not so straightforward, because a healthy atmosphere is required to reach out across religious boundaries. After all, it requires the courage to go beyond a comfort zone especially if the context is spoiled by hate speech, intolerance, and violence. The youth, who are usually imbued with a culture of adventure, are not sufficiently willing to take that step.

Young Christians in Indonesia are experiencing precisely this situation. They are regarded as being reluctant to emerge from their comfort zone, and hence feel more comfortable being active only in their Church circle only. This is exactly the

[19] R. ROBERTSON, "Globalization and the Future of 'Traditional Religion'," 60.

impression I got on the occasion of a meeting with Muslim fellows in a parish in Java. "Where are your young Catholic colleagues?", "what is it that occupies them so within the Church that they do not want to come out and meet us?" Asking these legitimate questions is surely understandable. Yet, the syndrome of being a minority should not be underestimated. After all, a sense of insecurity can be a contributing factor why Christians stay on their own, without engaging in civil society and with their peers from other religions, especially from the Muslim majority. At the exclusion of everyone else, young Christians tend to think that their needs can be found within their own circle, and such an attitude can be interpreted by Muslims as if they do not want to get along with them.

In spite of their concerns, young Catholic Indonesians have made some attempts to go beyond. One of the large events that characterizes their engagement with the building of harmony in the midst of a heterogeneous society was the 7th Asian Youth Day (AYD7), which took place in Yogyakarta on 2-6 August 2017. The theme of the meeting was "Joyful Asian Youth! Living the Gospel in Multicultural Asia." Over 2,000 participants from 21 Asian countries gathered in Yogyakarta, which was chosen because its religious and cultural diversity could provide the participants with a singular experience. AYD7 also involved non-Catholic communities in assisting the work of the organizing committee, and their presence was important in presenting the diverse cultural features of the nation. AYD7 was fully supported by the government of Indonesia, both at the central and local level.

Some months before, in March 2017, a similar meeting took place in Semarang on the northern coast of the Java island, organized by some students from five Indonesian universities – three Islamic (State Islamic University of Walisongo, Islamic University of Wahid Hasyim, and Islamic University of Sultan

Agung), one public (Semarang State University), and one Catholic (Soegijopranoto Catholic University), in partnership with the Commission for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Semarang. At that meeting, over 3,000 young people from all religions came to together, united against any form of intolerance and in support of the so-called *Pancasila*, the set of core principles at the foundation of the 1945 Constitution.[20] Therefore, this event reminded the youth that the collaboration between Indonesian Muslims and Christians, dating back to the establishment of Indonesia as an independent state, is valid also today.

Theological Education to Christian-Muslim Dialogue

An interreligious encounter that involves young Catholic people also finds its way in intra and extra-curricular theological education, through training, immersion, and communal living activities. The approach of the theological education for interreligious studies adopts the "Ignatian Pedagogy," namely a model for teaching and learning developed from the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

This model takes into account three key components: experience, reflection, and action. It starts from "below," on the basis of

---

[20] The Pancasila consists of five core principles: belief in the one supreme God; just and civilized humanity; the unity of Indonesia; democracy guided by the inner wisdom; social justice for the whole people of Indonesia. The first principle recognizes the role of religion in public life, but it does not mean that the state recognizes a certain religion as superior to others, even if Islam is the religion of the majority of Indonesians. The freedom of every citizen to practice their faith is ensured by Article 29 of the Indonesian Constitution: "The state guarantees all persons the freedom of worship, each according to his or her religion."

the personal experience, proceeds with the analysis of the context from various perspectives, including some religious wisdoms and Christian theological reflection, and continues with immersion or communal activities. The approach is completed by the acquisition of basic understanding and knowledge of the context, in order to gain the fruits of the process through evaluation.[21]

It is worthy of emphasis here that the primary method being adopted marks a shift from "activity-oriented" to "process oriented."[22] This can be illustrated as follows:

