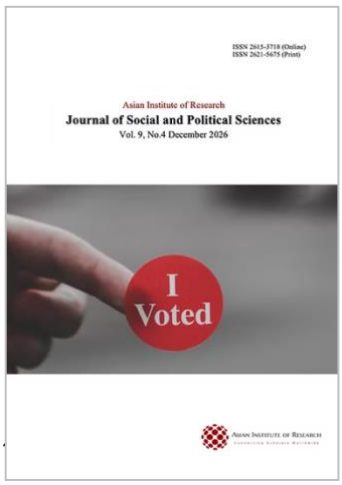


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Exploring the Transformative Vision: A Critical Review of the Synods of the Ruteng Catholic Diocese in Indonesia

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Abstract
This article examines the relationship between religion and social transformation in local contexts. It also explores religion's transformative vision within a constellation of social change by analyzing the meaning of the three synods' visions of the Catholic Church in the Ruteng Diocese, Indonesia. The primary assumption underlying these ideas and statements is that religion sees itself as an agent and source of energy for social transformation. Therefore, this study attempts to answer a fundamental question about "how religion seeks to present itself as a force for social transformation by using case studies of synods from the Catholic Church of the Ruteng Diocese." This study uses a constructive qualitative approach as its sole method for answering this question. This method mainly relies on the primary data from the archives and documents of the synods.

Keywords: Church, Synod, Ruteng Diocese, Indonesia, Public, Economy, Political, Transformation

1. Introduction

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) announced the Catholic Church's willingness to act as a social force, turning sorrow and anxiety into hope and joy in the world. Gaudium et Spes (GS) 1 states, *"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, specifically those who are poor or afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ."* With this fundamental intention, the Church intends to rediscover the authentic meaning of its presence in the world. Furthermore, it wants to expand its presence beyond mere ecclesiology and consolidate its social presence through real action for humans (Cockayne, 2019).
The Church is sacramentally a mysterious reality: "*The Catholic teaching about the Church is rich and deep. The Church, in Christ, is like a sacrament — a sign and instrument, that is of communion with God and unity among all men (LG 71)"* and wants to emphasize itself as part of the social capital accumulation in accelerating constructive transformation. It also rearticulates itself inclusively and simultaneously as egalitarian (Brown & Brown, 2003). On the one hand, the church wants to present itself as a religious institution open to people. On the other hand, it also seeks to address people's various problems through its experience (Gennip, 2023).

As part of the Universal Church, the Diocese of Ruteng in Eastern Indonesia has been on its journey for more than a century. Like other Catholic worship centers in the local setting, it has also grown alongside, or in the leading spirit of, the Second Vatican Council. For approximately the last seven decades, it has tried to be present with all the social problems in the local community.

This Diocese faces two essential dimensions concerning its presence: its calling (mission) and questions. In the first aspect, the Church carries a 'missionary call' to present itself as part of society, with its unique challenges and struggles. In the second aspect, it faces several complex social questions. These two aspects prompted the Diocese to reformulate itself both missiologically and sociologically. This context has a unique background narrative regarding the development of pastoral-missionary policies and options for pastoral action. Micheal M. van Wyk stated that*...the Church is an organization that strives for excellence in service toward members and should be managed according to specific business principles and practices relevant to the contemporary era (2017: 4).* At this point, the transformation is a process of missionary engagement that forms the Diocese's new identity.

This Church is present to change the social world and asserts itself as a community willing to initiate the transformation process. Transformation is the principal value in the missionary vision. The Diocese uses various media to realize this transformative vision. The Synod is one of the only tools used to express its vision through involvement in the social plan. The Synod's momentum reflected the Diocese's efforts to identify the primary concern for accelerating social transformation.

This study specifically reflects the Diocese's vision to transform local communities through the synods' agreement. The study uses the Church's archives and synodal documents as the primary data source. Academic literature supports these preliminary data. This study also includes several key sections: a brief overview of religion and social vocation, the location's historical background, an in-depth examination of the synod's transformative vision through its three moments, conceptual contributions, and brief closing notes.

