

## Towards the Spirit of Renewal and Openness: The Roman Catholic

### Church Reforms and the Global South

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*The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has brought change into the Roman Catholic Church. Since that day, various changes has taken place within the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic Church which has always been associated with the Western world, especially European and North American countries, is and will face the “Global South” phenomenon. Some recent studies have shown this real shift. This study will try to present how the “Global South” phenomenon occurs, and what’s the role of the Roman Catholic Church and also local Church, as well as the opportunity to grow and developed more. Discussing also how the Roman Catholic Church which has been built from a fairly long tradition for around two millennia will face the situation of its universality and also at the same time its diversities and localities as the Church becomes increasingly dominated by Catholics in the Global South region. Some of ideas are the Church should embraces Global South, increasingly develop the spirit of renewal and openness, and the most important thing is to involving the participation of local Church in South Countries to overcome social issues that occurs or we called it a Participatory Church.*

**Keywords:** *Roman Catholic Church; Global South; Participatory Church.*

#### **The Roman Catholic Church and Go South**

The Roman Catholic Church which has always been associated with the Western world, especially European and North American countries, is now shifting its orientation towards the Global South. This condition occurs especially after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) ushered in the modern age of Catholicism through reforms in church traditions and teachings, a turning point came in the global demographics of the faith as well (Rocca, Hong, & Ulick, n.d). According Vatican Statistics, the

number of baptized Catholics worldwide has grown at a faster rate than that of the world’s population, mainly in the South (Esteves, 2016).

Jenkins (2016) compared the total number of Catholics in the past few years, 1950, 1970, with the current situation, and predictions in 2050. In his presentation, Jenkins said that in 1950, the world’s Catholic population was 437 million. That number grew to 650 million in 1970. Whereas at present, the estimated number of Catholics in the world is around 1.2 billion people. In other words, the number of

Catholics in the world has doubled since 1970. Jenkins (2016) also believes that the number of Catholics in 2050 can reach 1.6 billion Catholics in the world. Based on data from Jenkins (2016), since 1980, the percentage of the number of Catholics has grown rapidly in Africa (238%) and Asia (115%).

Data from Jenkins shows that Christianity is shifting dramatically to the global south. Formerly, more than two-thirds of Catholics in the world once lived in the West. Today, more than two-thirds live outside the West, and that share is growing rapidly (Crux, 2017). Comparing that list to the same totals from the year 2000, the dawn of the 21st century, two shifts are striking: the Philippines has overtaken the United States as the world's third largest Catholic country, and Poland has disappeared from the top ten altogether in favor of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa. By this stage, seven of the ten largest Catholic nations in the world will be in the Global South (Crux, 2017).

Lucie-Smith (2014) reminds that the overall impression given by the survey is that there is a huge difference between traditionally Catholic countries in Europe, and countries in Africa and Asia. Many of these Africans and Asian countries have considerable Catholic populations, and many of them, one notes, considerable Muslim ones. It is understandable that the global church needs to keep everyone on board, and it is very clear that this is becoming more and more difficult. According Lucie-Smith (2014), in this process of discernment, we need to learn from the experience of our brethren in Africa and Asia.

This phenomenon needs special attention because it will affect how the future

of Catholics and what must be done by the Church, especially the Churches in Asia and Africa which is predicted to determine the number of catholic populations in the world.

On one side, the global south phenomenon can benefit the Roman Catholic Church to become more global. On the other hand, a growing percentage of the number of Catholics in the South presents its own threats related to Roman Catholic Church role and identity. When Roman Catholic Church becoming more universal with the development of the Global South, the diversity of traditions that have been held for 2000 years by the Roman Catholic Church may collide with various new things from the Global South region.

This research seeks to provide information related to the opportunity and threat faced by Roman Catholic Church, and what should be considered by the Church to more global and grow. We divide it to three things that the Church needs to pay attention. First, the Church needs to embrace Global South and involves their deeper participation. Second, the Roman Catholic Church must build a spirit of renewal and openness. Third, the Roman Catholic Church needs to build and implement the concept of Participatory Church.

### **Global South as a New Catholic Center of Gravity**

The distinguished Roman Catholic historian Eamon Duffy called the Second Vatican Council as the most significant religious event of the last 500 years. It changed the Roman Catholic Church more than anything else that has happened since Luther nailed his 95 theses up on the church door in Wittenburg.

