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# Contemplating Interfaith Pastoral Counseling for The Spiritual Well-Being of Transwomen in The Seruni Community, Yogyakarta

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## Abstract

*The foundation of this study is the problem of social and spiritual orphanhood that transwomen in Yogyakarta's Seruni Community encounter as a result of social and spiritual exclusion. It is vital and urgent to contemplate interfaith pastoral counseling for the psychological and spiritual well-being of transwomen. The purpose of this qualitative study is to determine (1) how the transwoman community manages psychological and spiritual crises brought on by social and spiritual exclusion before getting interfaith pastoral counseling? (2) how does interfaith pastoral counseling contribute significantly to the psychological and spiritual well-being of transwomen? Transwomen going through spiritual and psychological orphanhood in Yogyakarta's Seruni Community served as the research subjects for this qualitative study. The study's findings indicate that (1) the transwoman community is marginalized in terms of both social and spiritual circles. Trans women pursue psychological and spiritual well-being through the communities they build before obtaining interfaith pastoral treatment. (2) Faith communities are contemplating interfaith pastoral counseling as a pastoral response to transwomen who are experiencing both psychological and spiritual orphanhood. Transwomen's psychological and spiritual well-being can be greatly enhanced by interfaith pastoral counseling, allowing them to fully flourish as persons and transform as believers.*

## Keywords

*interfaith, pastoral counseling, spiritual orphanhood, transwoman*

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Our interactions with transwomen started this scholarly study, almost totally by chance. Most of our interactions happen at traffic signals. The transwomen made their livelihood by singing there while our car had to halt because the traffic light was red. Maybe the way we witness transwomen in public settings improves how we perceive them. More than anything else, social and/or religious prejudices,

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stereotypes, and stigmas impact our perceptions of transwomen. When our university hosted a seminar on "Religion and the Body" through a Religious Education course and invited several transwomen as keynote speakers, there was a more formal academic exchange. They discussed their experiences with faith as transwomen in the session. We acknowledge that the way we engage with transwomen is still seen from a distance, whether it be from seminar attendees' seats or speakers on stage.

As we got to know transwomen better, our conversations with them intensified. We were able to visit the Seduluran Rumpun Nasionalis Indonesia (Seruni) transwoman community in Yogyakarta thanks to a friend's introduction. Given the backdrop of our Catholic Religious Education curriculum, we are particularly curious about their religious journey via social isolation. They look for spiritual services in the various communities they belong to, based on their individual religious origins. A venue where Muslim transwomen can receive education about the Qur'an. Prayer sessions are one of the spiritual practices that Christian transwomen employ to attain spiritual well-being. It is difficult for us to draw a connection between the transwomen's stories of faith and "Pastoral Counseling," a course offered by the Catholic Religious Education study program, given the current state of their spiritual well-being.

In recent decades, there have been academic initiatives from both counselors and the Church to address interfaith pastoral counseling. Pastoral counseling involves scientific interdisciplinarity, ranging from theology, Bible studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, to social and economic sciences.<sup>1</sup> The Church views pastoral counseling as "a special activity, not a separate activity, of the Church's pastorate." Pastoral counseling is a special activity of "shepherding God's flock." In providing pastoral counseling, the Church provides counseling to the sheep it shepherds "both preventively and remedially".<sup>2</sup> Counselors and the Church address the issue of "sexual diversity" in counselees to contemplate pastoral counseling.<sup>3</sup> "Inclusive pastoral counseling" that goes beyond the walls of

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Lynch, *Pastoral Care and Counseling* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock: A Handbook on Pastoral Ministry, Counseling, and Ministry*, New Edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> Richard L. Dayringer and H. Newton Maloney, eds., *Pastoral Care and Counseling in Sexual Diversity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002).

separation, including diversity of sexuality, is necessary for "healing spiritual brokenness and cultivating spiritual wholeness".<sup>4</sup>

