

The Ignatian Discernment Approach in Building the Identity of Catholic Youth Amid the Digital Age

Ricardo Putrawan Gowasa

Parahyangan Catholic University Bandung

Email: rivanrenimus1697@gmail.com

Hendra Famaugu

Faculty of Moral Theology, University of Navarra, Spain.

Email: hendra.famaugu@gmail.com

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Abstract

Discernment is an important tool in forming the identity of Catholic Young People (OMK) amidst the challenges of modernity characterized by secularism, individualism, and materialism. The influence of modernization and globalization makes it difficult for OMK to find their identity. In this context, they often experience confusion and an identity crisis, especially when they have to choose between different value cultures. A crisis of values, morals, and role models often clouds the direction of young people's lives. This article explores the role of discernment in helping OMK recognize their calling in life, discern God's will, and build an authentic relationship with God. Using an Ignatian approach, discernment is described as a means of sorting out the movements of the spirit, understanding consolation and desolation, and integrating Christian values in decision-making. This article employs a literature review approach covering sources from spiritual theology, youth studies, and pastoral approaches to analyze the impact of social, technological, and materialistic cultural changes on the identity crisis of OMK. The article emphasizes the importance of parents' roles in modeling and transmitting the Catholic faith, spiritual accompaniment, contextualized faith education, utilization of digital media, and experiences of encounter through social action to help OMK build a Christian identity amid the challenges of secularism and digitalization.

Keywords: *secularism, digitalization, young Catholics, identity crisis, discernment*

Abstrak

Discernment menjadi sarana penting dalam membentuk jati diri Orang Muda Katolik (OMK) di tengah tantangan modernitas yang diwarnai dengan sekularisme, individualisme dan materialisme. Pengaruh modernisasi dan globalisasi membuat OMK sulit menemukan jati dirinya. Dalam konteks ini, mereka sering mengalami kebingungan dan krisis identitas, terutama ketika mereka harus memilih di antara berbagai nilai budaya. Krisis nilai, moral, dan

panutan sering kali mengaburkan arah hidup anak muda. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi peran *discernment* dalam membantu OMK mengenali panggilan hidupnya, memahami kehendak Allah, dan membangun relasi yang otentik dengan Allah. Dengan pendekatan Ignasian, *discernment* digambarkan sebagai sarana untuk memilah-milah gerakan roh, memahami penghiburan dan kesedihan, serta mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai Kristiani dalam pengambilan keputusan. Artikel ini menggunakan pendekatan studi literatur yang mencakup sumber-sumber teologi spiritual, studi tentang kaum muda dan pendekatan-pendekatan pastoral untuk menganalisis dampak perubahan sosial, teknologi, dan budaya materialistis terhadap krisis identitas OMK. Artikel ini menekankan pentingnya peran orang tua dalam memberikan teladan dan pewarisan iman Katolik, pendampingan rohani, pendidikan iman yang kontekstual, pemanfaatan media digital, dan pengalaman perjumpaan melalui aksi sosial, untuk membantu OMK membangun jati diri Kristiani di tengah tantangan sekularisme dan digitalisasi.

Kata Kunci: *sekularisme, digitalisasi, kaum muda Katolik, krisis identitas, discernment*

1. Introduction

The influence of modernization and globalization is one of the challenges of the times that cannot be avoided by today's society. Modernization and globalization affect various aspects of life, such as technological developments, social changes, mindsets, and lifestyles.¹ The rapid development of technology on the one hand provides very broad access to information and global interaction, but on the other hand also brings new challenges in managing the amount of information available. Moreover, social changes resulting from modernization and globalization have also led to an increasingly secular and individualistic society.² Growing secularism means that religious values and spirituality are often seen as individual choices rather than social obligations. Meanwhile, individualism is strongly dominated by personal freedom, autonomy and self-achievement.³ Both of these have a negative impact on people's lives, especially for young Catholics (OMK) today.⁴

The complexity of today's challenges has a direct impact on the faith life of OMK.⁵ Social changes, technological developments, and materialistic cultural pressures have a major influence on the faith life of OMK.⁶ This phenomenon triggers an identity crisis among the OMK.⁷ An identity crisis occurs when a person is uncertain about who they are and what their purpose in life is, especially in terms of faith and spirituality. In this case, not a few OMK find it difficult to maintain their identity as followers of Christ. This can be seen from the empirical data in the *OMK 2023 Faith Militancy Survey* organized by the Commission on Youth of the

¹ R. D. Nasution, *Pengaruh Modernisasi dan Globalisasi terhadap Perubahan Sosial Budaya di Indonesia* (Jurnal Penelitian Komunikasi dan Opini Publik, 2017) 21(1) 30-42.