2. An Overview of Religion, the Church, and Social Vocations

The discussions about religion and its social vocations face at least two positions (Droogers, 2011; Beyer, 2006, 2013). First, some people still view it as merely an individual reality (Mitchell, 2005). As a spiritual belief, it is a very personal matter. Secondly, for a long time, supporters of secularism have excluded and distanced religion from social life, calling it an incompetent institution dealing with social, political, and developmental problems. They classify this issue academically and place it in social development policies.

Social scientists reveal that religion and society are two realms and dimensions that inevitably intersect. Society undoubtedly influences religion at certain levels and in certain situations. On the other hand, it strongly determines the dynamics of a society or social community (Assimeng, 2014; Mellor & Shilling, 2014). Ehisienmen Charles states:

> "Religion can, at times, be a powerful agent for social change. It is probably considered relatively conservative, with the least impact on its followers. However, it is not a social institution that is completely separate from the rest of society. At some point in history, it has promoted dramatic social change." (p. 38, 2011)

However, sociologists (sociologists of religion) have convincingly introduced and defended religion as a social institution that functions in social terms (Altglas & Wood, 2018). They recognize religion as an organized, integrated set of beliefs, behaviors, and norms. They also claim it focuses on basic social needs and values. Therefore, religion is part of the universal human culture because it pays intense attention to humanitarian issues (Shah et al., 2010).

At this point, religion will become institutionalized in the pursuit of solutions to social problems. This involvement reveals its identity as a savior for humanity (Malachuk, 2010; McCutcheon, 2916). Another statement is that it always prioritizes pioneering social transformation in the surroundings. Therefore, religion's social mission is inherent in its entire context and content. Religion is defined by its functions in social life. In this context, it is related to actions with a social dimension. It connects this social function to the coherence of belief systems, values, and morality at every step of solving problems that entangle humans.

The social vocation of religion will define its functional dimensions in the daily struggle of human life, as a network of symbols, myths, and rituals (Taylor, 2008). It also shapes experiences through social and human dimensions. It becomes part of, and influences, social structures beyond its existence. Hence, its functional element touches on ordinary and extraordinary social problems and dynamics (Riesebrodt, 2010; Wach, 2019).

Religion can express its main concerns through principles of social presence and action. It does not claim a dominant role in initiating and supporting pro-humanitarian social transformation. Several experiences and studies show that no single institution can solve a series of complex human problems.

The Church's internal paradigm shift through the Second Vatican Council has direct and progressive implications for its external presence in human society (McEvoy, 2016). The council also strengthened the Church as a communion, but this self-awareness later had a significant social dimension. In addition, this shift is fundamental for the Church because it touches the center of contemporary human social anxiety (Hovorun, 2015). In other words, Vatican II's primary concern in the social and civilized spheres inherently broadens and deepens the meaning of the Church's mission in life (Andersen & Jensen, 2019).

The council has sparked various movements and changes in local Church contexts worldwide (McGreevy, 1994; Tosi & Vitale, 2009). These worship centers actively seek a new identity by developing a formula for direct involvement in the social sphere. Micheal M. van Wyk stated *the role and influence of the local Church in the 21st century. Scholars define 'religiosity' as a multifaceted social dynamic phenomenon because it cannot be easily defined or conceptualized. This phenomenon demands a rigorous scholarly endeavor, which, in turn, requires a multidimensional reflection (2017: 2).* The Church strengthens a form of ecclesiology that is open to current social and humanitarian questions and challenges. This context reveals its normative identity as a religious and spiritual community. It begins by explicitly engaging with social narratives of humanity that emerged in diverse and rapid ways (Hinze, 2016).

1. A Brief Description of the Historical Background of the Ruteng Diocese

The Diocese of Ruteng is located in western Flores Island, known as the 'Catholic Island.' Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim country. The Diocese covers 7,136.04 km2 and comprises three regencies: Manggarai, West Manggarai, and East Manggarai. Furthermore, it includes several islands, namely Komodo, Rinca, Mules, Longos, and 40 other small islands. This region has relatively high rainfall, with about 5-7 months of it falling each year. It is also the country's largest Catholic diocese and has sent hundreds of missionaries worldwide. For more than a century, this region has drawn missionaries from Europe. The history of the Ruteng Diocese can be divided into several phases.[1]

The first phase is the period of the Jesuit missionaries (before 1914), which was marked by the resumption of the Catholic mission in Flores.[2] In historical notes, Mgr. Petrus Francken, Apostolic Prefect of the Dutch East Indies, domiciled in Batavia (Jakarta), sent Fr. J.P.N. Sanders to Larantuka, East Flores, in 1860.[3] The pioneering missionary began the pastoral movement on the island by establishing a Catholic community in Larantuka, which had existed since the Portuguese era, and spreading the faith to other areas in Flores (Steenbrink, 2003).