---
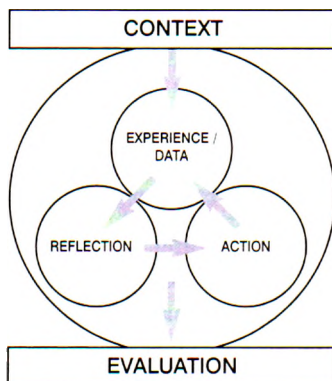
[21] Along these lines, Indonesian Jesuits offer periodical training programs on interreligious dialogue for seminarians or scholars, religious sisters and brothers, laymen and university students. In addition, since 2010 Indonesian Jesuits have organized the Asia Pacific Theological Encounter Program (APTEP) for university students coming from other countries, such as the Philippines, Australia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. APTEP provides the students with basic knowledge and understanding of Islamic Studies and the theology of interreligious dialogue in light of Ignatian Spirituality. The program lasts one month (three weeks of class sessions, and one week of immersion in an Islamic boarding school).

[22] Cf. J. VALLABARAJ, "Ecclesia in Asia and Youth Ministry: A Call to Rediscover the Original Paradigm," *Mission Today*, 2000, 344.
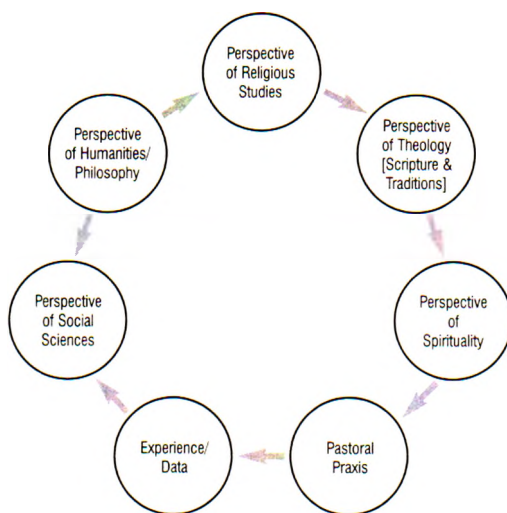
Do the immersion programs have any impact? What are their results? Why do we not choose a community of hardliners for the immersion? These are some questions that are frequently raised. We are sometimes tempted to think that, if we can build a relationship with the hardliners, we will be able to solve all the problems. We are not always aware that the approach of the hardliners is not compatible with our vision about non-violence. If we impose upon ourselves to build a good relationship with them, quite likely we may be accused of betraying our vision. Actually, it could have even more serious consequences, because we may disrupt our relationship with our moderate fellows.

The main point here is to create the conditions where we can bring young people to where they can make an attempt to reach out across religious boundaries. It can be one among many efforts that we can make structurally possible to help young people come out of their comfort zone.

Other Ways to Promote the Encounter

Occasional events, such as AYD7, or theological education programs, are not suficient to establish a culture of interreligious dialogue between young people. The encounter must be furthered starting from the private life of Indonesians, and there are already families whose children embrace different faiths and live together in harmony. In civil society, neither Muslims nor Christians live in Indonesia as a ghetto, but relations across religious boundaries are still the exception for their youth.

The Indonesian government and non-governmental organizations have adopted a series of measures to advance national unity, as well as interfaith and interethnic harmony. One of the most significant initiatives is the *Forum Kerukunan Umat Bergama* (FKUB) or the Interreligious Harmony Forum, designed to facilitate the interaction of different religious groups at a national level, and which acts as a mediator to solve conflicts that may arise between them, and promote peaceful coexistence.[23]

However, a FKUB youth dimension is yet to be properly developed, reflecting the poor participation of young people in community life. This is all the more true for Christians, as they belong to a religious minority group. From this point of view, they must be encouraged to join clubs and constructive political organizations, which can play an effective role as venues where youths from different religions can meet and find common ground on relevant social and cultural issues.