² M. Arif, *Individualisme Global di Indonesia (Studi Tentang Gaya Hidup Individualis)* (Ed. 2018) 12-15.

³ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁴ Selanjutnya, Orang Muda Katolik disingkat OMK.

⁵ Daniel Lapsley & Kathryn Kelley, "On the Catholic Identity of Students and Schools: Value Propositions for Catholic Education", dalam *Journal of Catholic Education*, Vol. 25, No. 1, (2022) 159-177.

⁶ Fides Del Castillo & Marie Antoniette Alin, "Religious coping of selected Filipino Catholic youth", dalam *Jurnal Religions*, Vol. 11, No. 9, (2020) 462.

⁷ Alfonsius Yoga Pratama, Antonius Denny Firmanto & Nanik Wijiyanti Aluwesia, "Urgensitas pembinaan orang muda katolik terhadap bahaya krisis identitas", dalam *Vocat: Jurnal Pendidikan Katolik*, Vol. 1, No. 2, (2021) 78-85.

Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KomKep KWI) which found that out of 482 respondents, less than optimal identity formation among OMK was one reason for the identity crisis.⁸

In the midst of this increasingly complex era, discernment is very important and relevant for everyone who believes in Christ, especially for OMK. The identity of OMK in this modern era faces diverse and complex challenges. Modernization and globalization generate a reality marked by diverse values and life choices, which often contradict Christian values. In *YOUCAT*, it is mentioned that besides opening up opportunities for evangelization, technological advances bring their own challenges for OMK. Many OMK face difficulties in distinguishing between true and misleading information. Exposure to social media and unlimited information has been shown to create confusion, social pressure, and identity crisis, which in turn affects the relationship with God and their community.⁹ Concern over this phenomenon of identity crisis prompted the author to examine discernment as a way out. Therefore, this article will explore the concept of discernment, analyze the challenges of OMK identity, and conclude with a pastoral offer as a solution. Although this article contains several contextual pastoral references, the theological concepts and pastoral reflections presented are universal and relevant across various cultural and social contexts, and contribute significantly to the development of academic and pastoral discourse related to youth identity formation and Ignatian discernment in the context of the modern age.

For this reason, the author considers discernment as one of the essential means to help OMK in sharpening their inner self and recognizing their identity amidst the noise of the modern world. Discernment can serve as a tool to help OMK in shaping their spiritual identity. Discernment allows them to explore various life choices more wisely and understand how these choices fit with the teachings of the Christian faith. Discernment not only serves as a means of decision-making, but also as an in-depth process of understanding self-identity, listening to God's voice, and finding true life purpose in daily life. In *Christus Vivit* it is affirmed that discernment is a way to help young people understand their life purpose, recognize their talents, and choose a life path that is in accordance with God's will.¹⁰ This article concludes that integrative pastoral accompaniment is key to the implementation of discernment for OMK.

2. Research Method

The method used by the author in this paper is a qualitative method with a literature study approach. According to Creswell (2018), literature studies are used to explore and analyze in depth and comprehensively theories, concepts, and previous findings related to a particular topic.¹¹ Snyder (2019) also argues that literature study is one approach that can be used in examining phenomena in depth through a variety of relevant literature data sources.¹²

⁸ Felicia Permata Hanggu, "Mendampingi dan Memuridkan Gen Z" Majalah HIDUP (09 Februari 2025) 10.

⁹ YOUCAT Indonesia, Katekismus Populer (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2012) 12.

¹⁰ Paus Fransiskus, Seruan Apostolik Pasca Sinode *Christus Vivit* (selanjutnya disingkat CV) (25 Maret 2019) art. 283-286.

¹¹ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Mixed Methods Procedures*, ed. Helen Salmon, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (London: Sage Publications, Inc, 2018).

¹² Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines, *Journal of Business Research* 104, no. August (2019): 333-39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

Therefore, the author collected the main points of discussion about the discernment spirituality of Saint Ignatius Loyola from ignatian books, especially in the book *Spiritual Exercises* as well as various other books, scientific journals, and magazines as support for this paper. In addition, the author also uses official documents of the Catholic Church that are relevant to the topic of study in relation to the identity crisis of today's younger generation and the Church's efforts in finding and strengthen self-identity amid the challenges of secularism and digitalization.

