

The Involvement of Catholic Youth in the Mission of Evangelization in the Digital Era at Kristus Raja Gido

Evimawati Harefa¹, Antonius P Sipahutar², Teresia Angelika Waruwu³

^{1,2,3} STP Dian Mandala Gunungsitoli Keuskupan Sibolga

Email: harefaevi@stpdianmandala.ac.id¹, parlin_nov@stpdianmandala.ac.id², teresiawaruwu10@gmail.com³

Abstract. This research explores the participation of the OMK (Catholic Youth) in the mission of preaching the gospel in the digital era at Kristus Raja Gido Parish. The digital era has brought significant changes in communication and the dissemination of information, including within religious contexts. This study aims to understand how the OMK of Kristus Raja Gido Parish utilizes digital technology to support and expand gospel proclamation activities. The research employs a qualitative methodology with a case study approach. Data was collected through interviews with OMK members, participant observation, and analysis of documentation, such as the social media platforms they use. The findings reveal that the OMK at Kristus Raja Gido Parish is enthusiastic about using social media for evangelization. They engage with platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram to share religious content that supports their faith journey. However, they also face challenges, such as a lack of self-confidence. This study concludes that the OMK's participation in the mission of preaching the gospel in the digital era at Kristus Raja Gido Parish is significant and has had a positive impact on their social lives. The research recommends that the church further supports these digital initiatives by providing technology training and developing content that aligns with the interests of the OMK.

Keywords: Digital era, OMK, Preaching Mission

1. INTRODUCTION

Christ came into the world to fulfill God's mission, which is the salvation of humanity. He carried out this mission as a prophet, priest, and king. As a prophet, Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God with authority and power. As a king, He demonstrated a leadership style that serves rather than being served. And as a priest, He sanctified all people through His self-sacrifice on the cross (Paus Yohanes Paulus II, 2021, no. 13).

This threefold mission of Christ was then continued by the Church, which He established through His apostles. Before ascending to heaven, Christ empowered His apostles, represented by the Apostle Peter. Jesus said to him, "You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The Church was created to spread the Kingdom of Christ everywhere for the glory of God the Father, and in doing so, to include all people in the redemption that brings salvation, directing the world truly towards Christ (Konsili Vatikan II, 1993b, no. 2).

All Christian believers are called to be witnesses of Christ, sharing in His prophetic, priestly, and kingly missions. Through baptism, they become members of Christ's body, gathered as the people of God, comprising the laity, religious, and clergy. Members of Christ, who have been united with Him through Baptism, the Eucharist, and Confirmation, have the

obligation to proclaim the Gospel. Therefore, the Church must earnestly strive to preach the Gospel to all people so that they may come to know Him. As it has been said, "Christ not only proclaimed the kingdom, but the kingdom is also present and fulfilled in Him." This calls us to deepen our understanding of the Gospel and to live it out in our lives (Konsili Vatikan II, 1993c, no. 3).

The OMK (Youth Ministry) represents the next generation, actively playing a vital role in continuing the life of the Church by bringing about change, beauty, and vitality in today's world. OMK members should have a strong awareness of their responsibility toward the world, nurture a genuine Catholic spirit within themselves, and dedicate their efforts to the work of spreading the Gospel. Essentially, OMK serves as the main driving force in the life of the Church, and its existence is seen as a foundational element for the Church's growth both now and in the future. OMK is the hope of the Church, the nation, and the country because OMK is a key factor in bringing about change. OMK members should understand that their primary duty is to spread the faith, to live a deeply Christian life, to proclaim the Kingdom of God, to sanctify, and to shepherd (Konsili Vatikan II, 1993a, no. 12).

The Church is a community of believers in Jesus Christ. This clarifies that the Church's efforts in utilizing social media are not solely the responsibility of Church leaders but are a collective responsibility of all its members. Therefore, the Church greatly encourages active participation from all members, particularly OMK. OMK is part of the millennial generation, which is characterized by a strong command of technology, including social media. OMK plays a dual role as both the successors and the determiners of the Church's future. Therefore, the proficiency of OMK in using social media needs to be developed. Today, OMK must be able to utilize social media as a means of spreading the faith (Rohid, 2023, hlm. 55).