Interfaith pastoral counseling has been the subject of academic initiatives in the last few decades from both the Church and counselors. Theology, Bible studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and social and economic sciences are only a few of the scientific disciplines that are involved in pastoral counseling.<sup>5</sup> Pastoral counseling is considered "a special activity, not a separate activity, of the Church's pastorate" by the Church. One unique way to "shepherd God's flock" is through pastoral counseling. Pastoral counseling is the process by which the Church offers guidance to the sheep under its care, "both preventively and remedially".<sup>6</sup> To consider pastoral therapy, counselors and the Church confront the topic of "sexual diversity" in their clients.<sup>7</sup> "Healing spiritual brokenness and cultivating spiritual wholeness" requires "inclusive pastoral counseling" that transcends boundaries and considers sexual diversity.<sup>8</sup>

### **Problem Formulation**

- (1) How the transwoman community manages psychological and spiritual crises brought on by social and spiritual exclusion before getting interfaith pastoral counseling?
- (2) How does interfaith pastoral counseling contribute significantly to the psychological and spiritual well-being of transwomen?

### **Research Objectives**

- (1) Bringing to light the problem of spiritual and psychological orphanhood that the transwoman community endures as a result of social and spiritual marginalization.
- (2) Supporting pastoral counseling initiatives aimed at restoring transwomen's spiritual and mental well-being.

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<sup>4</sup> Howard J. Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry for Healing and Growth*, Revised and Updated Edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Lynch, *Pastoral Care*.

<sup>6</sup> Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*

<sup>7</sup> Dayringer and Maloney, eds., *Pastoral Care*.

<sup>8</sup> Clinebell, *Basic Types*.

## REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To identify any gaps that might allow us to do additional study on the topic of interfaith pastoral counseling, we evaluated relevant papers. Our main area of interest is the pastoral interventions given by faith communities to the problem of trans women's spiritual well-being. Rather than being thorough, we think the research topics, research strategies, and solutions we provide in this study are innovative. New theoretical frameworks about trans women as God's people in faith communities, their equal call to holiness before God, and their quest for spiritual well-being after experiencing spiritual orphanhood are also necessary when thinking about interfaith pastoral counseling.

### Review of Related Studies

A pastoral service to "reach marginalized persons" is pastoral counseling.<sup>9</sup> Pastoral counseling is extremely necessary for people or social groups experiencing difficulties, such as transwomen. The mission of pastoral counselors is to "accompany counselees who experience emptiness to find true happiness in God".<sup>10</sup> The counselee is set free "from the root of his/her life's problems" by pastoral counselors.<sup>11</sup> Pastoral counseling can have a significant positive effect on a person's psychological and spiritual well-being to bring about complete personal development. The transwoman community finds it challenging to "have life, even have it in abundance" (John 10:10) because they do not receive pastoral counseling.

Counseling "guides, assists and directs the counselees" as a pastoral service.<sup>12</sup> According to M. Born-Storm, pastoral care is "the service of seeking and finding members of the congregation one by one so that they experience strengthening of the faith",<sup>13</sup> which Tu'u quotes. To "use response models of probing, understanding, interpreting, evaluating, and acting which culminate in action responses" from the counselee is the goal of pastoral counselors.<sup>14</sup> Pastoral counseling "represents two fields of applied science, namely counseling which is an applied science from

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<sup>9</sup> Tulus Tu'u, *Dasar-dasar Konseling Pastoral: Panduan Pelayanan bagi Konseling Gereja* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi, 2021), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Tu'u, *Dasar-dasar*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Tu'u, *Dasar-dasar*, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Tu'u, *Dasar-dasar*, 18.

<sup>13</sup> Tu'u, *Dasar-dasar*, 19.

<sup>14</sup> Tu'u, *Dasar-dasar*, 19-20.

psychology, and pastoral which is an applied science from theology".<sup>15</sup> Per *ibid*, it can "touch all aspects of human psychological and spiritual needs."