The data collection was carried out through a rigorous literature study focusing on relevant primary and secondary sources. The collected data were then analyzed using thematic content analysis, a meticulous and systematic approach to identifying recurring themes and patterns within the literature. The author conducted repeated readings, classification, and critical synthesis of pertinent texts to develop theological categories related to Ignatian discernment and youth identity. Each category was firmly grounded in theological reflection and supported by diverse sources, ensuring that the categories were not merely descriptive but embodied deeper theological meanings, thereby enabling a strong and comprehensive framework for discussion.

3. Discussion and Research Results

3.1 Definition of Discernment

Etymologically, the word discernment comes from Greek and Latin. In the context of the New Testament, *discernment* is often translated from the Greek word *diakrisis* which means “to distinguish,” “to judge,” or “to separate.” *Diakrisis* is the ability to distinguish between things that appear similar, as used in 1 Corinthians 12:10 and Hebrews 5:14, especially in the context of spiritual judgment. And in Latin, discernment comes from the word *discernere*, which means “to separate” or “to distinguish.” The word is made up of the prefixes *dis-* (meaning “to separate”) and *cernere* (meaning “to see” or “to understand clearly”). The meaning then evolved into the ability to sift, separate and carefully distinguish one object from another.¹³

In a spiritual sense, discernment means sifting through one's inner experiences to find their orientation and recognize their source.¹⁴ Orientation is one of the keywords in discernment. People's inner experiences tend to influence the direction one takes, the choices one makes; giving orientation to good or bad. To discover this orientation requires a certain awareness and understanding of experiences. Mental experiences involve thoughts, beliefs and considerations (at the level of thought), feelings and emotions (at the level of emotion) and desires and inspirations (at the level of will). Of course, these three states interact continuously and lead to the formation and development of attitudes, values and habits of thought and action.

Discernment is the effort to seek and discover God's will, precisely through the process of sifting through inner experiences and discovering its orientation. God's will can be understood as God's overall plan for man and the world (Eph 1:10); doing good and avoiding

¹³ Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality: Forms, Foundation, Methods* (Leuven: Peeters, 2022) 480.

¹⁴ Paul Suparno, *Discernment (Panduan Mengambil Keputusan)* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2009) 15.

evil, obeying His commandments, and living in love and building a better world. Discernment helps people to do only what God wants in a given situation, which is pleasing to Him here and now. Discernment teaches to carefully investigate and sort out between good and evil, between right and wrong. In this case, then, judgment is based on deeper insight and on specific criteria: the divine way leads to life (good and right), the non-divine way leads to death (evil and wrong).¹⁵

3.2 Biblical Basis of Discernment

The notion of discernment is deeply sited in the scriptures wherein we see numerous passages that accentuate discernment as a gift of God, a fruit of wisdom and a sign of Christian maturity. 1 Kings 3:9, the request of Solomon, shows that discernment is a divine gift enabling right decisions (James 1:5, Isaiah 55:8-9), etc. However, Jesus is the ultimate norm because His entire life, teachings, and mission are the absolute standard of divine truth. Jesus Himself was the object of discernment, a sign that caused opposition (Luke 2:34), with some accepting Him and becoming His followers, while others rejected Him and wanted to kill Him. This confirms that discernment does not only consider moral consequences or human rationality, but also refers to Jesus as the ultimate model of God's perfect will. Moreover, His cross is also the culmination of the paradox of Christian faith. As stated in 1 Corinthians 1:23-24, the cross appears as foolishness and a stumbling block to others, but to those who believe in Him, it is the power and wisdom of God. Therefore, discernment in the light of the cross leads everyone to see suffering as a path to new life in Christ. Discernment is not only about choosing good from bad, but also choosing according to the example of Jesus and God's plan of salvation.

Paul also exhorts: "Do not quench the Spirit, and do not despise prophecies. Test everything and hold fast to what is good. Abstain from all kinds of evil" (1 Thess 5:19-22). In the same way, Paul also urges the Romans to "discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom 12:2), i.e. "what is essential" and asks that the love of the Philippians "abound more and more in sound knowledge and all kinds of understanding, so that you may be able to choose what is good, so that you may be pure and blameless before the day of Christ the Lord" (Phil 1:9-10). This means that if we only have the "spirit of the world", we cannot discern exactly what is pleasing to God. John's first letter provides a clear and unequivocal norm on discernment:

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have arisen and gone out into the world. By this we know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus came in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God" (1 John 4: 1-3).

