

# Pluralism, Religious Conflict, and Multicultural Education: The Challenges for Catholic Institution in Indonesia

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PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION:  
THE CHALLENGES FOR CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS IN INDONESIA

Pius Suratman Kartasasmita<sup>1</sup>

INTRODUCTION

It is a great honor to be invited in such important moment and prestigious forum like this. So please, **first of all**, allow me to delightedly extend my sincere thank you to His Eminence *Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino*, the President of Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, for giving me an opportunity and trust to make this presentation possible.

**Secondly**, the official theme of this session is "The Challenges of Pluralism and Different Cultures: Which Dialogue?"<sup>2</sup> Consequently, it is justifiably expected that this presentation, to some extent, should be "*willing to discuss the implication of development on a continental scale and relevant challenges on global level, with the goal of identifying new direction for a pastoral commitment of the Church.*"<sup>3</sup> However, I will take a liberty to do this presentation under the following heading: "Pluralism, Religious Conflict and Multicultural Education: the Challenges for Catholic Institutions in Indonesia."

Accordingly, this presentation will be divided into three main sub-theme, these are *pluralism*, *religious conflict*, and *multicultural education*. Each discussion will basically consist of five elements, general notion of the concept, related issue, empirical illustration, critical challenges, and personal reflection.

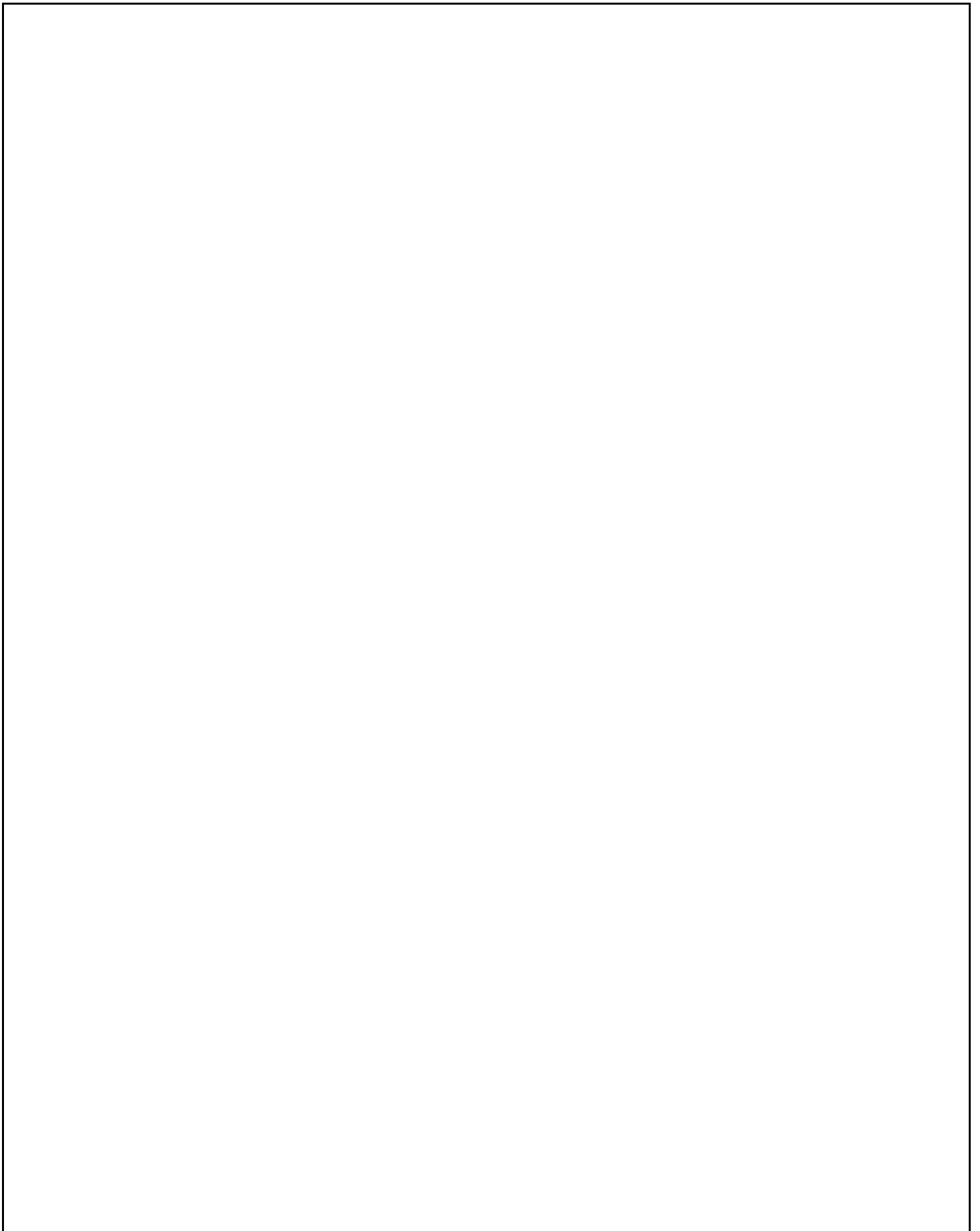
However, the very first challenges while preparing this presentation was that I have encountered with unexpected problems which are *plural*, *conflicting*, and also *cross-cultural* in nature, just like the title of this presentation. *Firstly*, I have to deal with obtaining leaving permit from my office little bit longer and complicated than usual. *Secondly*, I have to adjust my flight schedule in such a way so that can accommodate many conflicting interests. *Thirdly*, English is not my mother tongue, so that total expression of ideas, feelings, and experiences (especially at spiritual level) is always not easy. Therefore, please

