

**Synodality and *Kerygma*:  
Women's Involvement in Evangelization  
in St. Pius X Bengkayang Parish,  
West Borneo**

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**Abstracts**

Women are an integral part of the Church. Their involvement has a significant influence in pastoral work. However, the role of women is often still faced with a patriarchal culture that favors men. The Church continues to struggle with the issue of gender equality and is increasingly opening up space for the role of women. This study aims to analyze the involvement of women in the pastoral work of the Church, especially in the field of kerygma or proclamation, and how their role can be strengthened in the context of synodality. The main focus of this research is to understand the attitude of the Church that is necessary for women to actively participate in pastoral work, especially in the task of proclamation. The method used was a combination of descriptive quantitative and qualitative phenomenology. The research respondents were women who are members of the WKRI (Catholic Women of the Republic of Indonesia) categorical group of St. Pius X Parish, Bengkayang, West Borneo. From the results of the research, the Church's inclusive and supportive attitude is key to increasing women's active participation. The Church needs to implement policies related to women, conduct ongoing coaching and training, change women's mindset, and provide time flexibility. The results of this study can enrich the theory of synodality and feminism in religious contexts, as well as encourage Church pastoralists to implement programs that involve women and build collaboration with external parties.

**Keywords:** Synodality; Role of Women; Church; West Borneo

### Abstrak

Perempuan adalah bagian integral dari Gereja. Keterlibatan mereka memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan dalam karya pastoral. Namun, peran perempuan seringkali masih dihadapkan pada budaya patriarki yang mengunggulkan laki-laki. Gereja terus bergumul dengan isu kesetaraan gender dan semakin membuka ruang bagi peran perempuan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis keterlibatan perempuan dalam karya pastoral Gereja, khususnya di bidang kerygma atau pewartaan, dan bagaimana peran mereka dapat diperkuat dalam konteks sinodalitas. Fokus utama dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami sikap Gereja yang diperlukan agar perempuan dapat berpartisipasi aktif dalam karya pastoral, khususnya dalam tugas pewartaan. Metode yang digunakan adalah kombinasi fenomenologi deskriptif kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Responden penelitian adalah perempuan yang tergabung dalam kelompok kategorial WKRI (Wanita Katolik Republik Indonesia) Paroki Santo Pius X, Bengkayang, Kalimantan Barat. Dari hasil penelitian, sikap Gereja yang inklusif dan suportif menjadi kunci untuk meningkatkan partisipasi aktif perempuan. Gereja perlu menerapkan kebijakan yang berkaitan dengan perempuan, melakukan pembinaan dan pelatihan yang berkelanjutan, mengubah pola pikir perempuan, dan memberikan fleksibilitas waktu. Hasil penelitian ini dapat memperkaya teori sinodalitas dan feminisme dalam konteks keagamaan, serta mendorong para penggembala Gereja untuk melaksanakan program-program yang melibatkan perempuan dan membangun kolaborasi dengan pihak eksternal.

**Keywords:** Sinodalitas; Peran Perempuan; Gereja; Kalimantan Barat

### 1. Introduction

October 2019 was designated as the month of Extraordinary Mission by Pope Francis. One of the focuses of attention is the parish as a mission center based on the mission of Christ himself. To make the Parish a center of mission, it requires the involvement of all parties, both religious and laity.<sup>1</sup> One of the concerns is women. The involvement of women has an impact on the pastoral work of the Church. Several studies that have been conducted on women's involvement show that most of the pastoral tasks are carried out by women, for example in the areas of liturgy<sup>2</sup>, catechesis<sup>3</sup>, Church-Based Communities (GBC) mobilization, charitable

<sup>1</sup> Fransisca Romana Wuriningsih dan Nerita Setiyaningtyas, "Ensiklik Fratelli Tutti sebagai Kunci Pemikiran dari Evangelii Gaudium Mengenai Paroki sebagai Pusat Misi," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 23, no. 2 (2023): 192–210, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v23i2.432>.

<sup>2</sup> Ignasius Ledot and Maria Imakulata Tere, "Keterlibatan Signifikat Perempuan dalam Liturgi Gereja dalam Terang Dokumen Motu Proprio Spiritus Domini," *JPAK: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik* 23, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>3</sup> Afrida Odi, "Peran dan Liminalitas Perempuan Katolik Menurut Seruan Apostolik Mulieris Dignitatem di Desa Werang" 3, no. 1 (2022).

work, etc.<sup>4</sup> Pope Francis also recognizes that many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests.<sup>5</sup>

Engagement is the duty of all members of the Church. Therefore, within the framework of the Synod of Bishops in 2023, the theme of synodality is a major step in the reform of the Church. In this synod, the Pope expects the Church to be more open, and willing to listen and emphasizes that every member has a role in shaping the future of the Church including women.<sup>6</sup>

