

Discussion with Sinodo Dili: The Social Role of the Church in Timor Leste

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ABSTRAK

Pelaksanaan pengabdian masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperdalam permasalahan mengenai peran Gereja di Timor Leste menghadapi masalah-masalah sosial dalam melayani dan melindungi umatnya, melalui diskusi dengan Sinodo di Dili, Timor Leste. Topik ini perlu digali karena Timor Leste merupakan negara tetangga Indonesia yang berbatasan langsung dengan Provinsi Nusa Tenggara Timur, sehingga perlu diketahui karakter dan sosial budayanya agar persahabatan antar negara dapat terjalin dengan baik, terutama dalam mengelola perbatasan negara yang mengutamakan kesejahteraan. Gereja di Timor Leste kiranya berpenampilan dengan berwajah seimbang, yaitu berpenampilan ibadat/sakramen dan juga berpenampilan sosial. Dalam rangka menggerakkan peran Gereja dalam mengatasi keadaan ataupun situasi-situasi sosial yang terjadi di kalangan umat atau masyarakat, dibutuhkan kerja sama yang baik antara hierarki (pimpinan gereja) dan awam (umat). Peranan Gereja ini tiada hentinya, mulai dari periode Timor-Portugal dan melewati masa Timor-Indonesia sampai Timor-Independen saat ini.

Kata Kunci: Peran Sosial Gereja, Sinodo Dili, Timor Leste.

ABSTRACT

The implementation of this community service aims to deepen issues regarding the role of the Church in Timor Leste in dealing with social problems in serving and protecting its people through discussions with Sinodo in Dili, Timor Leste. This topic needs to be explored because Timor Leste is a neighboring country of Indonesia. It is directly adjacent to the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur, so it is necessary to know its character and socio-culture so that friendship between countries can be carried out properly, especially in managing state borders that prioritize welfare. The Church in Timor Leste should have a balanced appearance, that is, in worship/sacrament appearances and social appearances. Good cooperation is needed between the hierarchy (church leaders) and the laity (the people) to mobilize the Church's role in overcoming social conditions or situations among the people or society. The role of the Church has been relentless, starting from the Timor-Portugal period and through the Timor-Indonesian period to the present-day Independent Timor.

Keywords: The Social Role of the Church, Sinodo Dili, Timor Leste.



INTRODUCTION

The Church in Timor Leste is the Church of the people and the nation, which is instrumental in its development. The role of the Church has been relentless, starting from the Timor-Portugal period and through the Timor-Indonesian period to the present-day Independent Timor. The fundamental function of the Church in the State of Timor Leste today cannot be seen only from the entry of Indonesia (Timor-Indonesia). Still, it must be seen from the sixteenth century. Earth Lorosa'e today is no longer Timor-Portugal or Timor-Indonesia, but Timor-Independent. The people acknowledged the existence of the Church as a target in the struggle for independence, which lasted for quite a long time (the Timor-Portugal, Timor-Indonesian, and Timor-Independent periods), approximately 500 years. This struggle is not easy. There are many obstacles and challenges to be faced. There are many issues concerning the dignity of the human person as God's creature (Hardawirjana, 1993). "Lighted by a self-revealing God, the Church can answer these difficulties, describe the real human condition, and explain its weaknesses so that its dignity and vocation can be carefully recognized (Magnis-Suseno, 1987)." (Sipa, 2019)

Today, the Church in Timor Leste takes its duties more seriously, considering various social, technical, and cultural relationships. After achieving its independence, the people found new problems as a new country amid a changing world. The Church also has to deal with social problems due to the development of a country. Striking injustices are still present in economic, cultural, and political developments. In the context of political ethics, the problems faced by the people are the state's duty (Magnis-Suseno, 1987), which is the basic obligation of the state. However, "the Church has the right, even the obligation, to proclaim justice at the social, national and international level, condemning incidents of injustice, when demanded by human rights and her salvation (Walsh & Stilwell, 1989)".