This fact paved the way for the church's growth in western Flores. History records that on June 14-19, 1911, Father Engbers, SJ, a permanent priest for Sikka, departed for Labuan Bajo in Manggarai, West Flores, aboard the Captain de Kock, and also visited a Catholic from Larantuka who worked as a pearl diver. There, Pastor Engbers baptized the children of the Larantuka family who work and live there. As part of the broader missionary work in Manggarai, during the missionaries' visit to Labuan Bajo, they stopped to carry out pastoral activities in Reo and Ruteng. The opening of new missions on September 1, 1911, and August 5, 1912, explained this achievement. They opened a school in Labuan Bajo on January 12, 1911. On May 17, 1912, as the forerunner of the Church in Manggarai (Ruteng Diocese), Father Henrikus Looijmans, SJ, baptized the first Manggarai people to convert to

[1]Some of the information regarding the history of the Ruteng Diocese Church is taken from an unpublished book entitled "72 Tahun Agama Katolik Dioses Ruteng Kabupaten Manggarai" (English translation: 72 Years of Catholicism in the Ruteng Diocese of Manggarai Regency", Source category: Ruteng Diocese archives. The author is grateful to Pastor Max Haber for providing the primary archives for this research.
[2] The author summarizes information about the history of the Ruteng Diocese from the *Buku Kenangan Tahbisan Uskup Ruteng, Mgr. Siprianus Hormat* (Book of Memories of the Ordination of the Bishop of Ruteng, Mgr. Siprianus Hormat." (March 19, 2020), 24-46.
[3] Fr. Sanders was one of the central pioneer missionaries on the island of Flores. Karel Steenbrink explicitly mentions his name. See Orang-Orang Katolik Di Indonesia, 1808-1942 (Penerbit Ledalero, Maumere, 2006), 133. Yosef Maria Florisan translated this book from *Catholics in Indonesia 1808-1942: Documented History Volume 1: A Modest Recovery 1808-1903* (KITLV Press, the Netherlands, 2003).

Catholicism in Reo, including Katarina (Arbero), Henricus, Agnes Mina, Caecilia Weloe, and Helena Loekoe. They were baptized as adults and received the sacrament of holy marriage the same day (Steenbrink & Aritonang, 2008).

The second phase refers to the mission's situation before the two world wars. On September 16, 1913, the Holy See in Rome established the Apostolic Prefecture of the Lesser Sunda Islands, except Flores (Camnahas, 2020). On October 8, 1913, the Vatican appointed Father Noyen as Apostolic Prefect of the Sunda Islands. In 1914, the Vatican incorporated Flores Island into this Apostolic Prefecture. During this period, Mgr. Noyen made Ndona (now the Archdiocese of Ende) the Prefectural Center. This decision reflected Ndona's strategic location and its potential to develop the church's mission in the Nusa Tenggara Region (Gunawan, 2020).

Nevertheless, World War I affected the mission, which forced several missionaries to return to their home countries in Europe. Several African countries expelled them. They were later sent to Indonesia, including Flores Island, where Fr. Bernhard Glanemann, SVD, was stationed (Steenbrink, 2013). This situation brought blessings to Manggarai. This region had received visits only in the past, but since September 23, 1920, it has been a permanent mission area. Therefore, the region records September 23, 1920, as its founding day, and Ruteng became the area's central station. Fr. Glanemann arrived on March 6, 1921, and worked alone for several months before being joined by missionaries from the Congregation for the Society of the Word of God (SVD, Societas Verbi Divini), including Fr. Frans de Lange, SVD, and Fr. Willem Janssen (Camnahas, 2007).
The third phase established the Apostolic Vicariate (1951-1961). Pope Pius XII decreed the division of the Small Sunda Islands into three new vicariates: Ende, Larantuka, and Ruteng (Steenbrink & Aritonang, 2008). As a result, the Dean of Ruteng became the vicariate's new vicar. The Vatican also appointed Fr. Wilhelmus van Bekkum, SVD, as Vicar of the region, and Mgr. Henry Leven ordained him as a bishop on May 13, 1951. The Manggarain Church became a diocese in 1961, and the Diocese of Ruteng was officially established on January 3, 1961 (Erb, 2006). During Fr. Wilhelmus's third term, the church has grown, with several significant changes and developments. To date, five bishops have led the Diocese.