The council changed Christianity more than any event in the last 500 years – except, perhaps the French revolution; and the council was really the start of the Catholic Church’s long-delayed grown-up response to the challenge of the enlightenment (Brown 2012).

Pope John XXIII called for the institution’s renewal and more interaction with the modern world. As a result of Vatican II, the Catholic Church opened its windows onto the modern world, updated the liturgy, gave a larger role to laypeople, introduced the concept of religious freedom and started a dialogue with other religions. The council transformed the church from an exclusive to an inclusive institution (Poggioli, 2012). The council, in its decree on the liturgy, also opened the Mass to symbols and traditions of non-Western cultures, permitting the displacement of Latin with vernacular languages. This reconciliatory move has played a part in the remarkable growth of the church in Africa and parts of Asia (O’Malley, 2012).

Decades after the Second Vatican Council, on 2013, Pope Francis elected. Although he had not himself witnessed the proceedings of the council in Rome, this pope came from a continent where the vision of this reform council has been consistently accepted and implemented. Since the very first moment he has introduced a fundamentally new style in Rome, a pastoral style of leadership that the faithful had so long longed for. He set the course of renewal for the church with stirring sermons and concrete signs, such as renouncing inherited symbols of power like titles and the papal apartments. He made his priorities plain when he made the destination of his first visit

outside Rome the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, a refuge for people fleeing war and economic deprivation (Weisner, 2018).

In many respects, Francis took up the interchurch reform projects and sociopolitical positions of Pope Paul VI. The claim that the church must be a church for the poor and the need for reform of the church structure go hand in hand with Francis. This was the core of the intervention he made before the papal election during the consistory of cardinals March 9, 2013. He said then that church reform and social reform, ecumenism ad intra and ecumenism ad extra belong together. Shortly after his election, Francis announced a reform of the Roman Curia. To aid him in this, he appointed a Council of Cardinals with representatives from Europe, Asia, Latin America, Africa and North America. However, examining the list of men Francis has been appointing as new cardinals around the world shows that cultural diversity is being promoted (Weisner, 2018).

Nowadays, the Vatican expert John Allen said that the South is increasingly the center of energy of Christianity. Therefore, there is a strong current that would regard a Pope from the developing world as the most suitable leader now (Arie, 2005). Christianity, particularly Catholicism, are booming in the Global South demographically. The rise is so great, in fact, that Christendom’s so-called center of gravity - the point on the globe where roughly the same number of believers live to the north, south, east, and west - is shifting ever further from Rome, not to mention Jerusalem, where Christianity started (Arie, 2005).

Drilling down, the data offer the latest confirmation of the emergence of

the developing world as the new center of gravity for Catholicism. According to Vatican population numbers released in April 2017, the developing world are now the largest Catholic countries in the world, with their combined totals accounting for more than half of all Catholics on the planet (Crux, 2017).

The Roman Catholic Church worldwide is passing through an era of historical transformation, a decisive shift in numbers towards the Global South - to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Many are aware of this trend as an abstract fact, but we are scarcely coming to terms with the implications for Church life, for the composition of Church leadership, and for its future policies. A southward-looking Church may be a vibrant and flourishing body, but it might pose some challenges for Catholics of the older Euro-American world (Jenkins, 2017).

The fact of that geographical shift is clear enough. A century ago, the European continent accounted for almost two thirds of the world's Catholics. By 2050, that proportion will fall to perhaps a sixth. In that not too far future year, the Church's greatest bastions will be in Latin America (perhaps 40%), in Africa (25%), and Asia (12%) (Jenkins, 2017). Actually, those numbers understate the southern predominance, because a sizable number of Catholics living in Europe or North America will themselves be of migrant stock - Nigerians or Congolese in Europe, Mexicans in the United States. A church born long ago on the soil of Asia and Africa is returning home (Jenkins, 2017).

### **Methodology**

The article is conducted using a

qualitative method, with prior publications serving as the basis of the facts and arguments presented. The focus of this article is mainly on measuring the reason why the Malaysian government act or does not act. To understand that, the direction of domestic politics must be assessed. Due to its strong connection with the decision taken by the Malaysian government, public policy analysis underlines the big conceptual framework of this article.