To facilitate the engagement of young people from minority groups, the government should make sure that religious free-

---

[23] A. ROKHMAD, "The Role of Inter-Religious Harmony Forum in Maintaining the Harmony of Religious Life in Plural Society," *The Social Sciences*, vol. 11, 2016, n. 21, Medwell Journals, http://docsdrive. com/pdfs/medwelljournals/sscience/2016/5052-5059.pdf.

dom and freedom of expression are not curtailed, or else they will continue to shy away from the public space. In the socio-economic field, there must be an effort to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. The attempt made by the government to push for infrastructure development outside Java must be applauded. Scholarship must be provided for young people to pursue their advanced studies. There must also be a determined effort to provide law enforcement and guarantee the preparation of police personnel is of the highest degree. Everyone needs to be treated in a fair manner, so that no one is regarded as beneath, or above the law.

More attention should be paid to the technologization of information and media communication. A workable legislative system and ethical codes should be developed in such a manner that people, especially the youth, will be able to express their ideas and offer their responses to any discourse in a responsible way, avoiding hate speech and offending others belonging to different religious groups.

Challenges, Opportunities, and the Way Forward for the Youths

Living in a pluralistic society like Indonesia, citizens are challenged in three ways, namely: a way of believing; a way of discerning; and, a way of proceeding. The first is concerned with theology. Interreligious dialogue can stimulate us to reflect on our way of believing to make it correspond to the contextual circumstances. Is it possible for the Church of Indonesia to take religious plurality as a *locus theologicus* for constructing a contextual theology, ecclesiology, and Christology?

The Church in every age has adapted her reflection on faith issues to the specificities of the contexts where she has been engaged. Indeed, theology is contextual, although this does not

mean that every context gives rise to a theology, or that contexts become the source of theology. What is meant here is that contexts can be a starting point to search for meanings that links our life with God's plan for human salvation. Theology must be integrated with daily life. It is not abstract, for it gives responses to the challenges we face in the here and now.

Therefore, in the Indonesian and the broader Asian context, Jesus Christ and his message must be conveyed in a way that is suitable for the local concepts, terms, and symbols. In this regard, all Churches in Asia should pursue a triple dialogue: a dialogue with Asian peoples, especially the poor, with Asian cultures, and with Asian religions,[24] as poverty, the plurality of cultures, and the diversity of religious beliefs are the real challenges to be dealt with in Asian countries.

The second way is related to spirituality. "Religious pluralism must not be viewed as a mere fact of life to be reckoned with, much less as an impediment to Christian mission and identity, but as a divine grace to be thankful for and an opportunity to be seized – a gift and a task. Religious pluralism in principle is based on God's initiative in searching for people through history in order to share with them 'in many and diverse ways' God's own life, even before human beings could ever search for God," says Jacques Dupuis.[25]

According to Christianity, God's own life is communicated to humanity in and through Jesus Christ. His entire life was in fact a *kenosis*. *Kenosis* can be understood as a form of self-emp-

[24] J. DUPUIS, "A Persistent Vision: The Primacy of Proclamation in FABC Statements," *FABC Papers*, n. 64, December 1992, www.fabc.org/fabc%20papers/fabc_paper_64.pdf.

[25] ID., "Renewal of Christianity through Interreligious Dialogue," *Bijdragen: International Journal in Philosophy and Theology*, vol. 65, 2004, 131.

tying, a way to surrender one's own personal desire to be like Christ, who humbled himself "taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness; and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross."[26]

The young Indonesian Catholics can live out the spirit of *kenosis* by building the courage to engage with various communities in the public space, thus minimizing the tendency of self-ghettoization. A form of self-emptying can also be manifested by choosing the common good as the main focus. This certainly corresponds to one of the struggles that has to be faced by the Indonesians, as people now tend to perceive their identity primarily in religious terms, rather than as citizens on the basis of nationhood.

Without citizenship there is no democracy. Increasingly, the notion that "I am first of all a citizen who by chance is a religious believer" has been replaced by the conviction whereby "I am above all a religious believer who by chance is a citizen." This belief is rooted in the religious fundamentalism now virulent in the country. The current focus on human rights or representation agendas is valuable, but citizenship re-education has currently presented itself with the utmost urgency.[27]

In light of Ignatian spirituality, about finding God in all things, we are challenged to discover God's presence among us. The question is: "Could we also find Him among our brothers and

[26] "Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians," 2:7-8.