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<sup>2</sup> See the Programme of the Congress.

<sup>3</sup> It is noted in the invitation letter to the speaker.



be patient and open to any imperfectness, especially for those who are not familiar with the empirical context of Indonesia. I will pray and make belief that God Himself may presence in this precious moment to guide us in sincere and perfect understanding.

#### ABOUT PLURALISM

The simple way of explaining *pluralism*, if I may, is a *non-uni-oriented way of life* (thinking, feeling, and doing things including to define pluralism itself). In the shade of this definition, one might tend to think, feel, and do something in connection with something else, never stand-alone. Democracy is one of the most productive political concept that enable us to realize our political rights in conjunction with the political rights of our neighbours, including the right of the rightless, the power of the powerless and the voice of the voice-less. Within this light it is always possible to find the case that some one who live his/her solitary life, yet he/she might be a pluralist in nature and the other way around. It is not the intension of this presentation to stimulate academic discussion on the notion of pluralism, instead just to invite attention that the nature of human being in most cases is self-interested, trap themselves in their small "*rational*" mind and leave the publicness of their existence to the natural law.

At this point, I would see the country like Indonesia is a perfect example of plural society that fail to feel, to think, and to act in the pluralistic way of life. Geographically, Indonesia is the biggest archipelagic country in the world that consist of more than 13.000.000 islands and rich with natural resources both on its land as well as under the sea. Demographically, Indonesia has more than 220 million people, speak more than 550 local languages that each of them has their-own variation. It is convinced that statistics alone will not sufficient to describe the pluralistic character of Indonesia. The late and former Bishop of Bogor, Mgr.NJC.Geise, OFM who was an anthropologist and originally from Belgium once was joking: "*God created Indonesia while He is smiling, I cannot explain more but love this peacefull country, especially Parahyangan.(sic: West Java)*" Unfortunately, Indonesia is currently known mainly as number one Islamic populated country, the most corrupted country in Asia, with communal conflict are spread across the country. It is believed that currently Indonesia is calling for the son of the Church to do more for the country by being 100% Catholic and 100% Indonesian.