3. Exploring the Transformative Synod's Vision of Ruteng Diocese

The Diocese of Ruteng celebrated its 80th Jubilee in 1992. This ceremony occurred when Mgr. Eduardus Sangsun was the bishop. However, it marked the start of efforts toward social transformation. In some notes surrounding this celebration, Mgr. Eduardus was deeply aware of the local context (Zurschmitten, 2019). Therefore, building on this episcopal awareness, the first synodal meeting was convened for the region. For this purpose, Mgr Eduardus invited key figures from the Diocese, both the hierarchy (priests) and the laity, to realize the grand plan for this first synod.[4]

After debates between various parties, the region held the First Synod in 1994-1995. This is considered one of the Diocese's essential achievements in consolidating its identity as a Young Catholic Church on the one hand and asserting its functional definition of social life on the other. The culmination of this session was held on November 22-26, 1995.[5]

The first synod's transformative vision was revealed in the theme of Celebration Week. The session adopted the central theme, "Building the Manggarai Catholic Church, which is independent, missionary, and socially oriented towards the XXI Century."[6] This synod held a transformative vision as its leading principle, articulated through several central concerns. The first synod sought to clarify the problems of the church and society. It also established strategies and pastoral steps to address social issues and the challenges facing the local community at the time. Second, it outlined efforts to address existing deficiencies. These two points aim to continue developing the Manggarai Catholic Church as the foundation for social transformation.[7]

[4] Sekretariat Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng, Persidangan Yubileum 80 Tahun Gereja Katolik Manggarai dan 40 Tahun Keuskupan Ruteng, Seri SEKPAS KR 9, 1994 [Pastoral Secretariat of Ruteng Diocese, 80 Years Jubilee Session of the Manggarai Catholic Church and 40 Years of Ruteng Diocese, SEKPAS Series KR 9, 1994], Source Category: Ruteng Diocese archives.
[5] Sekretariat Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng, ibid.
[6] Sekretariat Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng, ibid.
[7] Sekretariat Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng, ibid.

This first synod subsequently manifested in "outlines of the work guidelines of Ruteng Diocese, 1995-2005".[8] It outlined the church's pastoral direction in several areas of social service and its conventional (sacramental) ministry. This religious direction refers to the church's initiatives and breakthroughs in promoting transformation through social services. These services cover key areas, including the lay apostolate, social and political issues, education, youth, socio-economic development, and family and women's pastoral care (Green, 1989).

The Diocese defines this pastoral direction in some imperatives. Beyond addressing the church's internal aspects, this series of pastoral imperatives primarily concerns its social dimension in a changing society. The first synod also recommended establishing a cultural center to study culture, specifically Manggarai culture. Under the coordination of the Pastoral Secretariat, it will become a social studies laboratory that provides information.[9]

Furthermore, the session initiated the so-called re-evangelization of Catholics in Manggarai (Vondey, 2006). This process should primarily be carried out through education for children and the younger generation. The session also emphasized inculturation education through theology packages for lay leaders. Guidance for Christian families is also a main concern of the Diocese (Mawusi, 2009).

On another level, the first synod specifically focused on crucial social issues. These problems challenged local communities. Therefore, the Diocese made law and justice education one of its pastoral activities. This concern aims to resolve land conflicts in the community. The church is present as a force that initiates and encourages conflict resolution in the community. In a sense, it has become an agent of peacebuilding.