Transwomen should be aware of the goals and effects of spiritual service activities that religious communities plan before they engage in them. In order to draw transwomen in, pastoral counselors must create pastoral counseling that is visually appealing. In order for their religion to be fully formed and for them to overcome negative stigma, pastoral counseling is necessary. Pastoral counselors can utilize the account of Jesus approaching the Samaritan woman in John 4:1–42 to help them relate to transwomen.<sup>16</sup> The Church may be called to engage in pastoral care for transwomen as a result of its outreach initiatives (Moreno, 2019).

We vehemently disagree with the opinions of Olivia Yusuf and Veydy Yanto Mangantibe, who regard transwomen as victims of "gender identity disorder." They consider pastoral counseling "as one of the right choices in helping transwomen to see and realizing their wrong existence before God, returning to their identity as complete men, and bringing them to experience restoration of their relationship with God, the Creator, through repentance" (2021: p. 104), using a qualitative research methodology. In their opinion, "to serve transwomen, a counselor must first take them out of their community, place them in an environment of normal people, so that they can begin to get used to, behave and live life like normal people in general" (p. 66), as opposed to providing pastoral counseling within the transwomen community.

The narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19:1–11, as well as the law against homosexual behavior in the Book of Leviticus 18:22 and Paul's Letter to the Church in Romans 1:26-27 (2021: p. 45), are cited by Katrina So'langi,<sup>1</sup> Fibry Jati Nugoho, Yusup Rogo Yuono, Chlaodhius Budhianto, and Daryanto as examples of sinful behavior. Pastoral counseling is also based on the statement made by Jesus in Mark 2:17, "not to the righteous, but to sinners." "Help LGBT people, free them from all the shackles of sin, and guide them to know God's love well and truly" is the stated goal of pastoral therapy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (p. 42). Pastoral counselors at Gereja Jemaat Kristen Indonesia Oikos Pelangi Kasih Semarang

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<sup>15</sup> Marthen Nainupu, *Peduli terhadap Sesama melalui Konseling Pastoral* (Malang: Media Nusa Creative, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> T. H. W. Kristyanto and R. P. Sianipar, "Pastoral Konseling Discipleship-Based Counseling for Terminal Patients: A Supportive and Empowerment Care," *Jurnal Apokalupsis* 13, no. 1 (June 2022): 40–69

are involved in empowering LGBT people to satisfy their physical needs in addition to offering spiritual services (p. 49).

Dwi Indarti Utami Dewi suggests "acceptance" as a strategy for Christian pastoral counseling based on Christian friendship without bounds (Luke 7:34), utilizing the library research. The psychological health of transwomen is improved when their sexual identity is accepted. Christian pastoral counselors can better understand transwomen if they have a basic understanding of queer theory. The goal of compassionate pastoral counseling is to give counselees acceptance, support, and nurturing. For transwomen, it turns into a secure spiritual environment. Mutual acceptance arises when Christian pastoral counselors and counselees have a relationship based on interpersonal trust. Pastoral counselors who identify as Christian have an opportunity to share Christ, encourage transwomen to rely on His love and demonstrate God's calling for them (2019: p. 95).

### **Theoretical Framework**

A transwoman is "a man who shows attitudes and behavior towards a woman," according to Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia. Despite having a male reproductive system at birth, a transwoman "identifies as a woman." Prejudices, stereotypes, and even subliminal stigmas against transwomen are present in the aforementioned definition. Society frequently views transwomen as outsiders who experience social orphanhood due to the stigma associated with them as psychologically and even sexually abnormal. While renting residences temporarily, they establish little communities for mutual support. Transwomen are stereotyped by society as having undesirable occupations as street singing, scavengers, salon workers, unofficial businesses, and even sex workers. Since church communities often hinder their spiritual journey, they also frequently experience spiritual orphanhood.