## ABOUT RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

### The perspective;

Taking religious conflict into challenging account is not entirely and arbitrarily subjective in nature. Empirically, it is undeniable that most of people might perceive conflict only from its negative side, since they are witnessing or even victims of various wars and violence. Wars among nations across time were memorized in our collective mind as the ugliest and the most destructive expression of human conflicts. In addition, we are now blatantly witnessing the dramatic changes, not only in the form and substance of social conflicts, but in the number and profile of the victims as well. Wars among nations have transformed becoming wars within the nations, and vertical political conflict has changed into horizontal communal conflict among various social groups within our society. As an illustration, it was once reported that during the World War I, the civilian victims is accounted for only 5%, dramatically raised up to 50% in the World War II, and continued to go up until 80% in the 1990s.

However, the other side of any coin is the bright one so as about conflict. Social conflict, as one might aware, has existed as old as human society itself and will always be there till the end of human life. Logically, then, why should we always deny the undeniable reality, instead of trying to skillfully understand and manage it? Social theorists like Marx and Weber give their radical thought by noting that conflict is innate in every human interaction, since it is rooted in the essence of human interest. Conventional *domination theory*, for example, remind us that when either individual persons or groups of people interact with each other, the most real thing one can observe is the interaction between two or more interests. Only the powerful will survive and the powerless will submerge. So that even in the most peaceful situation, conflict is always exist at least latently. Moreover, Ralph Dahrendorf, an American sociologist, not only in agreement about the natural nature of social conflict, even more he highlighten the positive function of conflict for society.

In terms of conflict, Indonesian society is not an exception to the global realities. One can easily identified violence and conflicts across the country, spreads out from Aceh in the West to Papua in the East covers various issues, not only geographical, social, political and economic ones, but ironically harsh

religious issues as well. This is particularly true since the down-fall of the military authoritarian regime. Decentralization process is also identified as responsible for flourishing communal conflict at local level. Global religious fundamentalism is resulted in many deadly bombing. Learning from Indonesia and elsewhere today, therefore, it is understandable if one finally claim that the main enemy for humanity in the developing nation likes Indonesia, is not limited to the repressive political regimes and greedy capitalists, but also fundamentalist and abusive religion practices, in addition to the mismanagement of pluralism in public arena. The following case of *Cigugur* is an illustration of how religiosity, religions and public policy contribute to the failure of managing pluralism.

### **The Challenging Case of Cigugur**

Cigugur was a small village located at the mountain foot of *Ciremai* (3.078 m), the highest sleeping volcano in West Java. Administratively, this village belongs to the district (*kabupaten*) of Kuningan, one among 412 districts in Indonesia. Geographically, Cigugur is located around 35 kilometers from Cirebon to the south, or 168 kilometers from the capital city of West Java province, Bandung or 200 km from the State Capital, Jakarta. Its altitude is 700 above sea level with average temperature of around 26°C and 26.80 mm of rain-drops. This village covered 511.120 hectares area of land consisted of 105.680 ha dwelling area, 116.120 ha rice field, 279.975 ha animal husbandry, 2.860 ha fishery ground and some other 180 ha functioned for infrastructures including roads, irrigations and cemeteries.<sup>4</sup>

Nowadays, *Cigugur* has changed and will always be that to become more urbanized village. Its administrative status has officially upgraded to a *keurahan* (urban village) and even more to a *kecamatan* (urban sub-district). It is strongly believed, that along this line current land used and ownership have also been significantly and structurally transformed and so its social structure and culture. Such transformation, however, does not put *Cigugur* as an exceptional case neither along urbanization story nor conventional economic development reign. This village has become extremely challenging, both for academics as well as all men of Good Will, who sincerely and dedicatedly wish to understand and deal with the concept of *communal* and *religious conflict*.