Discernment has received special attention in the Church's tradition. The Second Vatican Council used discernment when it stated that the Church must "read the signs of the times" and interpret them in the light of the Gospel.¹⁶ The Church as the center of Christian life invites its

¹⁵ Waaijman, *op.cit.*, 491.

¹⁶ *Gaudium et Spes* (selanjutnya disingkat *GS*), Konstitusi Pastoral tentang Tugas Gereja dalam Dunia Dewasa Ini, oleh Paus Paulus VI (7 Desember 1965), no. 4.

people to be sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit on God's plan and will for each person personally and communally.¹⁷

3.3 Discernment for Ignatius of Loyola

The need to interpret God's will (spiritual discernment) has accompanied the Church on its journey and demands constant reflection. This spiritual activity has become a classic in the Church and has outlined points throughout the history of Christian spirituality. Discernment flourished in the Church from the earliest times. Hundreds of years later, in the 16th century, came Ignatius of Loyola who was deeply rooted in this tradition. Discernment are as follows. *First*, Ignatius summarized the spiritual wisdom and tradition of the Church and provided helpful guidelines or rules. *Secondly*, Ignatius utilized discernment as a practical means to make decisions. He tried to examine and find the way of God's Spirit freely and gracefully.¹⁸

Ignatius was a nobleman. He was a valiant young man who did not give up easily. Ignatius was "captured" by God in a simple way, by having his leg wounded by a cannon during a battle in Pamplona, in 1521. In the process of his treatment, Ignatius experienced a spiritual transformation that made him feel a religious calling. Ignatius began to experience inner illumination. Since then, Ignatius began to do discernment to find God's will in his life. One of the important topics in the *Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola* is "Discernment of Spirits". Spirits in this discernment are various movements of the soul or affective movements that affect human life. The spirit in question is the movements of the human mind or soul power, which includes the movements of the human mind, feelings and free will.¹⁹

In his book entitled *The Good Spirit and the Evil Spirit*, Paul Suparno argues that there are three basic forces (spirits) that influence the way people think, make decisions and act. *First*, human nature. The way people think and act is not always influenced by good or evil spirits. However, it can be influenced by habit, nature or human nature. *Second*, the *good spirit*. The good spirit is the Spirit of God who always leads to virtue, truth, fear of God, faith, gentleness, and justice. The characteristic of the Spirit of God (the good Spirit) is that it gives true joy and gladness. It is also the Spirit that encourages a person to reconcile with others, improve themselves and repent. The Spirit of God always gives inspiration, positive whispers and directs human life towards happiness, peace, joy, humility, faith and love (Gal 5:22-23). And *third*, the *evil spirit*. Evil spirits always try to counter the spiritual joy and consolation that a person experiences by offering false excuses and misguided views as well as cunning deceptions. With these cunning deceptions, the evil spirit wants to bring people down so that they do not progress in serving and glorifying God.²⁰

Discernment can be done by anyone who is willing to do spiritual exercises in daily life.

¹⁷ GS no. 11.

¹⁸ Rex A Pai, *Discernment A Way of Life (Membedakan Roh-Roh: Suatu Cara Membaharui Hidup)* (Medan: Bina Media, 2002) 18.

¹⁹ Jules J Toner, *A Commentary on Saint Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to the Principles and Practice* (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982) 12-15.

²⁰ Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, (London: Sheed and Ward, 1980), hlm. 340-342.

Discernment requires an understanding that everyone's life is a search for and implementation of God's will. Discernment can only be done in an atmosphere of prayer as it involves spiritual awareness and realization with God. Discernment is a means to carefully examine and understand God's will in each person's life. That is, discernment is a form of identifying a spiritual reality as distinct from other realities, which affects the life of faith and the development of each person on the journey towards God.²¹

3.4 Ignatius of Loyola's Forms of Discernment

Ignatius distinguishes two forms of discernment, namely "personal discernment" and "communal discernment." Personal discernment is used to investigate and choose decisions personally, while communal *discernment* is used to investigate and choose decisions collectively. Ignatius emphasized that choices and decisions do not first come from the emotional level or the rational level, but rather from the "heart" level, where everyone experiences consolation and desolation.²²

The process of personal discernment will be made easier by repeating it (with helpful guidance, if necessary). A sense of satisfaction and peace will come from it, which means that there has been a best effort to discern and follow God's will in relation to the matter at hand. The advantage of such a step-by-step process in discernment is that one can be helped to think clearly and reduce confusion. If one actively seeks God's will, then there will be a strong determination to constantly ask God to move him from within.