In the history of the Catholic Church, the role of women has been both highlighted and criticized by theologians and feminists. They consider that the *patriarchal* culture that prioritizes the role of men is an obstacle for women to work. Therefore, feminists demand emancipation, justice and equality between men and women.<sup>7</sup> According to Emanuel Gerrit Singgih, the progress and involvement of women in the Church have not been very significant. Women are often considered inappropriate to occupy positions such as theological figures, educational personnel, etc. Most of them only serve as spiritual leaders.<sup>8</sup> Most of them only act as spiritual leaders who are not very active in decision-making and teaching. In some cases this view is based on the interpretation of Scriptural texts that limit the role of women in the Church.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, according to Sedihati and Riste, women can to lead Church organizations that help the development of the spiritual life of the people.<sup>10</sup> One research written by Fransiska Widyawati, it shows that the contribution of women is increasingly concrete and significant. Many of them work in the field of *kerygma* or proclamation. They become catechesis facilitators, lead Scripture-sharing activities, compose and bring devotionals in Church-Based Communities (KBG), etc.<sup>11</sup>

The debate on the role of women is a concern of the Church. This concern is shown by issuing several Church documents on women. In the document *Mulieris Dignitatem*, the Church shows respect for the dignity of women. The Church is also trying to find pastoral ways to the place of women in the Church and society.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Pope Francis in the document *Evangelium Gaudium*, said that the Church recognizes the contribution of women in pastoral work. The Church will seek to create wider opportunities for the influential presence of women

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<sup>4</sup> Fransiska Widyawati, *Perempuan dalam Gereja Katolik Keuskupan Ruteng*, 1st ed. (Unika Santo Paulus Ruteng, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Fransiskus, *Evangelii Gaudium (Sukacita Injil)*, vol. 1 (Konferensi Wali Gereja Indonesia, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Internasional.

<sup>7</sup> Darius Darius, Surlanti Laen, and Melianus Melianus, "Spiritualitas Solidaritas Feminis Dalam Pandangan Yesus Dalam Kitab Injil Dan Relasinya Dengan Pemberdayaan Perempuan Di Gereja Toraja," *Sanctum Domine: Jurnal Teologi* 13, no. 2 (2024): 245–60, <https://doi.org/10.46495/sdjt.v13i2.226>.

<sup>8</sup> Kalintabu.

<sup>9</sup> Bu'ulolo and Tioma.

<sup>10</sup> Bu'ulolo and Tioma, "Kepemimpinan Wanita Kristen: Pengaruh Dan Tantangan Dalam Konteks Gereja Modern."

<sup>11</sup> Widyawati.

<sup>12</sup> Yohanes Paulus II, "Mulieris Dignitatem (Martabat Kaum Wanita)," *Seri Dokumen Gerejawi no 32*, no. 32 (2010).

in the Church.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, the latest document, Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church, also shows the Church's openness to women. They are given space in fellowship, participation and mission.<sup>14</sup>

From the above understanding, it is clear that the Church is struggling with the issue of gender equality. The Church continues to open space for women. Although there are many studies on the role of women, most of them focus on biblical and theological aspects, so data that pay attention to women's involvement in the pastoral context of the Church are still inadequate. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap. The author will analyze the involvement of women in pastoral work, especially in the field of *kerygma* or proclamation, and how their role can be strengthened in the context of synodality. The main focus of this research is to understand the Church's attitude towards women to actively participate in pastoral work, especially in the task of proclamation.

## 2. Method

The research method used is *mixed-method*, which is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. Quantitative research uses descriptive quantitative data analysis, namely by using frequency distribution and percentage description. It is called quantitative because the data is measured numerically (percentage of respondents) to display measurements of the variables studied so that it can produce conclusions that apply generally.<sup>15</sup> While qualitative analysis uses a phenomenological approach. According to John W. Creswell, qualitative research is an approach to understanding the meaning of individuals or groups derived from life experiences related to the phenomena that occur.<sup>16</sup> The researcher will explore the experiences of the respondents to the involvement of women in pastoral work, especially in the field of *kerygma* or proclamation, and how their role can be strengthened in the context of synodality. The main focus of this research is to understand how the Church's attitude towards women is to actively participate in pastoral work, especially in the task of proclamation. Data collection was done by distributing questionnaires to respondents in the form of *google form* and reinforced with some indirect interview questions. The respondents are women who are members of the Catholic Women of the Republic of Indonesia (WKRI) categorical group of St. Pius X Bengkayang Parish, West Borneo. Because the role of women is quite active in this parish, the author chose the WKRI ketegorial to be used as respondents in the study.

The closed questionnaire uses 4 Likert scales, namely (1) strongly agree (SS), (2) agree (S), (3) disagree (TS) and (4) strongly disagree (STS). Furthermore, the questionnaire data is deepened through interviews with open questions. From these results, researchers will process

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<sup>13</sup>Fransiskus.