In 1848, *Cigugur* was known as home for a locally-born religion called *Agama Djawa Sunda* (ADS) or later known as *madraism* which was named

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.kuningan.go.id/>

before its founder *Pangeran Madrais Alibasa Widjaja Ningrat*. He was believed as a son of *Sultan Gebang Pangeran Alibasa I* from his un-official marriage. According to *Pangeran Djatikusumah*, his grand son who is now still alive and currently resides in Cigugur, the name of *Madrais* is shorten from *Muhammad Rais*, an Islamic and Arabic cultural trait.<sup>5</sup>

In his early ages, *Pangeran Madrais* was educated in one of the Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), although it has not clearly identified yet which one and where it was about. It is also soundly noted that he intentionally decided to drop his classes, instead he moved from one boarding school to another as a spiritual pilgrim across the province of West Java.<sup>6</sup> This stage of story is critical as the foundation of *Madrais'* teaching as identified by many scholars is a mixture between Islamic *tasawuf* and Javanese mysticism which was elegantly framed by *Sundanese* cultural traits. From *Cigugur* this local believes was rapidly spread to other places across the province such as Indramayu, Majalengka, Ciamis, Tasikmalaya, Garut, Bandung, Padalarang, Bogor, Purwakarta, even to the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta. It was claimed that once the number of believers across the province reached the highest hit of 100 thousand people. Yet, the convincing evidence reach far less bellow the figure, it was about 25 thousand believers.<sup>7</sup>

Within the Dutch colonial era, *Pangeran Madrais* and his followers were considered as a dangerous rebellion and radical community. He was sentenced to jail twice in Kuningan and Tasikmalaya, although he was finally released. In 1901 to 1908 *Pangeran Madrais* was exiled to Meraoke, West Papua.<sup>8</sup> He was charged as a political rebel to the government and as an economic robber to his followers.<sup>9</sup> As he returned from jail *Pangeran Madrais* was back to his followers for teaching, resulted in a more radical movement of his community. He was once again sentenced not to jail but to a lunatic house in Bogor in which he raised stronger solidarity and fighting spirit of his followers in order to gain their independence of practicing their beliefs. While in the lunatic house, he

<sup>5</sup> *Tempo Magazine*, 29 January 1983.

<sup>6</sup> Straathof, W. *Sadjarah Ngadegna Agama Djawa Sunda (ADS)*, Garut, 1970, p. 1

<sup>7</sup> ADS' book of census

<sup>8</sup> With regards to the place where *Pangeran Madrais* was exiled, A.M. Basuki Nursana Ningrat, the writer of *Umat Katolik Cigugur* who married to one of the family members, noted *Boven Digul* as the place. However, Dr. Lance Castle who served as the chair of the thesis committee, convinced that not until 1920s was Boven Digul becoming a place for rebellions and political exiles. This information was actually confirmed by many respondents who were previous followers of ADS consistently mentioned *Maroke* instead of Digul.

<sup>9</sup> It is understood later that the first charge is related to *Pangeran Madrais'* teaching the basic existence of the people and nation should really based on independency both physically and spiritually. While the second charge was proved by interpreting the fact that *Pangeran Madrais* and his family economically live on peoples offerings as a token of their worship and loyalty.

kept teaching, and yet this time his pupils were all psychos. His action was actually becoming the only reason for the Dutch authority to release him free although with greater suspicious and scrutiny. In 1926 the Dutch government withdrew all its officials from *Cigugur* and ADS was entering the calm part of its history. In 1927 ADS' marital rites was legally accommodated and accepted by the Dutch authority.

At one side, this period of time should be considered as a glorious victory of ADS history. On the other side, it was actually just the new beginning of harsh social and political hardship. Firstly, *Pangeran Madrais* and his followers were suspected by the independent movement fighters and their Islamic community as collaborators even as the right arm of the colonial regime.<sup>10</sup> Secondly, ADS encounter with its leadership succession from *Pangeran Madrais* to his son *Pangeran Tedjabuana Alibasa Kusuma Widjaja Ningrat*. The founder of ADS died in 1940.<sup>11</sup>

At the time Japanese troops arrived in *Cigugur*, the new leader of ADS, *Pangeran Tedjabuana*, was forced to sign the dissolution letter of his religious movement and abandon its activities entirely. He left his followers in *Cigugur* and moved to Bandung and Tasikmalaya afterwards. However, his followers asked him to keep fighting for their survival which was finally agreed. They brought their leader back to *Cigugur* and encountered two social and political hardships at the same time: unfavorable Japanese political strategy and the suspicious Islamic local community.<sup>12</sup>