Technological discoveries and digital communication tools have certainly enabled the Church's message to reach a wider audience. This means that social media and digital technology greatly assist the Church in its mission. Communication media bring important benefits and advantages to the Church. The internet, in particular, has become an essential tool for many Church activities and programs, such as evangelization, catechesis, faith education, and various forms of spiritual and pastoral guidance (Dewan Kepausan untuk Komunikasi Sosial, 2019).

In light of the current times, evangelization in this era needs to be contextual, especially considering the state of today's generation, which is heavily influenced by advancements in digital technology. People have become individuals of faith whose actions are greatly shaped by the rapid accessibility of technology and information. In other words, Christ assists the

faithful, especially the OMK (Youth Ministry), to succeed in life by embracing God's calling and demands, namely, becoming messengers of the Gospel through available technology, such as social media. However, the reality today is that OMK often misuses these tools. Nowadays, OMK members frequently post about their daily activities, statuses, and lifestyles on social media rather than engaging in the mission of spreading the Gospel.

Based on the researcher's observations of the OMK, particularly those at Christ the King Gidö Parish, it appears that they are more inclined to engage in online activities unrelated to religion, such as social media or gaming, rather than participating in Church activities. This trend is driven by the rapid advancement of technology, which has led young people to focus more on themselves and their material needs rather than their spiritual lives. Unconsciously, they have even neglected God and all spiritual activities, including prayer. Interviews with OMK leaders revealed that the OMK at Christ the King Gidö Parish are less interested in spiritual life, which is quite different from the Church's expectation that young people should actively involve themselves in Church life (Interview with the chairman of the OMK Kristus Raja Gido Parish, Monday 5 February 2024 at Gido Pastoran).

Given this reality, the Church has a responsibility to raise awareness among OMK that they are both the subjects and objects of evangelization. In their mission and service, the presence of OMK is truly felt by the faithful as intermediaries of God through the activities they carry out both inside and outside the Church. Moreover, they have the capability to utilize digital technology, such as social media, to broadcast and teach the Gospel (Rohid, 2023, hlm. 58).

2. METHOD

In this research, the author employs a qualitative research method, specifically using a case study approach. Case studies are a qualitative research approach that involves an in-depth examination of a group of individuals, institutions, and so on over a specific period. In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling, selecting data sources that have relevant knowledge pertaining to the research topic and the study's needs, particularly regarding the participation of the Catholic Youth (OMK) in the mission of evangelization in the digital era at Kristus Raja Gidö Parish. Data collection techniques included observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman model, which involves three processes: data reduction, data display, and data verification.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The mission of evangelization is the message of Jesus to His disciples to proclaim the good news to the Christian faithful, which has now become the duty and responsibility of all Christians. The mission of evangelization also means spreading the love and truth of Christ both within the Church and in the broader community, helping people to know and experience Christ's love in their lives. Evangelization is not a choice to be considered but a command that every Christian must carry out. This mission is not just about words; it must be lived out and practiced in daily life. OMK as an integral part of the Catholic Church's mission to pass on the faith to future generations, must consciously understand their duty and responsibility to share the Gospel with others. This involves education and formation processes aimed at deepening their faith, helping them to better understand Catholic teachings, and preparing them to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world, for example, by participating in liturgical activities, service projects, and evangelization efforts.

According to the information gathered by the researcher, most of the OMK members at Kristus Raja Gido Parish understand the meaning of the mission of evangelization and have been actively engaging in it. The OMK at Kristus Raja Gido Parish is enthusiastic about evangelization, one of their activities being visits to outstations to conduct catechesis and to encourage other OMK members to be more committed to service. In this digital era, OMK also uses technological tools as a means to carry out the mission of evangelization. Every activity and moment from these visits is posted on social media accounts, accompanied by captions featuring Bible verses or spiritually meaningful words used that day. This is an effort by OMK to inspire Christians worldwide to love Christ and to live according to His teachings, thereby becoming messengers of the good news to others.