<sup>14</sup> Internasional, "Sinodalitas dalam Kehidupan Dan Misi Gereja."

<sup>15</sup> Siregar.

<sup>16</sup> Suyadnya, Kholifa, and I.

and analyze the data. In quantitative data analysis, each answer category is calculated in the form of a percentage of the total respondents to provide an overview of the distribution of responses. Whereas in qualitative data analysis, researchers apply *bracketing*. The researcher must get rid of personal experience and focus on the respondent's experience. Next is the descriptive part that discusses the essence of the experience experienced by the respondents.

### 3. Findings and Discussion

#### 3.1 Research Results

From the results of the research through the questionnaire distributed, the researcher got a picture related to the equality of trust given to women. This can be seen in table 1 below:

Table 1. Trust in Women

No.	Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	Women have been entrusted with the pastoral work of the Church	56,7%	43,3%	-	-
2.	Women feel valued by the Church in carrying out their roles	63,3%	36,7%	-	-
3.	Women participate in leadership and ministry training organized by the Church.	38,7%	61,3%	-	-
4.	Women recognize that the Church's policies are an impetus for their work.	41,4%	58,6%	-	-

Table 1 shows the results of a questionnaire that uses a 4-point Likert scale to measure respondents' views regarding the equality of trust given to women. In the first question, all respondents agreed and strongly agreed that women have been given trust in the pastoral work of the Church. A total of 43.3% agreed and 56.7% strongly agreed, indicating a positive response to the role of women in the Church. Women feel accepted and that they are part of the Church. This trust inspires women to be bold in their involvement. This is reinforced by the answers to the second question. A total of 36.7% of respondents agreed and 63.3% strongly agreed that the Church values the role of women. Women feel more listened to when giving suggestions or ideas. They are starting to be involved in decision-making. This is what gives them the courage to play an active role in the Church.

The third question shows the Church's support in improving the quality of women. A total of 61.3% agreed and 38.7% strongly agreed that women participate in coaching and training

conducted by the Church. Women feel supported by the Church. They began to realize the talents within themselves as women. They feel more developed in evangelization through the formation and training held by the Church. In addition, women feel greatly helped by the existence of Church policies that open up opportunities for women to work. As many as 58.6% agreed and 41.4% strongly agreed that Church policy was one of the supporting factors for women's involvement. They feel a great responsibility to take part in the work of the Church. Women want to walk with the Church to realize fellowship, participation and mission.

In addition, there are other factors outside the Church that influence the role of women. This can be seen in table 2 below:

Table 2: Factors influencing women's involvement

No.	Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	Women are involved in the Church because of the influence of social norms	34,5%	65,5%	-	-
2.	Women are supported by local culture in their role in the Church	26,7%	73,3%	-	-
3.	Women are involved in the Church because of family support	43,3%	53,3%	-	3,3%
4.	Women with an adequate educational background feel more confident in carrying out their roles in the Church.	13,3%	56,7%	30%	-

Table 2 shows that external support influences women's involvement. In the first question, 65.5% agreed and 34.5% strongly agreed that social norms in society influence women's involvement. Restrictions on gender roles make it difficult for some women to play an active role in the Church. Patriarchal culture is a barrier. They feel that a woman's duty is only as a housewife. Women are not suited for leadership roles and they should be subservient to men. Based on the research, most of the respondents saw the development that occurred, where there was already an attitude of acceptance and respect for the role of women in society. As many as 70% of respondents are civil servants, and they work in the office as well as serving in the church. Although they have a dual role, women can carry out their duties well. They feel accepted and appreciated.

The second question shows that local culture influences women's involvement in the Church. A total of 73.3% of respondents agreed and 26.7% strongly agreed that women are supported by local culture regarding their role in the Church. In the Dayak tradition, women's involvement is also visible. In traditional ceremonies, women are assigned tasks even though

the main role is still with men. This involvement makes women feel accepted, valued and part of the tradition. They recognize that the acceptance of women in the culture encourages women to work in the Church. When the local culture accepts and values the role of women, the women feel that the Church will automatically give similar acceptance. They believe that cultural openness to women's contributions creates a strong foundation for the Church to do the same. In their minds, culture and the Church are two interconnected entities, so acceptance on the one hand will encourage engagement and appreciation on the other.

In addition, women's involvement is also influenced by family. 53.3% of respondents agreed and 43.3% strongly agreed with this. Some respondents said that their husbands and children were proud to see their wives or mothers active in Church ministry. Women with different religious family backgrounds also received support. Differences are not an obstacle. Family support means a lot to women.