[27] B. HERRY-PRIYONO, "Citizenship Education is Key to Religious Deradicalization," *The Jakarta Post*, 10 May 2011, www.thejakartapost. com/news/2011/05/10/insight-citizenship-education-key-religious-deradicalization.html; ID., "A Nation is a Prophecy in Quest of Self-Fulfillment," *The Jakarta Post*, 16 August 2011, www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/08/16/insight-a-nation-a-prophecy-quest-self-fulfillment. html.

sisters whose faiths are different from ours? Is it possible for us as Christians to find God – who took flesh in Jesus – among our brothers and sisters who do not believe in Christ?". Charles de Foucauld (1858-1916)[28] and Louis Massignon (1883-1962)[29] gave us a testimony that their faith came to life again after their encounter with Muslims.

The third area is concerned with moral praxis. People meet not primarily as religious communities, but as individual human beings, as citizens of a particular society. We are challenged to collaborate with anyone, regardless of his or her religious background, in the promotion of common values, such as freedom, justice, love, and service. In Yogyakarta, for example, a joint academic institution for interreligious dialogue was founded in 2000 by three universities, namely the State University of Gadjah Mada, the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga, and the Christian University of Duta Wacana, with the aim of delivering joint educational programs on Interreligious Studies.

[28] Charles de Foucauld was born in Strasbourg, France. He lost his faith when he was an adolescent. During a journey in Morocco (1883-1884), he had the chance to observe the way Muslims expressed their faith. So he started to question himself, and began repeating: "My God, if you exist, let me come to know you." Ordained a priest at 43 years of age, in 1901, he settled in the Sahara desert, among Muslim Tuaregs. He wanted to be with those who were "the furthest removed, the most abandoned." He was beautified on November 13, 2005 by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (For a short life account of Charles de Foucauld, please consult: www.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/saints/ns_lit_doc_20051113_de-foucauld_en.html).

[29] Louis Massignon was a French prominent scholar of Islam in the 20th century. He was also one of the most influential thinkers on Christian-Muslim relations in the Roman Catholic community before the Second Vatican Council. He studied the life and the mystical view of Mansur Al Hallaj, a Muslim sufi (L. MASSIGNON, *The Passion of Al Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, Bollingen Foundation, Princeton, NJ 1994).

In a plural society like Indonesia, undertaking a social project without collaboration of people belonging to other religious groups will not pay off. The allegation of pursuing a hidden agenda, be it "Christianization" or "Islamization," is very common. Here is an example. Our community, called Ignatius House of Studies, has a charity institution for homeless people and street children. It is run by our young Jesuit scholastics, as a part of their extra-curricular activities. One of the programs being carried out is a class session for kids. For a long time, we noticed that, when the class session was conducted by the scholastics, accompanied by some Christian university students, the parents – almost all Muslims – hardly ever gave permission for their kids to attend the lessons. But as soon as the parents realized that Muslim girls wearing a veil were also among those managing the class session, the situation changed. Since then, the number of kids joining the program has increased.

Encouraging the Youths to Go Wander

An Indonesian saying related to the culture of Minangkabau in West Sumatra offers a metaphor for the approach that young Christians must follow in interreligious dialogue:

Go wander ... so you know how it feels to miss and where to go home
Go wander ... and you'd know the reason to come back
Go wander ... so you know how precious to be home
One more time, go wander ...
And you'd know why you have to go home
And you'd know whom you're going to miss!

As young pilgrims, Christians are challenged "to go wander" beyond their comfort zone. A call will be heard after-

ward, a call "to go home" and "to come back." Their "wandering" and "coming back" in "the journey of pilgrimage" – "reason" through theological reflection, "heart" through spirituality, and "body" through praxis – will not be without benefits. They will definitely experience self-transformation, and will work to build a bridge across religious boundaries together with their Muslim peers and with the young followers of other religions in Indonesia.