Ruteng Diocese also critically sees politics as a crucial arena for its ministry. Changes in the national political situation require its participation in a maturing democracy. The church is both a victim of political instability and a primary driver of the democratization process. In this respect, it can contribute to moral education and values for political praxis and power. It is also deeply aware of the poverty that still traps people (ummah). The church will undoubtedly promote changes in the structure and economic system to improve people's socio-economic welfare, as one of the main framework elements of the First Synod; the Ruteng Diocese places solidarity at the foundation of transformative action through the session's main messages.

After a decade of the Synod providing pastoral guidance for implementing the vision of social transformation, the Diocese later identified several areas for improvement in religious practice (Martasudjita, 2015; Steenbrink & Aritonang, 2008). As social change and the transformation of people's lives toward progress became part of the Diocese's focus, Mgr. Eduardus again invited all Manggarai Catholics to hold a Second Synod in 2006-2007. This session carried the following central theme: "to unite and build a new habitus under the guidance of the Holy Spirit towards an independent, missionary, and socialist Church of the Ruteng Diocese."[10]

The central theme has three critical keywords: habitus, missionary, and socializing. The Diocese mentions "habitus" in the final recommendation at the 2005 General Assembly of the Indonesian Catholic Church in Jakarta (Seda, 2013; Rukiyanto, 2017). The Indonesian Bishops' Conference, which held this Assembly, invited the church to build a new "habitus" for the nation and state (Indonesian people). This habitus refers to three critical points. First, the church should fight corruption in the political sphere (power and government), which undermines the structure of social life. Second, it should actively prevent ecological damage; third, it should play an active role in fighting social and political violence. Indonesia was facing a resurgence of radicalism and terrorism at the time (Rüland, von Lübke & Baumann, 2019; Adi, 2017).

The second synod also outlined several fundamental objectives. First, Ruteng Diocese strengthens the spirit of openness in building a new habitus towards a particular independence, missionary spirit, and social life. Second,

[8]Sekretariat Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng, "Pedoman Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng, 1995-2005," *Ruteng Diocese's archives* (Seri Sekretariat Pastoral, 1994).
[9] Ibid.
[10] See. *Buku Kenangan Tahbisan Uskup Ruteng, Mgr. Siprianus Hormat* (Book of Memories of the Ordination of the Bishop of Ruteng, Mgr. Siprianus Hormat". (Pastoral Secretariat Office, Diocese of Ruteng, March 19, 2020), 40.

it needs to radiate love, joy, peace, patience, generosity, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 6:22-24)—characteristics that should be expressed in the religious community in a new habit. Third, it defines its missionary and community presence. At this point, the church wants to actively bear witness to life in the community through a way of life that reflects Christ's love. Furthermore, it emphasizes specific aspects, including respect for human rights, the struggle for gender equality, and the fight against other forms of domestic violence.

The Diocese continues to take steps in accordance with Synod II's primary pastoral direction. In this phase of the session, after the death of Mgr. Eduardus Sangsun, the Holy Father appointed Fr. Hubertus Leteng as Bishop on November 7, 2009, who stated the church's primary direction with a vision: "To become a solid, independent, and Solid Manggarai Catholic Church of Ruteng Diocese."[11] A more solid faith shapes actions that share life with the weak, poor, and oppressed. This dimension undoubtedly refers to the Diocese's partisanship and pastoral activity, which are becoming more solid in the community. This position reflects the Local Church's primary intention to accelerate social transformation. In terms of social solidarity, the church does not want to be an 'ivory tower' in the people's experience of poverty and suffering (ummah). Therefore, it seeks to feel the pulse of their lives and to participate in the struggle for justice and truth.