The last question was related to women's educational background. A total of 56.7% of respondents agreed, 13.3% strongly agreed and 30% disagreed if educational background was the reason for women's involvement. Most women said that a good level of education increases their value and honor as women. Thus, they become more confident in carrying out their role in the Church. Education also affects their mindset and broadens their horizons. Education affects women's contribution to the Church. Then women are also able to guide their other sisters to play an active role in the Church. In addition, some respondents also said that educational background does not matter. The increased role of women in the Church is first supported by intention and sincerity. Ultimately, women recognize that they have gained significant trust in the pastoral work of the Church. Women feel empowered, valued, and supported, both by the Church and external factors, so that they can play a more active role in the pastoral mission of the Church, especially in evangelization.

The questionnaire results above were strengthened by interviews using open-ended questions. Table 2 below shows the results of the interviews related to the roles and challenges faced by women in carrying out their roles in the Church.

Table 3. Roles and Challenges of Women in the Church

No.	Main Theme	Number of Respondents	Answer
1.	Women assist the pastoral work of the Church	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We actively lead worship and take care of the Church liturgy. In addition, we also organize activities for the general public. We conduct social actions such as free medical treatment, helping victims of natural disasters, and visiting inmates in prison.</li> <li>• We have conducted guidance to parishioners and the general public. We</li> </ul>

			<p>conducted seminars on anti-domestic violence and sexual violence. In addition, we also do formation for children and young people as the next generation of the Church. This formation is very important for the development of faith.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I represent WKRI, joining the district-level community organization. I am in charge of catechesis. I do catechesis during turneys or when visiting rural stations. Cooperation with external parties is very important to build good relationships.</li> </ul>
2.	Women face challenges in fulfilling their roles in the Church	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have difficulty in dividing my time between family and ministry.</li> <li>• I feel that the Church lacks trust in women to lead. Our job is only limited to the decoration of the Church. I see that there is still gender inequality.</li> <li>• I had no support from my family.</li> <li>• We find it difficult to adjust to advances in technology, so we seem clueless.</li> </ul>

In Table 2, 3 respondents shared the activities they have been involved in. The first respondent said, "We actively lead worship and take care of the Church liturgy. Besides that, we also organize activities for the general public. We do social actions such as free medical treatment, helping victims of natural disasters, and visiting inmates in prison." The second respondent added, "We have conducted guidance to the congregation and the general public. We conducted seminars on anti-domestic violence and sexual violence. In addition, we also do formation for children and young people as the next generation of the Church. This formation is very important for the development of faith." Furthermore, the third respondent said, "I represent WKRI, joining the community organization at the district level. I am in charge of catechesis. I do catechesis during toourneys or when visiting rural stations. Cooperation with external parties is very important to build good relationships."

From the answers of the three respondents above, women expressed their involvement in the programs carried out, both in the Church and the general community and even the marginalized. They expressed involvement in services in the Church, but also played a very significant role in the community. Some of the programs they undertake are social action and formation for children, youth and adults. Based on their experience, this formation is very



important for the development of faith, especially for the next generation of the Church. In addition, women see the importance of cooperation with outside parties. For them, this collaboration can build good relationships with communities outside the Church.

Furthermore, women also expressed the challenges faced in carrying out their roles in the Church. There were 4 respondents shared their experiences. The first respondent revealed, "I have difficulty in dividing my time between family and ministry." The second respondent added, "I feel that the Church lacks trust in women to lead. Our job is only limited to the decoration of the Church. I see that there is still gender inequality." The third respondent further revealed, "I don't get support from my family." Then the last respondent added, "We find it difficult to adjust to advances in technology so that we seem clueless."

As women who have double duties, dividing their time between their duties at home and Church is very difficult. Some don't even get support from their families. This is an obstacle for women to work. In addition, women feel a lack of trust in the Church, especially in exercising leadership. Women still see gender inequality, as their duties are still limited. Women also recognize that the difficulty of adjusting to increasingly sophisticated technology has become their new obstacle.

Thus, despite the many challenges that women have to face, they have shown their involvement in the Church by playing an active role in pastoral work. In addition, they also collaborate with outside parties to expand their ministry.

After a process of research and data collection, key points were found that reflect the role of women in the pastoral work of the Church. These findings not only confirm the involvement of women in the Church, but also illustrate the challenges and opportunities they face in strengthening the role of women in pastoral ministry. Based on the results of the research, some of the key themes that emerged include the inspiration for involvement, involvement in the proclamation, challenges faced by women in pastoral work, walking with the Church and collaboration as proclamation with community organizations. The following is a description of the main points of the research that has been conducted.

### **3.1.1. Inspiration to Get Involved**

The respondents revealed that the importance of women's role in the Church inspired them to get involved. This involvement is supported by the trust given by the Church to women to carry out pastoral work. Although the Catholic Church is known for its strong patriarchal culture, most respondents stated that they felt accepted, valued and listened to when giving suggestions or ideas. Women are starting to be involved in decision-making.