Children today often seem orphans, lacking fathers. The Church too needs fathers. Saint Paul's words to the Corinthians remain timely: "Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers" (1 Cor 4:15). Every priest or bishop should be able to add, with the Apostle: "I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (ibid.). Paul likewise calls the Galatians: "My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!" (4:19) (*Patris Corde*, art. 7).

In light of the various sexual orientations that exist in our culture, transwomen are today recognized as human beings with distinct sexual orientations. They are complete members of religious groups in the same way that they are complete citizens of society. Despite going through "spiritual orphanhood," transwomen persistently look for places inside religious communities where they might find spiritual well-being. Transwomen reread and reinterpret the Bible to find God's will for people who are viewed by their religious communities as sexually immoral and spiritually aberrant. Transwomen persistently seek God in their lives through faith communities, even though it is frequently exhausting for them to encounter religious antagonism, even violence, due to their distinct sexual orientation. They believe that in the end, their journey of faith in God will bring them to a state of spiritual well-being.

People's spirituality and values actually can serve one or more of three functions in relationship to their overall well-being. They can be negative or destructive forces that contribute to people's shame, guilt, anxiety, distrust, self-rejection, and blocked growth. I call this "pathogenic" religion and ethics.... Religious beliefs and values can be positive, constructive forces contributing to people's ability to be loving, trusting, productive, creative, joyful, and growing. I call these beliefs and values "salugenic." In our society, many people's beliefs and values can also be largely irrelevant to their deep needs, problems, hunger, and growth striving (Clinebell, Ch. 10).

## RESEARCH METHOD

Transwomen's spiritual orphanhood is revealed by using qualitative study methodologies and a descriptive-analytic design at Seruni Community, Jl. Solo Km. 8, RT 05/RW 28, Rejowinangun, Kalongan, Maguwoharjo, Depok, Sleman, Yogyakarta (Silverman, 2016 & 2017; Sugiyono, 2021). In January 2024, we closely studied their everyday behaviors to gain a deeper understanding of their spiritual orphanhood. Semi-structured interviews conducted in February and March 2024 provide additional support to the qualitative data about their spiritual orphanhood and their pressing need for interfaith pastoral therapy. The scholarly credibility of qualitative data is reinforced by audio-visual recording. Techniques for gathering data are characterized by triangulation. We consider this topic of ecumenical pastoral counseling for transwomen using an inductive approach to data analysis, and our conclusions are transferable.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Without support, transwomen frequently struggle with the existential issue, "Who am I?" The existential question above truly comes from the depths of their humanity in the face of biases, preconceptions, and even social stigmas that they grow up to be transwomen because they were raised in the wrong social circle and are infected by homosexual culture. Their identity as transwomen is strengthened when significant others—especially parents and family members—accept them. Yogyakarta's acceptance of transwomen's existence has gone through highs and lows. When extreme religious organizations started to form in the 2000s, Yogyakarta's population felt less secure than they had in the 1980s, when they were more accepting of their existence and openly expressed it in public. Transwomen experience trauma in response to acts of religious aggression and violence.

Aggression and violence against transwomen destroy their existence, just as social acceptance strengthens their existence. Because transwomen still identify as transwomen, it is frequently forbidden for them to be present or participate in places of worship. Transwomen must confront God as men, the original nature that God gave them at birth, according to fundamentalist organizations that claim to speak for religious communities. When people contest the legitimacy of their prayers to God, they encounter a comparable rejection. Their fundamentalist beliefs state that transwomen who continue to pray in this manner will never have their prayers answered by God. The Seruni community develops into a secure space where its members can worship the Almighty.

The Seruni community's transwomen acknowledged that they want for both spiritual and psychological support. The transwomen community is facing psychological and spiritual crises, which were discussed in semi-structured interviews with Mami Ruli, the head of the transwomen in the Seruni community, and Mami Endang, a member of the Seruni community. Because of religious intolerance and societal marginalization, transwomen endure psychological and spiritual orphanhood. The results of the study show how social and spiritual marginalization affect the psychological well-being and even the spiritual well-being of the transwoman population. Transwomen should hopefully get interfaith pastoral counseling to help them attain psychological and spiritual well-being.