Discernment can also be done communally. This is to show that everyone is part of a family, work group, interest group, religious community, parish and other groups. Such groups can undertake collective discernment of important matters, which can influence the members of the group. It is a shared search in a climate of faith and prayer to discern and discover where God is calling individuals as a group.²³ Communal discernment has advantages,²⁴ namely the participation, involvement and contribution of everyone. Everyone is listened to with respect. In communal discernment there is no discussion and debate, but rather sharing of experiences, listening and seeking consensus in an atmosphere of prayer, with no winners or losers. All group members work together to reach consensus, so that all feel peace and joy in God's presence and action.

3.5 Identity of Catholic Youth (OMK)

In general, young people are those who are in the transition phase from adolescence to early adulthood (ages 13-35). During this time, young people are in a phase of self-identity search that involves significant changes in psychological, moral and religious aspects. Psychologically, young people are in a transitional stage characterized by more rational and

²¹ Suparno, *op.cit.*, 15.

²² Pai, *op.cit.*, 41.

²³ Paul Suparno, *Communal Discernment: Bersama Mencari Kehendak Tuhan dalam Komunitas* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2007) 23-25.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

critical cognitive development, as well as a search for life purpose and deeper self-understanding. Morally, they begin to question existing values, seek a clear basis for the difference between good and bad, and formulate their own moral views through personal experience and reflection. Meanwhile, in the religious dimension, young people progress towards a more personalized sense of faith, where they no longer rely on parental teachings or tradition alone, but begin to seek, select and establish religious values based on their own understanding and experience. This whole dynamic forms an evolving person who seeks to achieve a deeper understanding of themselves, their morality and their beliefs.²⁵

It is not too easy to determine the exact age limit of young Catholics (OMK). In a book entitled “Mentoring Young People”, Mangunhardjana categorizes the definition of young people based on age. He calls young people those who are in the age level of 15-40 years.²⁶ Meanwhile, the KWI Youth Commission calls Catholic Youth those who are in the age range of 13-35 years, have been baptized and are not married.²⁷ From this age range, it can be concluded that OMK are those who range from adolescence to early adulthood. The Church views OMK not as an age group, but rather as a community that has the potential to grow and develop, and play a role in the life of the family, Church and society. In this context, the challenges faced by OMK in modern times are becoming increasingly relevant.

In the midst of increasing complexity, it is not surprising that many articles highlight the lives of Catholic Youth (OMK). This article emphasizes the spiritual-theological dimension of discernment as the main foundation in the formation of OMK identity. This differs from the research by Pratama et al., entitled “The Urgency of Catholic Youth Development in the Face of Identity Crisis,” which focuses more on psychological aspects. This difference is worth noting, given that OMK are the “future of the Church” and a “source of hope” for families, the Church, and society. Given the challenges they face, it is important to understand how the spiritual-theological dimension can help OMK in finding their identity.

It must be acknowledged that OMK plays an important role in the life of the Church, not only as the next generation, but also as agents of renewal who bring Christian spirit and values into an ever-changing world. However, in reality, OMK are often adrift in their search for identity and faith, especially when they have to live in a multicultural and multireligious context like in Indonesia. They are often faced with the dilemma of choosing between living according to the values of faith taught by the Church or joining the flow of modernization and globalization that offers a different view of life. Secularization pushes young people away from the values of faith in favor of individualism and materialism.²⁸ In this context, they often experience an identity crisis, especially when they have to choose between the values of faith and the dominating secular culture.

The crisis of values, morals and role models often clouds the direction of young people's lives. In a fast-paced world that offers instant, individualistic, consumeristic, and apathetic lifestyles, OMK need to be empowered with a deeper understanding of faith and morality, so

²⁵ Indra Nugroho, *Psikologi Perkembangan: Dari Prakonsepsi Hingga Dewasa* (Jakarta: Kencana, 2006) 12-14.

²⁶ Mangunhardjana, *op.cit.*, 109.

²⁷ Sahabat Peziarahan, *Pedoman Karya Pastoral Orang Muda Katolik Indonesia* (Jakarta: Komisi Kepemudaan KWI, 2014).

