



The Influence of Catholic and Charismatic Leadership on Church Growth: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Ecclesiastical leadership occupies a central position in Christianity, both from a theological and social point of view. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society, where Christianity is a religion that is often in the spotlight, Christianity must take concrete steps by opening itself up by conducting dialogues, showing the identity of Christianity in a simple way, but still blending in the midst of a pluralistic culture. This study analyzes the differences of leadership influence between the Catholic Church and the Charismatic Movement on congregational growth. Through a qualitative approach, this study compares the authoritative structure, pastoral methods, and spiritual-communal impact between the two leadership traditions. The results show that hierarchical Catholic leadership tends to be stable in maintaining tradition, while charismatic leadership is more adaptive evangelically.

INTRODUCTION

Ecclesiastical leadership occupies a central position in Christianity, both from a theological and social point of view. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society, where Christianity is a religion that is often in the spotlight, Christianity must take concrete steps by opening itself up by conducting dialogues, showing the identity of Christianity in a simple way, but still blending in the midst of a pluralistic culture. An understanding of examples of church leadership is becoming increasingly relevant in shaping the characteristics of Christianity and church growth. The phenomenon of church growth between tradition-rich and charismatic Catholics in recent decades demands a comprehensive study of how a leadership structure can give color to the growth of the congregation.

History records that the Catholic Church in Indonesia has managed to maintain a leadership model rooted in a hierarchical tradition that has been patterned for centuries. The pattern of the apostolic succession system on which the authority of the Catholic church is based, emphasizes the continuity of the liturgical sacredness history that forms a centralized leadership structure starting from the Pope, Bishop, to the Priest at the parish level. The characteristic doctrinal stability of Catholic leadership guarantees uniformity of pastoral practice through a centralized magisterium system. Catholic leadership is not only limited to its people, one imam in one stream, but leads the entire people in pluralism.

On the other hand, the Charismatic Movement emphasizes the miracle of divine healing and the statement of faith (Healing Revival Movement). This movement entered Indonesia since the second half of the 20th century and introduced a different leadership concept based on 1 Corinthians 12:28. This leadership model emphasizes individual charisma as the basis for legitimacy of authority, where the gift of prophesying, healing, or leading powerful worship is the primary marker of a Christian leader. Along the way, the charismatic movement developed rapidly, especially in urban areas. This is due to a more fluid and adaptive

liturgical structure. Religious statistical data shows an interesting development, if in the 1980s the number of Catholic congregations in Indonesia was recorded at around 5 million people, in 2023 this figure will grow steadily to around 8.6 million people. This number is equivalent to 3.06% of the total population of Indonesia and makes Catholicism the third largest religion. The Central Statistics Agency stated that the charismatic churches, which in the early 1990s were still a marginal phenomenon, are now incarnated as a sect with annual congregation growth reaching 10-15% of the 6.9% of the Christian population in Indonesia. This growth disparity raises fundamental questions about the correlation between leadership models and the appeal of the church in the contemporary era. Jan Aritonang, theologian and historian, stated that the charismatic sect is one of the various Christian sects that show the rapid development of this century.

Several factors also influence this dynamic. First, there is a significant change in Indonesia's demographics, where the dominance of the millennial and Gen-Z generations tends to be more interested in expressive and dynamic Christian patterns, especially worship with designs that suit the needs of Gen-Z. Second, the influence of globalization that brought the global Pentecostal wave to Indonesia through social media platforms. Third, the challenge of modernity requires the church to be more adaptive to social issues without having to lose its theological identity. In this context, the question that often arises is: "How can the difference between Catholic and Charismatic leadership affect the growth of the congregation?" This question is important to answer not only to understand the turmoil of Indonesian Christianity, but also to map the future of the church against the challenges of modern times. This comparative study is expected to provide a new perspective on how traditional and charismatic elements can complement each other in designing relevant church leadership.

Some previous studies have touched on certain aspects of this topic. Riwu, in his study of churches, noted the tendency of young congregations to move from traditional churches to charismatic churches due to the satisfaction and doctrinal factors. His theological analysis warned of the dangers of spiritual shallowness when the church overemphasizes the charismatic aspect without a solid doctrinal basis. However, no one has discussed the relationship with the growth of the congregation comprehensively. This research aims to fill this academic gap with a qualitative approach that combines theological and sociological analysis in a practical way. By comparing the structure, practice, and impact of these two leadership models, it is hoped that a more complete and in-depth understanding of effective congregational development strategies in the context of Christianity can be obtained.