### **The Opportunities and Threats for the Roman Catholic Church**

On 13th March 2013, surprisingly, a papal conclave elected Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio from Buenos Aires, Argentina, as the successor of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI who has resigned on the 28th February 2013, a rare event in papal succession. Interestingly, he is the first Jesuit Pope, the first from the Americas, the first from the Southern Hemisphere, the first pope from outside Europe since the Syrian Gregory III from the 8th century, and the first pope who chose Francis as his papal name in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, a patron saint for the poor in Catholicism. Since the Pope Francis' Pontificate, the first Non-European and the first Latin-American pope, as the new head of the most influential religious transnational actor, Carletti (2015) highlighted that it seems to be inaugurating a new stage of the Roman Catholic Church action in the world, characterized by the ideological displacement, less Eurocentric and more leaned to the emerging periphery, in accordance with the current international system rearrangement demands. During his pontificate, Pope Francis is elaborating a diplomatic displacement of the

Holy See, approximating the central structure of the Roman Catholic Church, traditionally linked to international elites, to the world periphery.

The word “peripheries” seemed to be a framework of thought and action throughout the papal period of Pope Francis. According to Parolin (2014), since his episcopate in Buenos Aires, Pope Francis has realized that the “ends of the earth” are not only about places, but also and above all people, as he said in his intervention during the pre-Conclave General Congregation meetings of the Cardinals on 9 March 2013, “The Church is called to come out of herself and to go to the peripheries, not only geographically, but also the existential peripheries: the mystery of sin, of pain, of injustice, of ignorance and indifference to religion, of intellectual currents, and of all forms of misery”.

However, on the other hand, we need to realize that the Roman Catholic Church has been built from a fairly long tradition, especially in its development for around two millennia which has shaped the identity of the Roman Catholic Church. The terminology of the “Roman Catholic Church” refers to a Church who acknowledges the spiritual primacy of the Bishop of Rome as Pope over all of the bishops in the world according to the sacred tradition beliefs that Jesus of Nazareth entrusted the authority to his apostle Simon Peter (ca. 1 BC – 67 CE), who became the first Bishop of Rome, an office now known as the papacy. This terminology is used to differentiate the Roman Catholic Church, also known as Latin Church, with the other Christian belief systems, such as Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Anglican,

and the other Christian denominations. With approximately 1.6 billion followers, the Roman Catholic Church is recognized as one of the major Christian denominations, as well as the largest religion in the world.

As the various data confirm that, quoting Jenkins in 2017, The Roman Catholic Church worldwide is passing through an era of historical transformation, a decisive shift in numbers towards the Global South, thus of course the opening of opportunities for the Roman Catholic Church to further universalize the Catholicism throughout the world, including to areas included in the Global South category, should be a matter of concern by the Church. However, the challenges that exist with the growing Catholicism in the Global South also requires the Church to prepare for changes in the face of new global reality. On the other hand, it should also be noted that there is also the possibility that there will be a threat that with the Roman Catholic Church becoming more universal with the development of the Global South, the diversity of traditions that have been held for 2000 years by the Roman Catholic Church may collide with various new things from the Global South region, where the Catholic population is growing nowadays.

Then, what are the things that have been and can be done by The Roman Catholic Church relating to the development of Catholicism that leads to Global South? Mainly, we also discuss how the Pope’s role as Catholic leader is related to this phenomenon.

### **The Church Embraces Global South and Global South’s Participation in the Church**

Pope Francis’ focus on the “peripheries”



clearly could be seen from various things during his pontificate, among others: apostolic journey, and new cardinals' nomination. During his six years of pontificate, Pope Francis nominated 70 new electoral cardinals that are renewing the Cardinals College of the Catholic (in Catholic Hierarchy, 2019), and in the nomination of those cardinals, there were also many surprises about the names of bishops and/or archbishops who received the "red hats". In Asia-Pacific, for example, the surprise was received by Laos, Pakistan, Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Tonga (Polynesia Islands), Haiti, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, and Myanmar. Some of those Asia-Pacific countries even get their cardinals for the first time in history, or get their cardinals back after years of waiting for their new cardinals.