This improvement in the quality of women is also influenced by Church policies that increasingly open up space for women to work. The church provides support through coaching and training, which according to the respondents made them aware of their ministry talents. They also felt their development, especially in terms of evangelization. The respondents acknowledged that Church policies have opened up opportunities for women to work. The

views of the respondents are in line with what was expressed by Ignatius Ledot and Maria Immaculata Tere, who stated that the involvement of women in the Church is a form of renewal in the Catholic Church. This spirit of renewal, born after the Second Vatican Council, is seen in policies that support the role of women, for example by involving them in liturgical duties.<sup>17</sup>

Women's involvement does not only stem from the Church itself, but is also influenced by local culture and social norms. This is in line with the views of Sedihati Bu'ulolo and Riste Tioma, who mention that strong social and cultural norms can be a barrier to the acceptance of women's leadership. Conservative views of gender roles and male dominance are often reinforced by tradition, religion or specific cultural demands. These norms create assumptions that limit women's roles in church leadership and hinder changes that give women equal opportunities to lead.<sup>18</sup> However, most respondents expressed a positive development, where women's roles are beginning to be accepted and valued. Women are no longer just seen as housewives, but are also recognized for their abilities in other areas, including in Church life. In Dayak culture, women are also involved in various traditional events, although the main role is still held by men. Women believe that cultural openness to women's contributions creates a strong basis for the Church to do the same. Acceptance in the culture inspires women to be more courageous in their involvement in the Church, especially in the area of evangelization.

In addition, respondents also recognized that family support had a major influence on their involvement. The family is where obligations to society begin. Every believer should remind his or her family members of his or her identity as the primary social core, and his or her basic role in society. Hence, the family becomes a more active and responsible place for proper growth and participation in social life.<sup>19</sup> Based on the research, husbands and children feel proud to see their wives or mothers actively involved in Church ministry. Some respondents who say that support comes from family members of different religions. Family support, especially those closest to them, means a lot to women.

Regarding the influence of education, most respondents stated that an adequate educational background enhances their value and honor as women. Education also shapes mindsets and broadens horizons, which in turn contributes positively to the Church. The respondents felt more confident in carrying out their roles in the Church and guiding other women to join the ministry. Nonetheless, some respondents argued that educational background is not the main factor. They emphasized that women's involvement in ministry comes first from personal intention and sincerity to serve.

As such, women's involvement in the Church is crucial. Despite challenges from patriarchal culture and restrictive social norms, support from the Church, family, and education play a significant role in encouraging women's participation. Respondents acknowledged that

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<sup>17</sup> Ledot and Tere, "Keterlibatan Signifikat Perempuan dalam Liturgi Gereja dalam Terang Dokumen Motu Proprio Spiritus Domini."

<sup>18</sup> Bu'ulolo and Tioma, "Kepemimpinan Wanita Kristen: Pengaruh dan Tantangan dalam Konteks Gereja Modern."

<sup>19</sup> Yohanes Paulus II, "Para Anggota Awam Umat Beriman Kristus," *Seri Dokumen Gerejawi No. 5*, 1989.

Church policies that support women's involvement and growing acceptance within the Church community inspire them to dare to contribute. For example, by providing opportunities to women in the tasks of proclamation, liturgy, catechesis, etc. With these positive developments, women are not only seen as housewives, but are also recognized for their abilities in various aspects of life, including in the service of the Church. The Church is a communion of the faithful, which does not only consist of the clergy. Therefore, in carrying out its mission, the Church needs the participation of the laity, including the youth, elderly, and women. The participation of the laity, especially women, is very important because they make up the majority of God's people. The Church has much to learn from the contributions of women in various aspects of the life and mission of the Church community.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.1.2. Women's Involvement in the Task of Preaching

As baptized believers, women carry out three main duties, namely as priests, prophets, and kings. Based on the results of the study, most respondents recounted the various duties they have carried out, one of which is the proclamation to the people.

Respondents who are members of WKRI often organize social actions for the general public, including the marginalized. This shows the presence of femininity in women that moves them to share and involve themselves in the welfare of others through the pastoral work of the Church. They often organize free medical treatment and assist victims of natural disasters. In addition, they have also visited prisons and held mass with the inmates. For the women, this social service is part of evangelization. Through these acts of love, they indirectly proclaim the gospel through action. Some respondents added that they also often organize faith formation for people in the Church and the general public. For adults, they have organized seminars on anti-domestic violence and sexual violence. Meanwhile, children and young people, they often organize faith formation, because the younger generation is the successor of the Church and must be nurtured from an early age. The respondents also stated that they are involved in the liturgical field, such as leading worship and becoming lectors. The involvement of women in liturgy is also recognized by Ignatius Ledot and Maria Imakula Tere in their research. They showed that the Church has been open to the role of women, especially in liturgical duties. Women participate in services as lectors and acolytes.<sup>21</sup>

The involvement of women in the task of evangelization is a great contribution to the Church. The Church recognizes that the role of women is needed because they possess sensitivity, intuition, and special skills that are often superior to those of men. Many women share pastoral responsibilities with priests, assist in guiding parishioners, families, and other groups, and make important contributions to theological reflection. Moreover, the participation of these women reflects a synodal Church that emphasizes communion, participation, and

<sup>20</sup> Internasional, "Sinodalitas dalam Kehidupan dan Misi Gereja."