The researcher also found that the Catholic Youth (OMK) at Kristus Raja Gido Parish understands the meaning of the mission of evangelization and is aware of their duties and responsibilities as the future of the Church. They recognize the importance of spreading the teachings of the Gospel using digital platforms, not only within the Church but also globally. This is a crucial task because it can help people come to know and experience God's love, which has the power to transform lives. The researcher also discovered that many OMK members are involved in evangelization through social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and others. However, they face challenges, such as the lack of interest from others in reading spiritual content, let alone practicing it. Additionally, there are still many people who respond negatively or argue against the truths being shared. Moreover, the researcher found that some OMK members participate less due to a lack of confidence and fear

of receiving negative comments that don't align with the image they present online. Therefore, the informants strongly hope for support and effective strategies from the Church leaders and parents to maximize OMK participation in the mission of evangelization.

Jesus Christ entrusted His disciples with the mission of fulfilling His threefold office: to be kings, prophets, and priests. OMK as the future of the Church, is certainly aware of this responsibility. In their role as prophets, OMK members are called and sent to bear witness to the faith through their lives. The prophetic calling is inseparable from the call to persevere in the mystical life of Christ. As kings, OMK members take part in the royal duty of proclaiming the Kingdom of God to all people. In their role as priests, OMK members must be capable of building fellowship with others, involving everyone in planning and achieving the goals of OMK, supporting one another, and demonstrating trust and loyalty. Through the sacrament of baptism, Christians, especially OMK as the primary drivers, can use social media as a means of evangelization to fulfill their responsibility as Christians. In the digital era, OMK already understands social media well as a tool for communication and sharing information in text, video, and audiovisual formats. The researcher found that OMK shares the good news within them by reflecting on God's goodness with others. Therefore, OMK often shares Bible verses on their social media accounts.

Based on observations, interviews, and documentation, the researcher found that the OMK at Kristus Raja Gidö Parish has actively participated in the mission of evangelization. In this digital era, OMK at Kristus Raja Gidö Parish, who are familiar with social media as it is a necessity for young people today, are using it as a tool for evangelization. OMK members who understand their role as the future of the Church use these platforms to share the Gospel with others by posting about their activities, spreading the good news they have received, and conducting catechesis with the faithful during their missionary work in the outstations.

4. CONCLUSION

The mission of evangelization is a task that the Church views as a mandate or direct command from Jesus for our role in this world. The mission is initiated by God, who sends His people to clearly proclaim the Gospel. It is not a choice to be considered but a command that must be carried out. The purpose of the mission is to restore the relationship between humanity and God, lead people to know the one true God, and glorify Him. The mission also represents God's plan of peace to save and establish His kingdom on earth, which must be fulfilled by every believer through service to others (Nasa, [tanpa tahun]).

Based on the research conducted, the participation of Catholic Youth (OMK) in the mission of evangelization in the digital era at Kristus Raja Gido Parish has been realized, although not all OMK members participate in the mission. OMK at Kristus Raja Gido Parish has utilized digital technology as a tool for evangelization, even though many OMK members feel insecure about what they want to share on their personal social media accounts. One example of the parish OMK's involvement in the mission is their visits to outstations, which they post on social media with captions containing the Gospel message delivered that day. In this way, OMK has indirectly spread the Gospel to the entire world through digital technology (interview with informant H on Thursday, May 2 2024).

REFERENCES

- Dewan Kepausan untuk Komunikasi Sosial. (2019). *Gereja dan internet* (A. Susanto, Penerj.). Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI.
- Konsili Vatikan II. (1993a). *Dekrit tentang kegiatan misioner Gereja (Ad Gentes)* (R. Hardawiryana, Penerj.). Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI-Obor.
- Konsili Vatikan II. (1993b). Dekrit tentang kerasulan awam (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*). Dalam R. Hardawiryana (Penerj.), *Dokumen Konsili Vatikan II*. Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI-Obor.
- Konsili Vatikan II. (1993c). Dekrit tentang upaya-upaya komunikasi sosial (*Inter Mirifica*). Dalam R. Hardawiryana (Penerj.), *Dokumen Konsili Vatikan II*. Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI-Obor.
- Nasa, R. (n.d.). *Gereja dan misi dalam konteks masa kini menurut Injil*. [tanpa penerbit].
- Paus Yohanes Paulus II. (2021). *Ensiklik tentang tugas perutusan Sang Penebus (Redemptoris Missio)* (F. Borgias & A. S. Suhardi, Penerj.). Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan KWI.
- Rohid, S. (2023). Pewartaan iman oleh OMK St. Agustinus Ketapang dalam media sosial. *Filsafat Teologi*, 4(1).