Furthermore, Pope Francis' focus to the "peripheries" clearly could be seen from the apostolic journey. Since the beginning of his pontificate in 2013, Pope Francis already made apostolic journey to Brazil (2013), Turkey, Albania, South Korea, Holy Land in 2014; Kenya, Uganda, the Central African Republic, Cuba, Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Sri Lanka, and the Philippines in 2015; Sweden, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Poland (31st World Youth Day), Armenia, Lesvos (Greece), Mexico in 2016; Myanmar, Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt in 2017; Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Ireland (World Meeting of Families in Dublin), Geneva (Ecumenical Pilgrimage), Chile, Peru in 2018; Panama (the 34th World Youth Day), United Arab Emirates, Morocco, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Romania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius in 2019, Thailand and

Japan (November 2019), and also already have a plan to visit Indonesia, Timor Leste, and Papua New Guinea on September 2020, but most probably would be cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. By considering those trips, we have the impression that the Pope's preference regarding the periphery did not remain just rhetoric. The countries he visited are countries either on Europe's periphery, or in the so-called Southern region of the world, characterized by a past or present conflicts and exclusion from the global political and economic center (Carletti 2015).

Besides, according Carletti (2015), solidarity is also pointed out by Francis as a fundamental element that should be present in all global relations, and as the antidote to the current economic system, that generates exclusion, poverty and the discard culture amid most of the world population. Pope Francis does not miss an occasion to call the attention towards the structural causes of poverty, violence and planetary inequality. His appeal to change can be found in all documents and speeches pronounced since the beginning of his pontificate. There are several papal documents which specifically highlight the various issues related to the challenges experienced by the region that included into the category of "the peripheries", such as the **Encyclical of "Laudato Si"** (meaning: "Praise Be To You!"), an encyclical calling for care to the earth, nature, and the environment, our common home; **Apostolic Exhortation of "Querida Amazonia"** (meaning: "Beloved Amazon"), a 2020 post-synodal apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis, written in response to the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region, held in

Rome in October 2019; **Apostolic Exhortation of “Christus Vivit”** (meaning: “Christ is Alive!”), a 2019 post-synodal apostolic exhortation dedicated to Young People and to the entire People of God, an apostolic exhortation that written in response to the Synod of Bishops for the Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment, held in Rome in October 2018.

Along with the increasing number of Catholics in the Global South region, the participation of various individuals who can represent Global South is increasingly visible in the Church hierarchy universally. In the first place, of course Pope Francis can be the right model, as stated in several previous sections, namely as the first Non-European and the first Latin-American pope. And in his pontificate, Pope Francis encouraged the Church to move to embrace the Global South or what is often referred to as the periphery. Internally, Pope Francis also attempted to reform the Roman Curia by forming the Council of Cardinals, on April 13, 2013, exactly one month since he was elected to the conclave, of which, before some changes in October 2018, 4 out of the 9 members, including the coordinator, were cardinals who came from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which are H.E. Oscar Andrés Cardinal Rodríguez Maradiaga, S.D.B. from Tegucigalpa, Honduras, as the Coordinator, H.E. Oswald Cardinal Gracias from Bombay, India, H.E. Francisco Javier Cardinal Errázuriz Ossa, P. Schönstatt from Santiago, Chile, and H.E. Laurent Cardinal Monsengwo Pasinya from Kinshasa, Congo Democratic Republic.

Since April 2013, The Council of Cardinals has served to assist the Holy Father

in the governance of the Universal church and to draw up a plan for the revision of the Apostolic Constitution of Pastor Bonus on the Roman Curia. Various efforts carried out by Pope Francis have also been explained in the previous section.

Some other names that can be few examples to show the increasing participation of Global South’s representation in the universal Church hierarchy are H.E. Luis Antonio G. Cardinal Tagle from the Philippines, and H.E. Peter Kodwo Appiah Cardinal Turkson from Ghana. Not to mention Robert Cardinal Sarah who serves as the Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments who came from Guinea, Africa.