<sup>21</sup> Ledot and Tere, "Keterlibatan Signifikat Perempuan dalam Liturgi Gereja dalam Terang Dokumen Motu Proprio Spiritus Domini."

mission. *The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)* also emphasizes that synodality invites the Church to listen to the poor, the potentially neglected, and those who are not members of the Church. With this attitude of openness, women can represent the Church in carrying out this task.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the involvement of women in the task of proclamation in the Church is very significant. Through various social actions, proclamation, faith formation, and roles in the liturgy, women not only fulfill their responsibilities as faithful, but also actively contribute to the mission of the Church. The values of femininity that encourage them to share and serve, as well as their unique abilities, reinforce their position in the Church. With this involvement, women play a role in creating a synodal Church, where participation and communion are the main focus, reflecting care for the marginalized and giving voice to them.

### 3.2. Challenges faced by women in pastoral work

In carrying out their roles, women face various challenges. Most respondents said that their dual roles, as wives and mothers responsible for taking care of their husbands and children, made it difficult for them to divide their time between family and service in the Church. This causes them to be unable to actively participate in organized activities. In addition, the lack of support from the family also results in women losing their enthusiasm to be involved in Church activities.

The respondents also revealed that the Church's lack of trust in women to lead was one of the reasons they were not involved. Although the Church has started to open up to the role of women, opportunities to hold some important tasks are still limited. Respondents felt that gender equality had not been fully realized. Women are only given decorative roles, such as decorating and cleaning the Church. This is an obstacle for women to dare to be more actively involved.

Another challenge faced by women is the difficulty of adjusting to technological advances, which causes them to be considered less capable or "gaptek." In Bengkayang Parish, with a large number of parishioners, social media is often used to reach more people, including catechesis through videos uploaded on social media. However, the rapid development of technology has made it difficult for women to adjust, thus hindering them in carrying out their service roles in the Church. Nonetheless, women continue to play an important role in the life of the Church. These challenges do not hinder women's access to the core of Christian life. Women are called to be unique examples and witnesses to all Christians, showing how love must be answered with love in response to their faith vocation.<sup>23</sup>

As such, women face various challenges in carrying out pastoral roles in the Church. Their dual roles as wives and mothers often make it difficult for them to divide their time between

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<sup>22</sup> Martasudjita.

<sup>23</sup> Kongregasi untuk Ajaran Iman, "Kerja Sama Pria dan Perempuan dalam Gereja dan Dunia," *Seri Dokumen Gerejawi No. 70*, no. 70 (2004).

family and ministry. In addition, the lack of family support and the Church's trust in women's leadership are barriers to their involvement. Another challenge is the difficulty in adapting to technological advances that are increasingly necessary in ministry. Nonetheless, women still play an important role in the life of the Church and are called to be role models, showing love in living out their faith vocation.

### 3.3. Walking with the Church

At the Synod of Bishops in 2023, Pope Francis emphasized the importance of the Church walking together, or being a synodal Church. Synodality is a way of church life in the third millennium, and reflects the nature, form, character and mission of the Church. Through this togetherness, the Church opens space for all the faithful to build communion, participate in mission, walk together, listen to each other, and especially listen to the Holy Spirit.<sup>24</sup> Women are an integral part of the Church, so their role is recognized, valued, and accepted by the Church. However, challenges still exist, especially related to the patriarchal culture that considers the position of men higher than that of women. Recognizing the contribution of women is not only important for gender justice, but also for the sustainability of the Church's mission in the world. Synodality requires the Church to be more inclusive and value all its members, including women, in various roles.

Based on the research results, the respondents recognized that the Church has begun to be open to women to be involved in the pastoral work of the Church. This openness can be seen from the policies made by the Church as well as training and coaching to improve the quality of women, especially in preaching and decision-making. Women's participation in decision-making not only enriches pastoral decisions but also brings valuable new perspectives. Women's experiences as mothers, wives, workers, and members of society provide unique perspectives that can enrich the way the Church responds to the challenges of our times. For example, women often have a deep sensitivity to social issues, such as domestic violence, poverty, and child education, which require a more holistic pastoral response. The involvement of women in decision-making processes enables the Church to provide a more inclusive and diverse response to the needs of the people.<sup>25</sup> In addition, to achieve synodality, there is a need for cooperation with external parties. The role of women in the external environment of the Catholic Church needs to be enhanced. Women who are considered to have an active role in the internal Church, must continue to be encouraged to venture into the wider community. The more and more qualified Catholic women are involved in society, the more the synodality of the Church will grow.<sup>26</sup>

However, most respondents said that challenges remain. These challenges are related to the patriarchal culture that is still strong in many communities, including within Church structures. This culture often views leadership roles as primarily male, while women are still

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<sup>24</sup> Martasudjita et al., *Sinodalitas Gereja (Tinjauan dari Berbagai Aspek Filosofis dan Teologis)*.