The state has recognized the struggle of the

Church, especially the Catholic Church in Timor Leste, to bear the suffering of the people and defend the rights of the people, starting from the previous period to the post-independence era. The state recognizes the social responsibility of the Church, as stated in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste:

"From a cultural and humanitarian perspective, the Catholic Church in Timor Leste has always been able to bear, with dignity, the suffering of all the people, defending them to defend their human rights (Constituição da RDTL, 2002)."

Starting from this acknowledgment, the Church can continue to serve its people. It is certainly difficult to deal with politics in a changing world as a new country. Political developments, political concepts, ideology, the Constitution, political institutions, and government functions are challenges for the people themselves. Economic, social, and political backwardness is unavoidable. The problem of injustice in the development process, politics, culture, and economy befell the people. Things like this make it difficult for many social factors to find solutions to solve a problem. Here the Church plays a prophetic and charitable role. The social concern of the Church is an open, consistent call to help in solving existing social problems.

The concern or social concern of the Church in Timor Leste is a real sign of salvation for the people of Timor Leste. The Church deals with social problems dealing with "currents and meanings of the changes taking place, in economic, cultural and political developments (KWI, 1999)", which cause injustice and glaring differences that lead to divisions in society. Today, more than in the past, the Church recognizes that its social role will gain credibility more directly from the testimony of concrete actions than its logical and internal consistency (Hardawirjana, 1993).

Based on the explanation above, the implementation of this community service is carried out to explore issues regarding the role

of the Church in Timor Leste in dealing with social problems in serving and protecting its people as a mission from a pastoral vocation. This topic needs to be explored because Timor Leste is a neighboring country of Indonesia directly adjacent to the Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur. It is necessary to know its character and socio-culture so that friendship between countries can be carried out properly, especially in managing state borders that prioritize welfare (Kennedy, 2021).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout history, the Church has responded to many social problems that often lead to injustice and the absence of peace. The Church's social involvement in solving social problems in a cultural, political, or economic system is a call to action. The Church's involvement can be seen in the period of Portuguese colonial rule, Indonesian occupation, and even in the era of Independent Timor. There is a form of social involvement as an example or real action whose history is unforgettable.

First, during the Portuguese colonial period, the Church developed the Tetum language as a language of unity. They published the Tetum Dictionary in 1885 and *Kathesimu iha Tetum no Orasaun Ruma* in 1889 (Silva, 2016). The missionaries also tried to "preach the Gospel in Tetum" (Mai Haré Timor, 2015). Thus, the Tetum language became a unifying tool that brought peace to the Portuguese Timorese people at that time.

Second, during the Indonesian colonial period, aspects of injustice and peace became fundamental for the Church to act. The Church responded to this problem and participated in the struggle to determine the fate of the Indonesian Timorese people. In 1989 Pope John Paul II, as Supreme Leader of the Catholic Church in the world, showed compassion and concern for the Timorese people because of violations of human, civil and religious rights (Carrascalão, 2002)(Diocesanos, 1989). Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo wrote to the United Nations to realize a referendum as

an alternative form of resolving the East Timor issue in 1989 (Silva, 2016). And in the post-independence period until today, the Church continues to face social problems.

There are various kinds of actions and social services carried out by the Church in Timor Leste in dealing with social problems. It has been a long time since the Church has carried out its social service duties based on the Church's Social Teachings. People have longed for it since the beginning of the entry of Portuguese missionaries in Lifau, the Portuguese colonial occupation to the Indonesian occupation. Until now, approximately 500 years of the existence of the Catholic Church in Timor Leste. Some say the Catholic Church in Timor Leste is known as the Charismatic Church, the People's Church, because in the process of evangelization, the Church proclaims the good news and can also solve are considered social problems.

METHODS

The method of writing this report is the descriptive method, namely conducting several reviews of various literature and the results of discussions with resource persons. The location of the activity is directly in Dili, Timor Leste, which borders the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur in Indonesia. This activity was carried out using a common discussion method that was carried out before the worldwide pandemic occurred, so that successfully implemented the activity.