The Third Synod's general theme became the vision of a solid, independent, and more assertive faith outlined above. This session was held from 2013 to 2015.[12] During this period, the Diocese formulated a primary pastoral direction that reflected its closeness to the surrounding social context. Since 2015, the Diocese has regulated and implemented all pastoral programs in accordance with this synod's recommendations. Msgr. Silvester San, appointed by the Holy See on October 11, 2017, as Apostolic Administrator, implements the synod in the annual pastoral work. For example, 2019 was the "Year of Diakonia" (Year of Service).[13]

The third synod confirmed the Church's presence by proclaiming open doors to live in the world. The Church is a picture of total involvement in the struggles of community life, as the constitution affirms that Gaudium et Spes, the Second Vatican Council, shares and experiences contemporary people's "joys, sorrows, hopes and anxieties" (GS 1). This session had several main concerns, including affirming and enforcing socio-economic pastoral care and education.[14]

After a comprehensive evaluation of the three Synods' journeys, the importance of socio-political apostolate as a catalyst for social transformation was emphasized. This concern is also supported by participation in gender, migrant, and ecological apostolates. Social and economic transformation is the entry point in the overall process. Synod III will undoubtedly continue the church's social struggle on the Socio-Economic and Educational Apostolate themes.[15]

The church should show solidarity with people's struggles and lives. This session's spirit aligns with Pope Francis' pastoral call for the church not to be alienated from the current efforts of human life. It should reflect its worldview and show an open willingness to engage with the outside world. In contemporary society, this is one of the Diocese Synod's transformative visions.

Overall, the session's vision of transformation refers to efforts to overcome the community's poverty and underdevelopment. The awareness that the church is part of the community is the essential starting point for

[11] Ibid., p. 43.
[12]Sekretariat Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng. *Dokumen Sinode III 2013—2015 Keuskupan Ruteng: Pastoral Kontekstual Integral (Translation: A Synod Document III 2013—2015 Ruteng Diocese: An Integral Contextual Pastoral)* (Penerbit asdaMEDIA, Yogyakarta, Februari 2017).
[13] The Year of Diakonia is one of the implementations of the Synod III of Ruteng Diocese. The Year of this Diakonia is held in 2019. The contents of this Diakonia dimension can be found in *Dokumen Sinode III 2013—2015 Keuskupan Ruteng: Pastoral Kontekstual Integral (Translation: A Synod Document III 2013—2015 Ruteng Diocese: An Integral Contextual Pastoral),* 175—271.
[14] The author summarizes the views of the Outlook written by Father Dr. Martin Chen, Secretary-General of the Synod III of Ruteng Diocese in *Dokumen Sinode III 2013—2015 Keuskupan Ruteng: Pastoral Kontekstual Integral (Translation: A Synod Document III 2013—2015 Ruteng Diocese: An Integral Contextual Pastoral),* 363—392.
[15]Education has been one of the leading service areas of the Catholic Church of the Diocese of Ruteng until now. Education is one of the main concerns of the missionary work of the pioneer missionaries in this Diocese. Because of this, education gets immediate attention in the whole process of the third synod of Ruteng Diocese.

implementing the synod's vision across its three moments. Therefore, it will inevitably manifest in concrete social contexts.

The transformative vision primarily aims to raise awareness of the roots of poverty and underdevelopment. The Diocese wants to lead liberating social transformation. In this way, its synodal vision also strengthens a new wave of global awareness at the academic level, seeking to reinvigorate religion's crucial role in social reform. As a social institution, the church seeks to dismantle the reality of society's limitations in achieving a decent standard of socio-economic life. Therefore, the vision also contributes enormous external energy to accelerating social change.

4. Revisiting the role of religion in social transformation

At the academic level, social scientists have offered various perspectives on religion's role in society. Classical sociologists, such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx, advanced functionalist, interpretative, and critical perspectives on the relationship between religion and society. These perspectives aim to emphasize their coherence. They argue for a close relationship between religion as a social institution and community, with all its complexities.

Furthermore, several social thinkers predict and support modern secularization. They observe that this new era will rapidly erode religion's significance in daily life. They also note the growing irrelevance of faith in political discourse and social development. From a social policymaking perspective, political institutions (power) are promoted to keep faith from the center of the process.

On the other hand, some social scientists predicted a new dawn of religion's key role in society. It is a key element in the process of social transformation. Scholars such as Peter Berger, Rodney Stark (a feminist), and John Caputo have clearly expressed this view. They consider contemporary religious experience in its sociological dimension. Deneulin and Rakodi recalled this trend: "*The role of religious organizations as civil society actors has to be reckoned with, not only in delivering social services but also in advocacy (*Deneulin & Rakodi, 2011). They decisively exposed a new phase of spiritual revival. These scholars believe religion will rediscover its social function over the long term and engage in social projects to realize this idea.