In 1947, two years after Soekarno and Hatta declared the independence of Indonesia, the Dutch returned to *Cigugur* and applied the earlier Dutch policy towards ADS: let them exist with strong alert. This was applied till they really go due to the acceptance of the freedom of Indonesia by the Dutch. However, on 21 December 1954, the residence of ADS leader which was also functioned as the activity center of ADS community, was attacked and burnt by the Islamic troops DI/TII. Although there was no serious destruction caused by the attack, the ADS community was so much threatened both psychologically and socially. From that time on, *Pangeran Tedjabuana* and his family, moved out from *Cigugur* and led ADS community from Cirebon for safety. In 1955 ADS was officially registered as the member of *Badan Konggres*

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<sup>10</sup> It is critical to know the official attitude of the Dutch, especially that of *Van der Plas* who was in charge for *Cirebon*, so that the relationship between *Pangeran Madrais*, the Dutch and Islamic community can be clarified.

<sup>11</sup> There was a strong dispute regarding the age of *Pangeran Madrais* when he was die. Professor Kamil Kartapradja noted his age was 65 years old while the well-known national magazine *Tempo* mentioned his life time was from 1833 to 1939, it means he was 106 years old when he dies. The calculation based on the Fr.W.Straathof was closer with the later 105 years old revealed from the calculation that *Pangeran Madrais* journeys across West Java was in 1845 to 1849 and he was 13 by that time.

<sup>12</sup> Harry J. Benda (1980) noted that Japanese was in favor to use Islam communities and political leaders as their basic strategy to win the war in Asia. This kind of strategy that was applied in Aceh was also confirmed in *Cigugur*.



*Kebatinan Indonesia* (Indonesian Spiritual Congress Council) known as BKKI. It was the time when ADS community was officially acknowledge and relatively lived and practiced their beliefs without significant hardship.

Not until 21 September 1964, when Indonesia was politically independent from any foreign colonialism, *Pangeran Tedjabuana* as the leader of ADS community had to once again dissolve ADS for good as one of local religious community. There were two reasons which are mentioned in his legally written statement, i.e. to dissolve ADS as a religious organization and he along with his family **converted to become Catholic**. In addition to his testimonial document, he also urged his followers not to continue ADS as a religious organization, both individually and collectively.

Such an action was the only logical, legal and political consequences, and yet indirectly, of the official document issued by the local committee on community beliefs named *Panitia Aliran Kepercayaan Masyarakat (PAKEM)* of *Kabupaten Kuningan*. This lower level official document No. 01/SKPTS/BK.PAKEM/K.p./VI/64, dated 18 June 1964, declared that the ADS marriage, which had long been accepted customarily, was illegal and against the official law which is enforcing only five official religions i.e. Islam, Catholic, Protestant, Hinduism and Buddhism. At this point, ADS community faced with the new kind of challenges: law suit for the parents and the problem of civil rights for the children. As '*follows the leader*' was the only game in the village, almost 99% (precise number should be verified) of ADS community members across West Java and Jakarta converted to Catholic collectively brought along their beliefs, symbols, rituals, customs and of course their community leaders. That was the miles-stone of the Catholic Church in West Java, the home land of *Sundanese* ethnic community that is naturally a pious Islamic community.

Strikingly 16 years later, in 1981, after the hard-work and the services of dedicated missionaries represented by some Holy Cross Fathers and Sisters from Carolus Boromeus, around 2000 families resigned from the church and converted back to the new established local religious group named PACKU stand for *Paguyuban Adat Cara Karuhun Urang* meaning *community for our ancestor tradition*. This new born religious movement was established by *Pangeran Djatikusumah*, the son of *Pangeran Tedjabuana* or the grandson of the late ADS' founder.

The religious conversion part two in Cigugur, if one might call it, was of course politically acceptable and legally correct because it was amenable by the state guideline *Garis Besar Haluan Negara (GBHN)* 1978. However, it caused inevitable conflict among different religious believers, religious leaders, and

government officials, even among members of the nuclear families. One year later, in 1982, the state considered PACKU was new-ADS. Therefore, it was officially prohibited through an official decree of local prosecutor number Kep.44/K.2.3/8/82. One of our Church was burnt to dust.