Cardinal Tagle is a relatively young cardinal from Asia and highly respected in the universal Church, who in late 2019 was appointed by Pope Francis to be the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, one of the important bodies in the Roman Curia. Previously, he had served as the Archbishop of Manila, and also as the presidents of Caritas International, a federation of Catholic relief, development, and social service organizations, and of the Catholic Biblical Federation. On 1 May 2020, Pope Francis promoted Cardinal “Chito” Tagle, who also known as “Francis of Asia”, to the rank of cardinal bishop, the highest rank in the cardinal level in the Roman Catholic Church, making him the first Filipino and Asian to hold that title.

Meanwhile, Cardinal Turkson is a cardinal from Ghana who currently serves as the Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development since 31 August 2016, having previously been appointed as

the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace since 24 October 2009. The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is a newly-built body which is established on 1 January 2017 as a result of the fusion of 4 bodies in the Roman Curia, which are: (1) the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum”, (2) the Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, (3) the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and (4) the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. This was also part of the efforts of Pope Francis to reform the Roman Curia.

According to the examples mentioned above, we may see that the presence of the Catholic leaders from the Global South, for example from the Philippines, Congo Democratic Republic –the two countries which are listed in the top ten countries in the world that are predominantly Catholic from the Global South region– as well as from Chile, Ghana, Guinea, India, Honduras, and so on, show the increasingly represented Global South in the ranks of the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church universally, especially in the Roman Curia. Their presence can be a bridge to channel the aspirations and needs for both of Catholics in the Global South region, as well as a bridge for the Roman Catholic Church to globally embrace the dynamics of development in the Global South region. The presence of Catholic leaders from the Global South region proportionally in the ranks of the Roman Curia that allows them to correspond closely with the Vatican, will certainly be better for the Roman Catholic Church in responding to the growth of the Global South as a new center of growth for Catholics in the world.

## **The Spirit of Renewal and Openness**

In relation to the Church, a peacebuilding church is grounded in the conviction that peacebuilding is not optional but is integral to our Christian vocation and, therefore, central to the mission of the Church. For bishops and priests, peacebuilding is an integral part of their roles as prophets, teachers, and pastors (Powers, 2017). An analysis of the Church in Sudan’s peacebuilding efforts offers a nuanced understanding of the Church’s role. According to this analysis, Church leaders were “peace bearers” as much as they were “peacebuilders”: Church leaders did not consider themselves to be ‘peacebuilders’. They considered themselves pastors and shepherds, whose first obligation was to reflect Christ’s fidelity to the Church through their own fidelity to the people. As pastors, they created and sustained communities of faith that could absorb suffering, embody forgiveness and reconciliation, maintain hope, and advocate for justice. As shepherds, they gave voice to the voiceless and spoke truth to power (Ashworth & Ryan, 2013).

As an “alternative space” amidst conflict, the Church provides humanitarian aid not as a for the sake of Christ, the duty to be present wherever human suffering exists and to make heard the silent cry of the innocent who suffer persecution”– the bishops message was intended social service agency but as a form of accompaniment of the poor and suffering. The Church is a community of care whose presence amidst violence can absorb suffering and sustain eschatological hope because of its theology of the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection (Ashworth & Ryan, 2013). So, in the context of the development of the Global South, the



Church must play a vital role in being able to mingle and become peace-bearers - the focus is twofold in the effort to associate with Global South: befriend with the Global South and be involved in the context of peace. This fact has actually been done since long ago by the Roman Catholic Church before Pope Francis.

Building on the contributions of his predecessors since the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis has promoted a culture of encounter and dialogue as a means to grow peace in the world. This attitude cannot solely take place amongst Catholics; if it is to be truly transformative, it must reach across economic, cultural, social, and religious lines that too often divide the human family and alienate us from the rest of the ecological world (Hrynkow, 2019).

Troy (2016) mentioned various involvement examples of the Roman Catholic Church in the global diplomacy, in the second half of the twentieth century, such as, (1) Pope John XXIII's engagement in a peaceful solution of the Cuban missile crisis (Flamini in Troy, 2016); (2) the Solidarnosc movement, which contributed to Poland's democratization (Byrnes in Troy, 2016); (3) the Philippine people's power revolution, which led to the ousting of dictator Ferdinand Marcos (Astorga; Youngblood in Troy, 2016); (4) the Holy See's mediation in the Beagle channel conflict between Argentina and Chile (Laudy; Princen in Troy, 2016); (5) reconciliation efforts in new democracies or countries in transition, such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa (Philpott in Troy, 2016); and (6) peace-building fieldwork during the civil war in Mozambique and elsewhere by the Catholic lay community of St. Egidio (Batlogg

in Troy, 2016).