²⁸ OMK Pasca-IYD 2023, *Majalah HIDUP* (16 Juli 2023): 4.

that they remain steadfast in the face of the changing times. In this reality, the biggest challenge is how to remain faithful to the Catholic faith amidst the growing wave of religious and cultural pluralism.²⁹ For this reason, intensive mentoring is needed to help young people find true meaning in their lives. Globalization demands OMK to be an active witness of faith in a heterogeneous society.³⁰

Another challenge is the change in family and community structure. Many OMK grow up in broken families that lack adequate spiritual nurturing. This affects their ability to be rooted in strong faith values.³¹ This is a concern for the Church, as Pope Francis affirms in *Christus Vivit* that young people often do not know where their lives are heading, and many of them feel lost without God. The Church is responsible for accompanying OMK, as seen in various pastoral programs at the diocesan level.³² The church needs to listen to the voice of OMK and accompany them on their spiritual journey. The church should be a safe place for OMK to explore their identity and find a better purpose in life.

3.6 OMK Discernment: Implementation of Ignatius Discernment Guidelines³³

In this modern era, many people use the term discernment to describe various methods of consideration in making decisions. However, for Christians, discernment refers to the process of recognizing and choosing God's will in daily life, with the aim of living a life in line with Gospel values. This process is especially important for OMK, who are faced with a variety of life choices and big challenges, whether in their personal lives, careers, relationships, or vocations.³⁴ For many OMK, this identity search process is often accompanied by confusion in choosing between the values of faith and the demands of a more individualistic and secular modern world. Emotional immaturity also makes OMK more vulnerable to social pressures and worldly offers that can lead to decisions that are not in line with the teachings of the faith.

Discernment is a very important tool for OMK to recognize God's guidance in their lives, choose the good path, and find meaning in their vocation.³⁵ The process of discernment is a process of separating between human desires that are often influenced by worldly temptations and the will of God that brings true happiness. Discernment is not just about choosing between two good options, but rather listening to God's voice and letting Him lead to a decision that is in line with their calling.³⁶ In this case, it requires honesty and inner awareness to be able to recognize the movement of the spirit within. For example, an OMK who is considering choosing a career could be trapped in the temptation to choose a job with high income, and sacrificing the time for Church service or jeopardizing his/her health. In this case, discernment helps the OMK to evaluate whether the decision brings inner peace and closer to God, or it adds worries and anxieties. Thus, OMK should develop the sensitivity to listen to God's voice that drives them towards true peace and joy.³⁷

²⁹ Mangunhardjana, *op.cit.*, 109.

³⁰ Rikard Bagun, "Strategi Komunikasi: Antara Makna dan Solusi," *Majalah HIDUP* (24 November 2024): 12-13.

³¹ Titus Jatra Kelana, "Ke Mana OMK Pasca-IYD 2023" *Majalah HIDUP* (16 Juli 2023): 16-17.

³² *YOUCAT*, *op.cit.*, 12.

³³ Ignatius de Loyola, *Latihan Rohani*, seri Ignasiana 5 (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1993) 170-175.

³⁴ Pai, *op.cit.*, 6.

³⁵ Konferensi Wali Gereja Indonesia (KWI), *Pembaharuan Hidup Kristiani Sebagai Karisma Roh* (Jakarta Pusat: Obor, 1995) 45-46.

³⁶ Pai, *op.cit.*, 21.

³⁷ Timothy M. Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* (New York: The

One important element in discernment is to recognize experiences of consolation and desolation. Consolation³⁸ refers to experiences that bring peace, joy, and encouragement to draw closer to God. In contrast, desolation³⁹ refers to confusion, doubt, or feeling distant from God. For OMK, these two experiences are very important to help them understand the direction of their lives.⁴⁰ For example, an OMK who is considering marriage may find consolation in a relationship that is based on genuine love and commitment in faith. However, if the relationship is driven by mere human attraction, or just for the sake of fulfilling personal and social needs, then desolation may come later on, such as dissatisfaction or a feeling of emptiness in the relationship. Therefore, OMK need to discern whether their decisions are in accordance with God's will or whether they are just following their own temporary desires.

Discernment also requires an attitude of vigilance against temptation in the guise of goodness. Ignatius reminds us that evil spirits often disguise themselves as "angels of light" (2 Cor 11:14) to mislead individuals.⁴¹ These temptations often start with ideas that "seem good", but gradually lead to decisions that are contrary to God's will. To overcome this, assistance from an experienced spiritual director is needed. This assistance helps the OMK recognize the pitfalls of evil spirits and make wiser decisions that are in line with God's will. In the discernment process, it is important to observe inner movements, including ideas, feelings, and desires that arise within. Through deep reflection, OMK can recognize whether these movements bring them closer to God or move them away from Him. This principle serves as a practical guideline to distinguish between good spirits that bring peace and evil spirits that create unrest.⁴² By understanding this difference, OMK can be more sensitive to the way God works in their lives, as well as more cautious of the deceptions of evil spirits.