As far as the story goes, the 2.000 families were stranded religiously. Most of the families were uneasily converted back to the Catholic Church. Some of them were converted to Islam, numbers of them converted to Protestant, a new participant in the village, and the rest were lingering around *Pangeran Djatikusumah* circle who are now keep struggling to establish a heavenly religious local community in a harsh modern and globalize society.

The 1986 survey towards Catholics who converted from ADS community concluded that:

- a. *The level of religiosity is high* measured by participation in daily and Sunday mass and other regular based rites. They basically view that their participation in such activities was the main characteristic of being Catholic.
- b. The high level of religiosity is positively correlated with how intensive some one attending the initiation processes.
- c. The level of religiosity has nothing to do with both the amount of economic aid nor the level of modernity represented by their formal education.
- d. The level of religious intensity in the past (as a member of ADS community) negatively correlated both with the involvement in the initiation process and their modernity.
- e. The level of religious intensity in the past (as a member of ADS community) positively correlated with the amount of economic aid.

It is generally concluded that experiential factor is more dominant than economic factor in explaining whether some one is committed with religious activities. It is also clear from the case under study that improper intervention will not only fail to establish a peaceful multi-cultural and multi-religious kind

of society (as many widely claims), in the contrary the fact that the state and its policy play a very negative role in the respective matter.

#### **Challenging questions:**

Given the case under study, one might ask question from different angles, yet there are at least four critical questions for reflection under the light of Populorum Progressio, i.e.:

- *Firstly*, how religion should be conceptualized? Should ADS community be considered as our brother and sister in Christ? Since it is clearly noted that, although officially ADS community has never been accepted or even recognized as a religion by Indonesian government, yet in practice it is accommodated as a cultural heritage from the past. Inline with such theoretical question, there is also a practical one, how should the church strategically behave in such kind of environment?
- *Secondly*, to what extent social, political, legal and economic factors should be utilized as the mean of evangelization? Are there any moderating variables that work in explaining evangelization? Therefore, how to develop an effective mode of evangelization?
- *Thirdly*, would it be possible for our church to develop a kind of support group that focused on religious community development that preventing conflict instead of post conflict recovery?
- *Finally*, what is the possibility in revitalizing Catholic education and community services in order to build a heavenly community on the fragile world by enforcing multi-cultural education?

#### **CONCLUDING NOTES: REVITALIZING MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION**

As a concluding note, this presentation will argue of proposing radical reform of all Catholic educational institutions under clerical domain. It is not easy to find counter argument for the following familiar statement saying that *the failure of the nation is the failure of its people that rooted in their education system*. At least sound right to most Indonesian and else where who work in the field of education. The challenging and burning question, at this point, is not only how to revitalize education system in the country like Indonesia, or how to establish multi-cultural education that help young generation to equire peacefull living, but the most critical problem is, *where are the standing point of*

*Catholic educational institutions?* Can the Church currently turn to them for solution, or are they part of the existing problem?

In the past, our Catholic educational institutions were highly respected by both the public and government for quality, discipline and non-discriminative politically, socially and financially. That was the case for almost all level of school up to 1970s. Things have been gradually changed since then, especially when missionary financial support was abandoned by the Minister of Religion. Consequently, raising fund has become important key word in the business. Now the situation is more challenging than before. Education, especially at tertiary level, is regarded by law as trade-able services through ratification of WTO free trade agreement. Four capital city in Indonesia, Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya and Medan are now opened to foreign universities with collaboration with local actors.

As an illustration, Indonesia currently have 62 public universities, 2700 private universities (only 17 among them are Catholic). Together with other Catholic education institutions at the lower level, they are mostly staggering for survival, to face harsh competition, fund rising and unfavorable inconsistent government policies. The very final question would be whether Catholic educational institutions should be revitalized as our pillar of evangelization as it used to be, of course, with greater challenges.

Rome, 22 November 2007.

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