Another milestones that could mentioned are the pontific mediation between Cuba and the United States (Carletti, 2015; Kuivala 2017) the formal acknowledgment of the State of Palestine, among other international affairs (Carletti, 2015), and in honoring human dignity, building solidarity, and creating a culture of encounter, Pope Francis also take a significant role on the refugees and migrant issues, as well as Rohingya issue (Guzik, 2018). Another important milestone is the apostolic journey of Pope Francis to the United Arab Emirates which was historical as the first ever visit by a Pontiff to the Arabian Peninsula for the first time and at the same time signed a historic document called A Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb. According to Carletti (2015), the Holy See, the governing organ of the Roman Catholic Church, is the only religious institution in the world that has the prerogative of maintaining diplomatic relations with states.

Cited from the Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together as made by Pope Francis and Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, the Roman Catholic Church agreed that:

“We affirm also the importance of awakening religious awareness and the need to revive this awareness in the hearts of new generations through sound education and an adherence to moral values and upright religious teachings. In this way we can confront tendencies that are individualistic, selfish, conflicting, and also address

radicalism and blind extremism in all its forms and expressions.... Dialogue, understanding and the widespread promotion of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and of living together peacefully would contribute significantly to reducing many economic, social, political and environmental problems that weigh so heavily on a large part of humanity..... The concept of citizenship is based on the equality of rights and duties, under which all enjoy justice. It is therefore crucial to establish in our societies the concept of full citizenship and reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities which engenders feelings of isolation and inferiority. Its misuse paves the way for hostility and discord; it undoes any successes and takes away the religious and civil rights of some citizens who are thus discriminated against.” (Vatican, 2019).

The National (2019) describe that Human Fraternity Document pledges to uphold the following principles, such as: (1) the principle of the authentic teachings of religions are remain rooted in the values of peace, to defend the values of mutual understanding, human fraternity and harmonious coexistence; (2) to respect the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action; (3) to respect that justice is based on mercy in order to achieve a dignified life for every human being; (4) principle of dialogue, understanding, and the widespread promotion of a culture of tolerance, acceptance of others and of living together peacefully to contribute in reducing many

economic, social, political and environmental problems; (5) principle of dialogue among believers; (6) the protection of places of worship; (7) that terrorism is deplorable and threatens the security of people; (8) the concept of full citizenship is based on the equality of rights and duties, justice, as well as to reject the discriminatory use of the term minorities; (9) principle of good relations between East and West; (10) the right of women to education and employment, and their freedom of political rights; (11) the protection of the fundamental rights of children; (12) the protection of the rights of the elderly, the weak, the disabled, and the oppressed.

### **The Participatory Church**

Vatican II (1962-1965), especially with the rediscovery of the church’s image as God’s people, triggered the birth of a participatory church (Utama, 2010). The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences (FABC) (in Utama, 2010) develops an understanding that participatory churches have several meanings.

First, the church in which all special gifts that have been given by the holy spirit to all believers - lay people, religious people, and clergy. Second, the church is an alliance of those who have authentic joint participation and responsibility, where all its members are trained to have attitudes and actions to really listen and to engage in active dialogue, to fall apart to be able to discern, and jointly bear witness, and joint responsibility. Third, the church is able to participate creatively in the dialogue of life and faith.

In the Asian context (or even African), where the reality of poverty is the experience

of the majority of the population, being a participatory church cannot but also have to be a “church of the poor”. The church will truly become a “church of the poor” if it increasingly has greater involvement with the lives of its people; by being with the poor; and with its efforts to carry out programs for truly human development and development; with their involvement in the struggle of their nation to fight for justice and self-empowerment; by emphasizing rich church members will only become full members of the “church of the poor” by fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations to bring about justice and love for the poor (BIMA I in Utama, 2010).

According to Ferdinand M. Mangibin, The phrase of “the Church of the Poor” was first used by the Pope John XXIII in his inaugural address to the Fathers of the Vatican Council in 1962. The Catholic Social Teachings of the Church as one of the main sources of understanding the “Church of the Poor” (Mangibin, 2009). And, it also needs to be understood that the term “Church of the Poor” cannot be compared to what is called the Liberation Theology, which was coined by Gustavo Gutierrez and clearly by the Roman Catholic Church was not accepted (Vatican, n.d.).