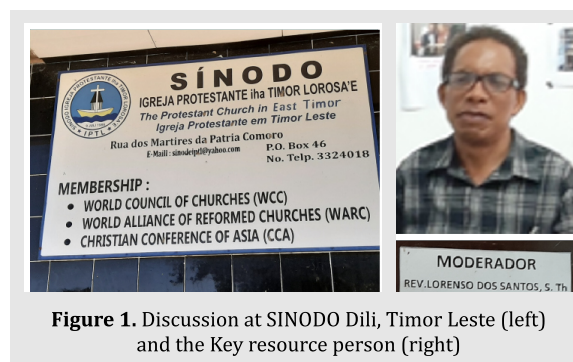


Figure 1. Discussion at SINODO Dili, Timor Leste (left) and the Key resource person (right)

The output target of this activity is to increase understanding of a topic or problem with

the Sinodo Church of Timor Leste regarding the role of all churches, both the Catholic and Protestant Churches, in the social problems of the people in Timor Leste. From the discussions carried out, the existing problems and solutions that have been carried out in helping to empower the people in Timor Leste were discussed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

At the beginning of the history of Bumi Lorosae in the XIV century, the Church arrived on the island of Bumi Lorosae. It expanded to various places to proclaim, introduce and bring God's salvation. In addition to proclaiming and bringing God's salvation to the natives at that time, the Church was also directly involved in dealing with social problems. The Church's social care and concern have become a real sign for the natives, continuing today. The role of the Church has been continuous, starting from the Timor-Portugal period and through the Timor-Indonesian period to the present-day Independent Timor. Thus, the Church is part of the historical facts of the State of Timor Leste. The existence of the Church is part of the process of forming the State of Timor Leste. It cannot separate the history of Earth Lorosae from the Church.

After achieving its independence, the people found new problems as a new country amid a changing world. The Church also has to deal with social problems due to the development of a country. Striking injustices are still present in economic, cultural, and political developments. The Church's Social Teaching is a guideline for how the Church deals with social problems such as socio-economic, cultural, political, and other social problems. The Church's Social Teaching invites individuals to see, feel, be moved, and be involved in responding to the concerns of the social situation and the situation of the times for the common good and to give appreciation for human dignity as individuals and social beings.

The Church's Social Teaching responds to phenomena or problems faced by humanity in the form of appeals, criticism, or support. Social problems drive the Church. It is asking everyone

to listen to the requests of her brothers and sisters and respond with Love. Seeing social problems, the solidarity of the Church is very important, and it is obligatory to involve oneself directly as a form of church social involvement which is full of responsibility. Therefore the Church is called to action. All this will work if justice is served and lived in honesty. The role of the Church in dealing with these social problems is not only limited to social analysis or discussion but involves directly concrete-praxis action. The spirit of Faith is translated, and the inspiration of the gospel becomes a reality.

The Church in Timor Leste is expected to be able to be involved in overcoming the challenges of today's era. The Church must also be able and increasingly recognize the importance of social analysis for effective pastoral planning. In that situation, the Eternal Word of the Gospel can be spread and draw principles or reflections, norms of decisions, and guidelines for action from the Social Teachings of the Church (KWI, 1999). In overcoming social conditions or situations that occur among the people or society, good cooperation between the hierarchy and the laity is needed. As the leader of the Church, the hierarchy is expected to be able to embrace the laity. In addition, the laity also contributed their ideas and expertise to assist the Church in its efforts to be salt and light for the state of Timor Leste. A good synergy between the hierarchy and the laity will strengthen the Church in developing its mission in the country.

Hierarchy

In Timor Leste, the role of hierarchies in dealing with social problems is generally still in mind. Most priests/pastors always have good ideas to contribute something to the nation and state. However, most of them are more often closed within the Church environment alone. In other words, there is a reluctance to get out of the comfort zone by establishing relationships with local communities of different religions, government officials, and others. The most effective way that hierarchies can do in dealing with social problems is to engage directly with

the community and government officials. The identity of the Church represented by the hierarchies be known by the public. The bad result is that the Church will not be able to spread teachings to the people and testify in their midst if their existence is still far from society. Therefore, hierarchies should open up, socialize, discuss and cooperate with the community around their residence and not distance themselves from them. It is the first step to fully diving into the scope of the state. Being able to mingle and relate well, then little by little, had a good influence on the country of Timor Leste. (Sipa, 2019)