3.6.1 Prayer as the Basis of Discernment

Prayer is an important element in the discernment process, which enables OMK to turn their hearts to God in an effort to understand His will.⁴³ Prayer is not only a form of communication, but also a means of faith growth and spiritual strengthening that enables them to remain sensitive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who guides them in making decisions that are in line with the values of the Christian faith. In prayer, OMK learn to listen attentively and purify their motivations, so that the decisions taken are not born out of personal interests or desires or outside influences that are contrary to God's will.⁴⁴ Through prayer, each person will receive clear guidance in responding to every inner movement, which is based on an intimate relationship with God. Since "prayer" is man's attempt to be present and live in His presence, *discernment* is also a form of prayer. Prayer enables them to deepen their relationship

Crossroad Publishing Company, 2005) 66.

³⁸ Toner, *op.cit.*, 94-115.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 122-143.

⁴⁰ Brendan Comerford, *The Pilgrim's Story: The Life and Spirituality of St. Ignatius Loyola* (Chicago: Loyola Press) 151.

⁴¹ Ignatius de Loyola, *op.cit.*, 175-180.

⁴² Gallagher, *op.cit.*, 132.

⁴³ Aumann, *op.cit.*, 399-340.

⁴⁴ J. Darminta, *Doa Berdoa* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1981) 17.

with God, direct all of life's struggles to Him, and renew their intention and commitment to follow the good and right path. Prayer empowers them to respond to situations wisely in the light of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵

3.6.2 Repentance as the First Step in Discernment

Repentance is a very necessary attitude in discernment. The discernment process helps everyone to increase self-awareness and repentance (*metanoia*).⁴⁶ Repentance is able to free OMK from worldly attachments and improve relations with God. As a process that contains elements of regret and transformation, repentance enables OMK to break away from sinful tendencies that hinder their ability to hear God's voice. In the face of the challenges of the times that often lead them to the temptation to pursue personal fulfillment or follow values that are contrary to the teachings of faith, repentance provides an opportunity to return to God and align life with His will. Repentance is a call to redirect life to God and embark on a journey towards a new life that is more in line with the teachings of Christ. As a fruit of repentance, OMK learn to share love and joy with others, which becomes a manifestation of a life that has been transformed by God's grace. Thus, repentance is a very important first step in creating a deeper self-awareness and readiness to live life according to God's will.

3.6.3 The Act of Choosing and Doing God's Will

After going through a process of prayer and repentance, OMK are required to make decisions that reflect God's will in every aspect of their lives. True discernment must be realized in concrete actions that are in accordance with the principles of Christian faith. In this case, OMK need the courage to choose a path that may not be popular or humanly profitable, but is in accordance with the teachings of Christ. This discernment process requires a keen inner sensitivity to assess life choices and actions to be taken in accordance with the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The actions taken should reflect the inner transformation that takes place in the discernment process.⁴⁷ In addition, the act of choosing and doing God's will requires a strong commitment to abandon our human tendencies and prioritize His will. Discernment insists on constantly testing and realizing life choices that are in harmony with the teachings of Christ, both in personal life, social relationships, and responsibilities as members of the Church. Thus, the act of choosing and carrying out God's will is the tangible evidence of discernment, which leads to the maturity of Christian life.⁴⁸

4. Conclusion: Youth Pastoral Offering

In this modern era, discernment has become an important tool for young adults and

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁶ *Metanoia* is an attitude of radical turning to God and believing in the Gospel. It is not limited to an intellectual order or a sense of regret, but an inner attitude as well as a concrete human action to return to God in response to the call and experience of God's mercy in human life. The Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures describe this attitude as the human act of admitting guilt, then regretting and repairing his relationship with God. [See Tom Jacobs, *Mercy for the Weak: Sacrament of Penance, Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1987) 68.