METHODS

The research method related to this paper is a qualitative method through an exploratory approach to document studies, ethnography, and natural observations. This exploratory research method is digging and exploring with the aim of exploring findings and every possibility that exists because initial knowledge about this issue is still minimal. The investigation is directed to find new ideas or relationships that have not been explained so far. The resulting theories and conclusions will still be tentative and provide opportunities to be tested in further research. Data is collected by browsing websites that contain related articles and journals, books and encyclopedias that contain related materials. A Bible search related to the topic to be discussed is also carried out.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Growth of the Church

Broadly speaking, the issue of church leadership is a determinant factor that not only affects the statistics of church membership in quantity, but more fundamentally, shapes the character and quality of the faith of the congregation. In the context of Indonesia's diverse culture, the challenges of modernity of the concept of worship and the increasingly complex competition among denominations, a deep understanding of the impact of Catholic and Charismatic leadership models is a crucial need. Each leadership model has its own advantages and disadvantages. This research does not only intend to map the existing differences, but rather to find common ground and possible creative synthesis that can enrich the practice of church leadership.

Historical and Theological Context

The Catholic Church inherited a leadership system that has lasted for centuries, with a centralized leadership structure based on the doctrine of apostolic succession. In this pattern, authority flows perpendicular to the Pope through the Bishop to the Parish Priest, with an emphasis on a unity of vision that is in line with the tradition of the early church. This makes the Catholic faith tend to grow steadily and sustainably through the consistency of catechesis practice. Catechesis is one of the efforts made by the Catholic Church in growing the faith of its congregation. Catechesis encourages the faithful to understand the teachings of the Catholic faith, cultivate moral character, and build a strong community of faith among the faithful through prayer and the sacraments. Catechesis guides the people through the stages of faith growth, from the introduction of spiritual values to providing in-depth insight into religious teachings, ethics, and the practical application of the Catholic faith in community life. According to Raharso, the special purpose of catechesis is divided into three parts. First, to grow the seed of faith that has been planted through the sacrament of baptism. Second, it leads the people to reach maturity of faith. Third, providing

daily spiritual food intake for Catholics. Furthermore, in his *Catechesis Tradendae*, Pope John Paul II emphasized that people should build a strong foundation of faith in order to be witnesses of God who declare that salvation exists only in Jesus Christ.

The Book of Canon Law stipulates, "It is a special and heavy task, especially for the leaders of the church, to work on the catechesis of Christians so that the faith of the faithful through religious teaching and through the experience of Christian life, will grow and become a blessing (Can. 773)". Although faith cannot be measured qualitatively, the growth of faith can be seen through the journey of life, interaction with religious values and response in facing life's problems. At the very least, the involvement of the people in the church can be considered an indicator of faith growth. Attendance in worship, service, and community can at least reflect a personal commitment to faith. From these provisions, we can conclude that the role of catechesis has a great contribution to the people. Therefore, in the process of catechesis succession, it is necessary to have the right management of the church leader or pastoral team to the spiritual needs of his congregation and to accommodate the right means and containers to answer this challenge.

Meanwhile, the Charismatic Movement carries a different leadership pattern. His leadership model emphasizes Pneumatology or belief in the activeness of the Holy Spirit and His gifts. The main characteristic of the charismatic movement is its emphasis on personal experience with God. These experiences can be in the form of manifestations of the Holy Spirit, in the form of the experience of speaking in the Spirit (Glossolalia), divine healing, visions or prophecies experienced by spiritual leaders or the individual of the congregation itself, which is often considered as God's intervention in spiritual life. In the context of worship, charismatic movements tend to be expressive. This can be seen from the dynamic atmosphere of worship, starting from the layout of the pulpit, lighting in the form of spotlights, the use of *sound systems* and projectors. In addition, worship praise that is performed emotionally and passionately supported by more

modern musical arrangements is an important element in the practice of charismatic worship.

Outside of the liturgy of worship, charismatic leaders tend to encourage their congregations to receive spiritual gifts. Everyone who receives and is equipped with spiritual gifts can use them to serve others. Charismatic leaders tend to emphasize the importance of experiencing the Holy Spirit not just over a period of time, but to continue throughout the life of the congregation. The Holy Spirit is often described as a teacher who is able to lead people to God's Word and understand His will. Meanwhile, Charismatic leaders in Indonesia in their pastoral methods often encourage their congregations to be actively involved in the *Cell Group*. It is through this cell community that the church can be built more deeply. The existence of a cell community among the congregation that is divided by age group, profession, and area of residence and is carried out periodically is able to produce interpersonal relationships in the congregation as a unit of the family of Christ. Furthermore, the cell community instills the individual members to care for one another in love as it is written "*and all who have become believers remain united, and all that they have belong to the common, and there is always one of them who sells his possessions, and divides them to all according to his need.*" (Acts 2:44-45).