Our first encounters and continued communication with the Seruni community make us aware of the presence of transwomen. We have finally been able



to see the transwomen in Yogyakarta who were invisible to us. Transgender women are marginalized in both the general public and religious communities, such as Indonesian Catholic churches. In reflecting on interfaith pastoral counseling, we seek to demonstrate the Church's pastoral repentance from its early rejection of transwomen's existence to its acceptance of them as members of the Indonesian Catholic Church. According to James Martin, SJ's *Building A Bridge*, which reflects on the existence of LGBT Catholics, it has "important pastoral implications" when we first recognize the presence of transwomen in the Seruni community and other communities located throughout Indonesia (Ch. 1).

Interfaith pastoral counseling begins with a broader understanding of transwomen. Without exception, all faith communities have a revitalized pastoral *diakonia* to welcome transwomen into our communities on a spiritual level. Transgender women yearn for spiritual acceptance in the faith communities they currently attend. Faith groups' spiritual participation creates a strong foundation for interfaith pastoral counseling design. The inclusion of interfaith pastoral counseling is diminished, if not completely hampered, by the rejections of some religious fundamentalist groups. In addition to having trouble accessing faith-based pastoral counseling, transwomen endure ongoing marginalization from faith communities following a period of societal exclusion.

The life that Jesus gives us is a love story, a life history that wants to blend with ours and sink roots in the soil of our own lives. That life is not salvation up 'in the cloud' and waiting to be downloaded, a new 'app' to be discovered, or a technique of mental self-improvement. Still less is that life a 'tutorial' for finding out the latest news. The salvation that God offers us is an invitation to be part of a love story interwoven with our personal stories; it is alive and wants to be born in our midst so that we can bear fruit just as we are, wherever we are, and with everyone all around us. The Lord comes there to sow and to be sown (*Christus Vivit*, art. 252).

As we did in earlier comparable studies when we cited recent scholarly works on faith-based pastoral counseling, some writers used Holy Scriptures to reinforce stigmatization against transwomen rather than to lessen stereotypes. Restoring the original nature that transwomen have inherited from God—who has predestined them to live healthily as men—is the primary goal of the faith-based pastoral therapy they provide to transwomen. Transwomen do not experience spiritual well-being

from faith-based pastoral treatment, which builds its stigmatized perspective on transwomen as persons who have sexual deviations, even serious transgressions. Because social and spiritual orphanhood are intertwined, receiving pastoral counseling based on religion exacerbates the anguish experienced by transwomen. Such pastoral counseling escalates barriers against transwomen, as James Martin, SJ puts it, rather than "building a two-way bridge."

Our encounters with transwomen prompt Catholic churches in Yogyakarta to consider the possibility that transwomen are spiritually excluded inside our ecclesial institution. As "a growing ethical decline, a weakening of the meaning of personal and collective sin, and increasing relativism" in the age of a knowledge-based society, prospective Catholic pastoral counselors need to reflect on prejudices, stereotypes, and even stigmas against the existence of transwomen (*Evangelii Gaudium*, art. 64). The superficial frivolity of classifying transwomen as individuals who undergo "disorientation in adolescence and early adulthood who are sensitive to change" must also be avoided by aspiring Catholic pastoral counselors. Transwomen are disparaged in these viewpoints as having "moral relativism," or even "extraordinary shallowness in moral discernment" (*ibid*).