In a participatory church, according to the FABC (in Utama, 2010), then:

1. The laity is not an extension of the clergy, or merely the observant executor of the apostolic work of the clergy, but a full member of the church with all their rights and responsibilities, and mature to carry out the duties and functions of leadership in the church.
2. Women have the opportunity to play

their role both in service tasks and decision-making processes. Church members should be given roles according to their competence and not based on their gender.

3. Young people are accepted as partners in the effort to achieve justice and are allowed to take part in the decision making process and in the decision making itself.
4. It is demanded that clergy receive education and training so that they can truly serve and work in teams.
5. Family life has a central place, because the family is a “house church” where love, peace, truth, freedom, attention and concern for the poor and destitute, faith in God, and hope for His goodness and freeing power, sense responsibility, and sacrifice.
6. Religious people, both women and men, should increasingly develop attitudes to be part of the particular church, of which they belong.
7. Politics must be understood as an activity which is full of objectives to achieve mutual equality. All members of God’s people are called to involve themselves in politics in that sense, because the task of introducing the evangelical values and the kingdom of God, namely the values of love and justice, into the political, economic, cultural, and social world in Asia is a necessity of the gospel.

Utama (2010) concluded that it was appropriate for the church to imitate Jesus himself: to be present in the midst of society, to

build solidarity among them, and to proclaim the great work of God through the witness of his life. This is possible if the church is not only busy with liturgical affairs and devotional devotions. The church should also defend the marginalized weak, uphold human rights, care for ecological issues, and active involvement in creating a more humane society.

## **Conclusion**

The Roman Catholic Church which has always been associated with the Western world, especially European and North American countries, is now shifting its orientation towards the Global South. This phenomenon needs special attention because it will affect how the future of the Roman Catholic Church, especially on its identities, its organizational structure in Roman Curia, the involvement of the Global South leaders on the leadership of the universal Church, and ultimately the combination of those aspects would affect how the Roman Catholic Church addressing the global as well as regional issues and challenges in the future. Responding to this phenomenon, there are opportunities and threats that might occur and need to be managed properly so that in the end it can help the Roman Catholic Church to become more global and grow.

On one side, the Roman Catholic Church has greater chance to grow even more, especially in regions that are new centers of growth for Catholics in the world, namely in the Global South. On the other hand, the various challenges that will be faced are how the Roman Catholic Church faithfully and carefully preserves the identity and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church which has been

running for 2000 years, while at the same time absorbing the various cultures found in the Global South regions.

Situated in such a condition, the Roman Catholic Church needs to pay attention to several aspects. First, the Church needs to involve more participation from the Global South region in the universal order of the Roman Catholic Church, both through involving Catholic religious leaders in the hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the Roman Curia, so they can become a bridge between the people in the Global South region with the Vatican and vice versa.

Second, the Roman Catholic Church must build a spirit of renewal and openness because the Church itself is basically and essentially a community that is present in the midst of society, country, and the world. The Roman Catholic Church cannot be separated, or cannot escape, from it, and therefore must play an active and vital role in the various situations and problems faced by mankind, especially in the Global South regions. In addition, from a spiritual point of view, it also needs to be noted that the Roman Catholic Church must present a spirit of renewal and openness through efforts to develop peace in the midst of humanity.

Third, related to what was stated earlier in the second part, the Roman Catholic Church needs to build and implement the concept of Participatory Church because the Church is actually living and growing in the context of the community, including in various problems faced by the community. With the development of Participatory Church, the Roman Catholic Church can actually be present, through particular churches (local churches) and

Catholics, and respond to various problems faced by the community which is to become a “Church for the Poor”.

Through those three aspects, the Roman Catholic Church is expected to be able to carry out policies based on aspirations and are relevant to the specific condition in the Global South. Aspects that we mentioned also provide more opportunity for the Church to build good relations and establish a spirit of universalism with other countries, especially in the Global South, by advocating the active participation of the local Church to overcome social problems they face independently with the supervision of the Roman Catholic Church under the primacy of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome.

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