A cell community that is well pioneered and fostered by a charismatic leader is able to reproduce new leaders who can then disciple new souls. The multiplication of congregational growth is not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. This concept is a positive thing to capture unreached souls and nurture new souls in smaller groups. The observation of the success of this charismatic movement must certainly be balanced with a deeply embedded theological concept, starting from the highest leadership to the leaders in small groups. First, efforts are needed to deepen the theological basis without losing the identity of the charismatic church that characterizes it. This is seen as necessary for the continuity of the spiritual maturity of the independent congregation without depending on certain figures. Second, the charismatic church must

pay attention to the social issues around it. The Charismatic Church needs to have an impact on the surrounding community as the embodiment of the law primarily: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. That is the first and foremost law. And the second commandment, which is the same, is: Love your neighbor as yourself."* (Matthew 22:37-39). The Charismatic Church must be present and not close itself, which leaves an impression of exclusivity in the Society, as part of the pluralistic Indonesian society.

In general, the growth of the congregation in a church should ideally have a balance between quantity and quality. Although in practice, it is easier to observe the growth of quantity than quality. Research conducted by Peter C. Wagner and Ricard L. Gorsuch of the Fuller Seminary School of Psychology has formulated a formula for measuring the quality of the church. Research collected from hundreds of church pastors has produced a formula that can measure the quality of the congregation in a church based on its level.

There are at least twelve factors that can be a measure of the quality of the congregation. First, knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, that is, the congregation who knows the Bible and studies it and knows how to practice godly living in daily life. Second, personal communion with God in shady times that is done regularly. Third, worship, where the congregation routinely participates in worship organized by the church. Fourth, witness, where the congregation dares to witness God's love to those who do not yet know Jesus. Fifth, the ministry is done to help the congregation find and develop spiritual gifts. Sixth, mission ministry, where the congregation can be involved in mission services to reach the soul, either independently or mission services facilitated by the church. Seventh, offerings, which are offerings that the congregation gives to support the ministry work of the local church. Eighth, fellowship, where the congregation takes part in various fellowships that are carried out outside of Sunday worship, such as morning prayers, fasting prayers, and others. Ninth, the lifestyle, in which the

church reflects the personality of Christ that is not similar to those who do not know God. Tenth, ministry responsibility, where the congregation performs service with pure motivation as a service to God and not for self-interest. Eleventh, social services, namely services that touch and have an impact on the surrounding community, so that the congregation is able to blend and understand problems in the surrounding environment, for example, social services to the poor. Twelfth, social justice, in which the congregation seeks to contribute to the local social culture in order to create a new breakthrough that creates a more moral and just society.

CONCLUSION

After delving deeply into the influence of Catholic and Charismatic leadership on the growth of the church, conclusions can be drawn about the big picture of the growth of each church. Although these two leadership models differ in theological roots and traditions, they both make a great contribution to Christianity in Indonesia. The structure of Catholic leadership is centralized and maintains the sacramental tradition, although the growth data of the congregation tends to show a slow increase in quantity, but it has proven to have a stable theological concept and is able to be a protector for the faithful. In terms of faith education, Catholic leadership is able to facilitate the congregation through catechesis that guides the faithful to have a basic theological introduction and recognition of God, supported by a meaningful liturgy. Catholicism is also able to encourage its people to practice God's love through organized social service. This is possible because the Catholic Church has an extensive network of educational, health, and social institutions that are rich in experience and tested by time. However, the Catholic Church today faces the challenge of finding ways to maintain this church tradition so that it remains relevant to the development of the times, especially for the younger generation. The leaders of the Catholic Church are required to be able to formulate a pattern that can

embrace the younger generation who want a more creative and modern pastoral change.

Meanwhile, Charismatic churches that tend to be adaptive to the times in their liturgy are able to accommodate the needs of congregations with more varied demographic patterns, ranging from elderly congregations, young adults, Gen-Z, to children's congregations through varied and colorful worship practices and supported by a rapidly growing network of cell communities. The concept of a flexible church is able to reach every generation, so it is not surprising that statistics indicate that church growth is growing rapidly in terms of quantity. However, there are a few things that need to be of concern to the leaders of the Charismatic Church. One of them is the need for solid Christian foundation formation and education with a correct understanding of theological fundamentals to shape the character of the congregation through biblical teaching. The Church needs to be encouraged to know God in a right way and not instantaneously. Worship procedures that many adopt contemporary culture also often obscure the true purpose of worship. The Church needs to be directed until their faith takes root. In addition, charismatic churches need to touch the community and the environment more. The closed behavior of the charismatic church toward the community is often considered an exclusive act. Charismatic Church leaders need to think of an effective way to get the congregation moving and making an impact on the surrounding area. The social services carried out need to be transformative rather than charitable.

Ultimately, there is no one perfect leadership pattern. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. However, similarities and differences in leadership patterns have made a significant contribution to the growth of the congregation. Superior leadership always strives to lead each congregation to a correct biblical understanding. The differences that arise are religious dynamics that can enrich the diversity of the people. The essence of every teaching, whether Catholic or Charismatic, is absolutely to have a common view of God, especially in matters of salvation. Salvation is redemption from

sin, that is, salvation that frees man from God's judgment and judgment obtained only through faith and confession of the gospel that brings man to Christ. A good leader is a leader who is able to bring his congregation closer to Christ.

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