<sup>25</sup> Martasudjita et al.

<sup>26</sup> Martasudjita et al.

considered more suitable for supporting roles. This stereotype prevents women from being able to fully engage in pastoral leadership. Another challenge is women's difficulty in adjusting to technological advances, which are a necessity in this digital age. Some women feel left behind in the use of technology, which in turn limits their participation in wider pastoral ministry. In addition, distrust of the Church and lack of family support are major challenges for women.

While these challenges remain, synodality gives hope for a more inclusive change. The synodal church not only values the role of women, but also recognizes that they should be an integral part of the structure of ministry and leadership, not only as supporters, but also as key actors in the mission of the Church. Women play a role in various areas, such as proclamation, liturgy, social action, and pastoral administration. These roles need to be expanded and supported by the Church as a whole. To realize a more perfect synodality, it is important for the Church needs to provide opportunities for women to develop themselves, especially through theological education and leadership training. Theological education for women enables them to better understand and convey the teachings of the Church more effectively. Education also gives women more confidence in taking on important roles in the life of the Church, whether in liturgy, proclamation, or pastoral administration. Thus, women are not only actors in proclamation, but also leaders who play an active role in carrying the vision and mission of the Church forward.

The involvement of women in proclamation and other tasks, not only reflects the values of synodality such as communion, participation, and mission, but also strengthens the Church's commitment to be more inclusive and just. A synodal Church model that involves women more significantly is a path toward renewing a Church that is more relevant and responsive to the challenges of the times. By walking together, women and men, the whole Church community can contribute fully to realizing stronger communion and wider participation, to achieve the greater mission of the Church.

Thus, despite challenges, such as patriarchal culture and difficulties in adapting to technology, women's involvement in various pastoral fields is increasingly recognized and strengthened by Church policies. Recognizing the role of women not only contributes to gender justice, but also enriches the Church's mission with a holistic perspective on social issues. To realize a better synodality, the Church needs to provide continuous education and training for women, thus enabling them to play an active leadership role in all aspects of Church life. With more inclusive collaboration between women and men, the Church can become more responsive to the challenges of the times and create a stronger communion. In addition, the results of this study can enrich the theoretical understanding of synodality by emphasizing the importance of women's involvement.

#### **3.4. Collaboration of Women as Preachers with Community Organizations in the Context of Synodality**

The synodal Church calls all the faithful, including women, to actively participate in realizing communion, participation, and mission. In carrying out their role, women are not only

limited to the internal scope of the Church. Women dare to go out and build collaboration with external parties so that the mission of the Church can be felt by the wider community. Women become representatives of the Church in establishing relationships and dialoguing with the wider community. This is in line with the concept of synodality in Indonesian society based on Pancasila, where every citizen plays a role in developing values, soul, dignity, dialog, sociality, relationality, and authenticity. As social beings, everyone must establish relationships and dialog with others in their differences.<sup>27</sup>

Through women's collaboration with civil society organizations, the Church's mission can reach more layers of society. Women bring the spirit of the Church's ministry to the public sphere, creating dialog and cooperation between the Church and the external community. In the spirit of synodality, this involvement allows the Church to be present in people's lives by bringing the values of the Gospel through acts of proclamation. Based on research, women perform social actions as a form of love for others, such as helping victims of natural disasters. This cooperation serves as a bridge between the Church and the wider community, especially in the context of cultural and religious pluralism. The Church is invited to walk with everyone, regardless of background differences. Women who collaborate with community organizations play an important role in building intercultural dialogue, strengthening social ties, and enriching the fellowship of the people.<sup>28</sup>

Together with community organizations, women can respond to various social challenges faced by the community, such as poverty, injustice and environmental issues. Respondents said that they had held a seminar on anti-violence and domestic violence. This seminar was conducted to help address issues of injustice that occur within the family. The synergy between the Church and external organizations allows for more inclusive and sustainable solutions. In the spirit of synodality, women become important actors in the joint mission to face this challenge, bringing the spirit of solidarity and love for others. Through this collaboration, women not only strengthen the mission of the Church, but also bring the spirit of synodality to everyday life. With broader and deeper involvement, women become living witnesses to the proclamation of the Gospel and help the Church walk with society in realizing a more inclusive communion and mission.<sup>29</sup>

This collaboration enables the Church to build a wider network with various parties, including the government, NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations), GOW (Gabungan Organisasi Wanita) and other local communities. This network is important to support the Church's various mission initiatives, such as economic empowerment, education, and health programs. As said earlier, this collaboration serves as a means to spread Gospel values in society. Values such as love, solidarity, and social justice can be lived and promoted through activities carried out by community organizations in collaboration with the Church. To fully realize the vision of synodality, women's cooperation with community organizations must

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<sup>27</sup> Martasudjita et al.