⁴⁷ Konferensi Wali Gereja Indonesia (KWI), *Pembaharuan Hidup*, *op.cit.*, 16.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

should be an integral part of pastoral activities in parishes. Through discernment, young adults can find meaning and purpose in their lives while building a strong and authentic identity. Therefore, the Church needs to continue to adapt and provide a space that supports the discernment process. Although there are many challenges, there are also opportunities for young people to deepen this practice in their daily lives. In line with this, the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI) urges parishes to provide programs that support the spiritual development of young people. Discernment must be seen and lived as an important life skill for young people, not only in making big decisions, but also in their daily lives. The Final Document of the XV Synod emphasizes that discernment is a process that enables young people to understand their purpose in life and build a strong Christian identity amid the challenges of the times.⁴⁹

Several pastoral measures can be taken to shape the identity of young adults. *First*, strengthening the role of parents, spiritual mentors, and an interdisciplinary approach in guiding young people. Parents have a central role in setting an example and passing on values of faith so that young people truly grow in their relationship with God.⁵⁰ In particular, parishes can provide regular family counseling sessions to help families face the challenges of today, such as divorce or social pressures, which often affect the ability of OMK to be rooted in values of faith. Spiritual mentors can also help young people toward spiritual and emotional maturity.⁵¹ This mentoring can take the form of deep dialogue, in which the Church not only listens to their spiritual needs but also encourages young people to find their authentic calling in life. In addition, an interdisciplinary approach to mentoring young people is essential to understanding their needs holistically, given the complexity of the challenges faced by the younger generation in this era.⁵² Guidance that involves collaboration between the fields of psychology, sociology, and faith teaching can help address issues such as anxiety, social media pressure, and the complex search for identity among young people.

Second, contextual and participatory liturgy and various spiritual activities such as retreats, recollections, and spiritual camps play an important role in deepening the faith experience of OMK.⁵³ Liturgy must be a heartfelt experience that is relevant to the lives of young people in order to foster their spiritual depth.⁵⁴ In addition, spiritual activities not only nurture spiritual life, but also increase sensitivity to movements of consolation and desolation, thereby strengthening their bond with the Church. Faith education that is relevant to the challenges of the times, including moral and spiritual aspects, becomes the basis for decision-making in line with Christian values. The use of modern media in this education, as proposed by Paul Suparno, including apologetics classes and workshops, helps bridge the value gap between faith and the secular world.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 62-64.

⁵⁰ CV art. 242-243.

⁵¹ CV art. 244-246.

⁵² Synod of Bishop, *op.cit.*, 62.

⁵³ Synod of Bishop, *op.cit.*, 58-60.

⁵⁴ CV art. 224.

⁵⁵ Paul Suparno, *Orang Muda Menjadi Jati Diri di Zaman Modern*, Kanisius, 2011, hlm. 92-94.

Third, the development of small, inclusive communities and the use of digital media for evangelization create a safe space that allows young people to share their experiences, discuss, and reflect on their spiritual journey. In the context of increasing individualism, these communities are important for building a strong faith identity and solidarity.⁵⁶ Digital media as an effective means of communication allows the Church to reach young people through creative content such as weekly podcasts and social media accounts that focus on reflection, faith testimonies, and relevant discussions. The Church needs to make the most of digital media to reach young people.⁵⁷ However, the use of digital media must be accompanied by strict ethics and integrity so that technological challenges do not undermine pastoral goals.

Fourth, the experience of encountering God in others becomes a central element of discernment. The courage to step outside of ourselves and see the face of God in others creates awareness of the suffering, injustice, and needs around us. The Church teaches that faith must be manifested in actions that bring change and joy.⁵⁸ Through the involvement of OMK in social programs such as community service, assistance for the poor, and ecological projects, the values of empathy and solidarity are not merely concepts, but are manifested in concrete actions that strengthen identity and counteract the tendency toward individualism.

However, although these programs have great potential in shaping the identity of OMK, it must be acknowledged that this study has limitations because it is only based on literature studies and therefore does not capture the empirical dynamics in the field. The focus on Ignatian spirituality has not been compared with other spiritual traditions, so further research is needed to test the effectiveness of these pastoral programs empirically through qualitative or quantitative methods. Therefore, these pastoral offerings are designed not merely as programs, but as concrete manifestations of Ignatian discernment in communal and personal life. These programs provide a context that supports OMK in recognizing, reflecting on, and responding to movements of consolation and desolation, thereby maturing their spirituality and aligning themselves with God's will amid the social and cultural revolutions of today.

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⁵⁶ CV art. 217-218.

⁵⁷ CV art. 87-88.

⁵⁸ Synod of Bishop, *op.cit.*, 46-48.

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