In our times, "advances in the sciences and biomedical technologies have powerfully influenced perceptions about the body, leading to the idea that it is open to unlimited modification. The capacity to intervene in DNA, the possibility of inserting artificial elements into organisms (cyborgs), and the development of the neurosciences represent a great resource, but at the same time they raise serious anthropological and ethical questions".... "Moreover, in some youth circles, there is a growing fascination with risk-taking behavior as a means of self-exploration, seeking powerful emotions and gaining attention... These realities, to which young generations are exposed, are an obstacle to their serene growth in maturity" (*Amoris Laetitia*, art. 82)

In view of Pope Francis's beliefs, transwomen in the Seruni community suffer from both "spiritual orphanhood" and social orphanhood, according to their testimonies. The social orphanhood they experienced before to living in a "fatherless and motherless" society is frequently carried over into this spiritual orphanhood. Pope Francis urges the Catholic Church to act as a "loving mother and father" to her flock and to the people of the globe amid this dual orphanhood—both social and spiritual.

When we consider ecumenical pastoral counseling from the standpoint of the Catholic Church, this crucial and urgent demand resounds.

According to Pope Francis, who views the Catholic Church as "a home with open doors" (*Fratelli Tutti*, art. 276), we view interfaith pastoral counseling as a place that provides transwomen, who frequently experience both social and spiritual orphanhood, with a place to call home. The interfaith pastoral counselor and the counselee do not establish this relationship for pragmatic or utilitarian reasons. When interfaith pastoral counselors see transwomen suffering from social and spiritual orphanhood, they express a great deal of empathy. Transwomen regain a spiritual home through pastoral counseling that had previously vanished from their lives. When transwomen can build a new spiritual home as a community, they will experience spiritual well-being. Transwomen feel the symbolic presence of moms and fathers whose love has been absent from their life in their new spiritual home.

To create a "home" is to create "a family". "It is to learn to feel connected to others by more than merely utilitarian and practical bonds, to be united in such a way as to feel that our life is a bit more human. To create a home is to let prophecy take flesh and make our hours and days less cold, less indifferent, and less anonymous. It is to create bonds through simple, everyday acts that all of us can perform. A home, as we all know, demands that everyone work together. No one can be indifferent or stand apart since each is a stone needed to build the home. This also involves asking the Lord to grant us the grace to learn how to be patient, to forgive one another, and to start over each day (*Christus Vivit*, art. 217).

In light of the fact that Catholic students have previously called for a "clear, humanistic, and empathetic way" (*Christus Vivit*, art. 81) to explain homosexuality, aspiring pastoral counselors are urging the Catholic Church to clarify her teachings on sexual morality, particularly as they relate to transwomen. If ecclesial declarations lack these attributes, there is a chance that aspiring Catholic pastoral counselors will distance themselves from the Church. Prospective Catholic pastoral counselors are highly critical of the Church's involvement in creating "a space of judgment and condemnation" for transwomen, given the social exclusion that these women experience (Synods of Bishop, *Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, art. 39). "Who am I to judge someone who is gay and has good intentions and seeks the Lord?"

At this point in the research, our understanding of the characteristics that interfaith pastoral counselors should possess to support transwomen in the Seruni community in achieving their spiritual well-being is still very early on. We humbly adopt the description of a youth facilitator provided by Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia*. Until we can develop a profile of interfaith pastoral counselors based on longer-term, more in-depth interactions with transwomen, we temporarily adopt the following attributes. We anticipate that the need for competent interfaith pastoral counselors like those listed below will soon be met by interfaith pastoral counselors.

“Being a faithful Christian who engages with the Church and the world; someone who constantly seeks holiness; and someone who is a confidant without judging. Similarly, someone who actively listens to the needs of young people and responds in kind; someone deeply loving and self-aware; someone who recognizes his or her limits and knows the joys and sorrows of the spiritual journey.... A mentor should believe wholeheartedly in a young person’s ability to participate in the life of the Church. A mentor should therefore nurture the seeds of faith in young people, without expecting to immediately see the fruits of the work of the Holy Spirit.” (*Christus Vivit*, art. 246).