This phase will be strengthened for two reasons. *First*, religion will again find its social calling in facilitating transformative social development (Karpov, 2010). *Second*, several contexts and experiences increasingly show that social and political institutions cannot fully demonstrate their capacity to accelerate just and humane social transformation.

> *In the 1970s, there was growing discontent and an equating of development with economic growth, as it became clear that for the majority of developing countries, the rapid growth of the 1950s and 1960s was not trickling down to reduce poverty. Dependency theory and related perspectives became influential in development studies, and more proactive policies to ensure that the benefits of economic growth were spread widely were advocated* (Deneulin and Rakodi, Loc. Cit., 2011).

These social, political, and economic institutions confront serious problems, specifically their ineffectiveness in promoting social change.

Through a study of the Ruteng Diocese synods, the church revealed a critical portrait of religion as a social institution, an essential part of the local community, and a crucial force for social transformation (Greenberg, 2000). At this point, the church is both the actor and the subject, considering the most contextual and effective strategies and actions for transformation. It asserts itself as an institution of social awareness through vision, ideas, and involvement in transformative pastoral action.

It also actively shows extraordinary pioneers who have brought about social change in the local sphere. The Diocese strives to provide an experience of direct involvement in triggering and strengthening social transformation. The three synods' agreement and commitment to the transformative vision underscore the church's critical role in overseeing social change (Pattison & Woodward, 1994; Miller et al., 2011).

The Diocese wants to send a message of transformation to the community and demonstrate the politics of social change. The synodal transformative vision records the ecclesiastical agreement and commitment to realizing comprehensive social duties and vocations. This statement refers to the Diocese's primary intention to mature itself and its presence through a vision and a choice of transformative pastoral action. In other words, the church transforms itself through social transformation.

As a social and religious institution, it exists within its missionary calling and social life. This Local Church is part of Indonesia's constellation of social, economic, and political challenges as a young democratic nation. As a young democracy, the country mainly presents space for social involvement in the Diocese at the local level. This church is on the main path in designing its pastoral strategy to establish a free, just, prosperous, equal, and democratic society.

It offers a path to social transformation through rapid social and economic development in the community. The circulation of social welfare faces complex issues because corruption and implementation do not fully address society's real challenges. Such conditions constitute an essential arena for the Diocese to formulate accurate alignments in community and social life. Therefore, the synod's three moments, with a transformative vision, offer valuable contributions to understanding the dynamics of the relationship between religion, society, and social change.

To become a religious institution with strong solidarity with the local community, most of whom face acute poverty, Ruteng Diocese initiated pastoral involvement. Since establishing its presence in the Manggarai area over a century ago, it has faced and addressed key problems in people's lives, such as poverty and underdevelopment. In response, it has carried out various community social and economic empowerment programs and activities.

Within the Diocese, the church understands the importance of community social involvement. It teaches spiritual and moral matters and helps people out of poverty by building roads, dams, clean water systems, hospitals, and clinics. It also promotes agriculture, plantations, animal husbandry, carpentry, cooperatives, and other innovative economic programs to improve people's welfare.

5. Conclusion

The relationship between religion and society has always been a challenging and exciting topic in the social sciences. From a particular perspective, religion has been seen as an accelerator of social transformation. This view mainly applies to people living in various forms of social and economic backwardness. In this context, religion helps encourage social change.

As a religious institution, the Catholic Church faces similar social responsibility. It is also part of social construction, with portraits of problems that vary by context. The universal Church pursues an ecclesiological mission with sociological impact. Furthermore, it seeks to establish its presence and transform human life.

The Diocese offers a transformative vision for the local community. The three synods explained the pastoral desire to change the lives of people facing complex social, economic, and political problems. Through these three Synods, the church aims to build constructive consistency in social situations trapped in various stories of underdevelopment and poverty.

However, this study has limitations because it relies solely on the Diocese's experience in describing religion's transformative contribution to promoting social change. Therefore, future studies should expand on this by comparing experiences across contexts regarding the relationship between religion and social transformation. The audience will gain a comprehensive overview of religion's contribution to accelerating social change.

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