People

At this time, the role of the laity must take precedence because their number is far greater than the number of hierarchies in the Church. The Church is not primarily a hierarchy but the entire people. The laity is called upon to convey God's Love and justice to society. In today's context, hierarchies can't struggle alone in dealing with this difficult problem. Therefore, the participation of the laity is very much needed to support the Church. It is not an easy matter, but ordinary people in Timor Leste have the potential to contribute to the good of the country. Most laypeople are scholars who have certain expertise in their respective fields. In today's context, the Church is very rich in the number of lay scholars. The Church in Timor Leste works not only to save the people and is indifferent to the interests of society in general. The teaching says that God's saving power in the world is for everyone. The Church in Timor Leste is the majority and very influential. The Church should greatly influence the nation and state, namely in dealing with today's social problems. What needs to be known is that the Church is not defined or equal to the government in solving social problems in a country. But both have full responsibility for the welfare of the community or its people. (Sipa, 2019)

Important Notes

There are two important notes for Church in Timor Leste, namely (Sipa, 2019):

- The Church is not identified with the state or government, which can solve social problems directly and technically. Or the church hierarchy cannot be equated with the President or the Prime Minister. The Church's answers to social problems are rooted in Faith, and the Church offers her social teachings. This teaching has its own very basic unity, which flows from Faith incomplete and complete salvation, from hope in the fullness of justice, and from Love which makes all humanity true brothers and sisters in Christ: it is an expression of God's Love. About the world. There is no intention to seize or seize the other party's obligations or neglect his obligations, nor was there any thought of pursuing ends that were foreign to his mission. The task of this mission is to give overall shape to the right of the Church. At the same time, their obligation to develop a social doctrine of their own and to influence society and social structures with that social doctrine through the responsibilities and duties that this social teaching entails. (Komisi Kepausan, 2009)
- The Church teaches that the government should not only be regarded as the guardian of laws and regulations. Still, it must carry out all efforts "So that through the entire legal system and institutions, the structure and administrative functions of the state improve the welfare of the public and individuals." Of course, freedom of action must be left to individual citizens and families, but as long as the public interest is guaranteed and no one is harmed. Moreover, the function of the state's rulers is to protect society and its parts; however, in protecting the rights of individual citizens, it is the weak and the poor who have to be especially concerned. The poor have nothing to defend themselves and must mainly depend on protection from the state. Workers also belong to the masses of the poor. Therefore the state has a special obligation to care for and protect them." (KWI, 1999)



Figure 2. Group Photos after Discussion

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The role of the Church in Timor Leste is very important, not only serving the sacraments but also participating in solving social problems in the form of charitable social work. The role of the Church in overcoming social conditions or situations that occur among the people or society, good cooperation between the hierarchy and the laity is needed. As the leader of the Church, the hierarchy is expected to be able to embrace the laity. In addition, the laity also contributed their ideas and expertise to assist the Church in its efforts to be salt and light for the state of Timor Leste. The existence of good synergy between the hierarchy and the laity will strengthen the Church in developing its mission in its country, imbued with the Spirit of Jesus.

The Church in Timor Leste should have a balanced appearance, that is, in worship/sacrament appearances and social appearances. Having a social face here does not only mean moving in a socially charitable manner but also becoming a cause and effect seeker, why these social problems occur, and the root causes of the problem. The Church's Social Teaching gives

a broader nuance to the issue of social service, which invites people not only to feel sorry for the victims of social problems but also invites people to jointly conduct social analysis to solve the problem as a whole.

The hope in the future is that the Church in Timor Leste will carry out what is recommended by the Church's social teachings as guidelines for serving the poor, the oppressed, and the weak, especially those who are afflicted with serious social problems. Thus, the Church's social teachings remind us that Faith is related to the real relationships of human life. Social life is a shared responsibility, and it is important to uphold human dignity as God's creation. The shared hope is that social teachings can also become real instruments to raise the Church's social awareness (hierarchy and people) of the local social situation. The Church's Social Teaching principles become the main guidelines in the common service of the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, and participation. Thus moral values, Love, and social justice are practiced according to the Word of God.

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