We must identify the fundamental beliefs that interfaith pastoral counselors must adopt while working with transwomen as counselees to assess whether or not interfaith pastoral counseling has improved the spiritual well-being of transwomen. Since "pathogenic texts" are frequently cited in religious aggression, including violence against transwomen, we must reread "salugenic texts" that we have misinterpreted concerning transwomen to establish interfaith pastoral counseling. In his public ministry, Pope Francis encouraged Christian pastoral counselors to follow Jesus' example of building relationships with people of all sexual orientations. Pope Francis stressed God's grace for everyone, without exception, based on the experiences of the Catholic Church with parents who are struggling with family members who have homosexual tendencies.

The Church makes her own the attitude of the Lord Jesus, who offers his boundless love to each person without exception. During the Synod, we discussed the situation of families whose members include persons who experience same-sex attraction, a situation not easy either for parents or children. We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while

'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence. Such families should be given respectful pastoral guidance so that those who manifest a homosexual orientation can receive the assistance they need to understand and fully carry out God's will in their lives (*Amoris Laetitia*, art. 250).

As transwomen share their life stories, interfaith pastoral counseling should be considered, particularly with those in the Seruni group. Reading the life histories of transwomen from an interfaith viewpoint is an important task during interfaith pastoral counseling since their personal histories frequently still leave signs of trauma, especially after facing social exclusion and religious persecution. Transwomen are encouraged by interfaith counselors to consider God's call to holiness from the standpoint of each new faith community that they have joined. Similarly, transwomen must acknowledge their sacred calling as believers and engage in the religious community as equal beings before God, as well as the larger society.

Many Christian communities already offer journeys of accompaniment in faith for homosexual persons: the Synod recommends that such initiatives be supported. In these journeys, people are helped to read their history; to adhere with freedom and responsibility to their baptismal calling; to recognize the desire to belong and contribute to the community's life; and to discern the best ways of realizing this. Thus, all young people, without exception, are helped to integrate the sexual dimension of their personality more and more fully, as they grow in the quality of their relationships and move towards the gift of self (*Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment*, art. 150).

## CLOSING

### Conclusion

Because of their social and spiritual orphanage, transwomen who join Yogyakarta's Seruni Community have psychological and spiritual problems. The primary cause of transwomen's orphanhood is now social exclusion, which intensifies into religious violence against them. Socially and spiritually, the community is marginalized. The transgender community, like Seruni, becomes "a home with open doors" for them, even though they frequently only reside somewhere temporarily. Transwomen have made an effort to foster conversation with society and religious communities from where they reside and go about their everyday business. Where

transwomen reside frequently serves as a place where they go to seek God when the closest religious communities do not fully accept them as members of their community. Transwomen teach faith communities that "building a two-way bridge" necessitates mutual outreach.

Faith communities must respond urgently and seriously to the reality of transwomen, who are at risk of religious abuse and aggression that keeps them from reaching spiritual well-being. One crucial pastoral solution to this problem is interfaith pastoral counseling. In their quest for spiritual well-being, transwomen frequently view faith institutions as "pathogenic" as a result of prior traumas brought on by religious violence and aggressiveness. If interfaith pastoral counseling conveys "salugenic religion," as Clinebell describes it, it will have a huge positive impact on the psychological and spiritual well-being of the transwoman community. It is our sincere desire that interfaith pastoral counseling would help to redefine interfaith communities as "open homes."

### **Suggestions**

Because additional clarification is needed regarding the informant data collected, the results drawn in this academic research are still quite speculative. Interpretation is still needed for rich data from semi-structured interviews with transwomen who served as informants in the Seruni Community. Because religious violence in the past has traumatized transwomen psychologically and that acceptance of "queer theology" is still relatively low in Indonesian faith communities, gradatum fortiter mode is necessary when rereading and reinterpreting Biblical texts, which queer theologians may find particularly familiar. The "salugenic" literature that religious communities employ to accept transwomen must be used by interfaith pastoral counselors. As interfaith pastoral counselors, we must promote more research into fresh biblical passages that provide credence to our work with transwomen.

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