<sup>28</sup> Martasudjita et al.

<sup>29</sup> Martasudjita et al.

continue to be supported. Synodality demands the active participation of all the faithful, and women have an important role to play in this process. Collaboration with social organizations provides a space for women to bring the values of the Church into the wider society, as well as to strengthen the presence of the Church in an increasingly complex modern world.<sup>30</sup> In addition, increased education, training, and empowerment of women are also key in building strong collaborations. The Church must provide opportunities for women to develop themselves and their leadership skills so that they can take on a greater role in the mission of the synodality.<sup>31</sup>

Based on the research results, the respondents shared that WKRI (Catholic Women of the Republic of Indonesia) of St. Pius X Bengkayang Parish has collaborated with a district-level community organization, GOW (Gabungan Organisasi Wanita). This organization is run by women from various women's organizations and focuses on social and religious activities to achieve common welfare (*bonum commune*). WKRI of St. Pius X Parish is assigned the task of catechesis. This catechesis is done during visits to inland stations. This contribution is very significant for the Church, especially because St. Pius X Bengkayang Parish still lacks priests, brothers, and nuns who are in charge of pastoral work. The involvement of women in catechesis greatly helps the Church reach out to remote stations that are rarely visited. They not only lead the worship of the Word, but also provide catechesis to increase the faith of the people, both for adults, children, and youth. The role of women in catechesis is very supportive of the pastoral duties of the parish priest.

Thus, women's collaboration with community organizations in the context of synodality enables the Church to reach out to the wider community by bringing Gospel values to the public sphere. Women play an important role in social action, catechesis, and intercultural dialogue, which helps the Church respond to social challenges such as poverty, injustice, and violence. Through synergies with external organizations such as GOW, women strengthen the Church's mission and contribute to the common good. This collaboration demonstrates the active role of women in building a more inclusive and transformative Church fellowship, participation, and mission.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on research on women's involvement in the pastoral work of the Church, especially in the field of *kerygma* or proclamation, it can be concluded that an inclusive and supportive attitude of the Church is key to increasing women's active participation. The Church needs to implement policies that provide space for women to play a significant role in leadership and pastoral ministry. For example, by providing opportunities for women in liturgical duties such as lectors, catechism teachers, etc. Then supporting and fostering women's groups within the Church such as WKRI and allowing women to collaborate with community organizations that focus on gospel values, such as social justice, education, and peace.

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<sup>30</sup> Martasudjita et al.

<sup>31</sup> Martasudjita et al.



In addition, to improve the quality of women in evangelization, the Church needs to organize ongoing coaching or training. This training can include *public speaking* skills, *leadership*, and the use of technology. Meanwhile, to overcome the existing challenges, the Church needs to voice the importance of the role of women. The Church encourages a change in mindset in society and among the people. Furthermore, the Church needs to understand and recognize that many women face dual roles as mothers and wives. This dual role is often a challenge in their ministry. Therefore, the Church should provide flexibility in time and task arrangements that are more inclusive. The Church can encourage women to remain active without having to sacrifice family responsibilities.

The results of this study can enrich the theoretical understanding of synodality by emphasizing the importance of women's involvement. The research also supports *feminist* theory in religious contexts, which demands recognition of the role of women. In addition, the findings encourage Church pastoralists to develop and renew pastoral approaches that support women's involvement. The Church is expected to pay special attention by providing education and training for women, establishing balanced collaborations between women, men, and external organizations, and strengthening the role of women in the tasks of proclamation, liturgy, social action, etc.

The author realizes that this research still has limitations and is simple research. This research only focuses on the field of *kerygma* or proclamation without any other aspects. In addition, there are data limitations. The respondents in this study were the WKRI group in St. Pius Parish Bengkayang, so the results do not fully represent the involvement of women in the Church at large. With these limitations, the author would like to make several suggestions that are expected to be useful for further research. *First*, it is necessary to conduct a study on the involvement of young women in the Church. Given the importance of regeneration in the Church, this research is expected to provide insight into ways the Church can better involve young women in pastoral work. *Secondly*, further research is expected to explore the role of women in the synodality of the Church. This research can explore how women contribute to realizing a synodal Church, especially in the fields of liturgy, diakonia, koinonia, and other pastoral works.

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