



Implications of the ‘Open-Door Church’ Concept in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* for the Pastoral Work of the Church in Indonesia

Benediktus Denar^{1*}; Jean Loustar Jewadut²; Asni Asmawati³

¹STIPAS St. Sirilus, Ruteng

²Ledalero Institute Philosophy and Creative Technology

³STIPAS St. Sirilus, Ruteng

*Correspondence Author: benydenar@gmail.com

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Abstract: This article aims to explain the concept of the “Open-Door Church” in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and to apply in the pastoral work of the Church in Indonesia. This study employs a qualitative method, focusing on in-depth literature review complemented by systematic content analysis of primary and secondary sources. The primary document studied is *Evangelii Gaudium* to gain a comprehensive understanding the concept of the “Open-Door Church”. Based on an in-depth examination of the document, the “Open-Door Church” is defined as the Church's effort to move beyond the comfort zone of liturgical-centered pastoralism, a Church ready to welcome all people of good will, a Church that prioritizes service to the poor, a Church that continually renews itself internally, and a Church that respects the culture of the community. The “Open-Door Church” demands pastoral work that is sensitive to the signs of the times, focuses on diakonia for the poor, and prioritizes intergenerational evangelization for those of different faiths and the poor. By becoming a “Open-Door Church”, the synodal aspect of the Church becomes stronger.

Keywords: Open-Door Church; *Evangelii Gaudium*; Pastoral; Indonesia

Introduction

The election of Jorge Mario Cardinal Bergoglio, Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina on March 13, 2013 as Pope upon the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI brought many new things to the life of the Church, both internally and in the practice of its witness to the outside world. Cardinal Bergoglio, whose papal name Francis is inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi, signals that he will be a simple Pope, friendly with all creation, and will reform the life of the Church, not only through words, but especially through the testimony of his life.¹ Meanwhile, regarding the Church's position and mission in the world, Pope Francis' attempt is to revitalize the positive view of the Second Vatican Council on the world and cultures of the

¹ Frederikus Fios, “Menafsir Dekonstruksi Derida dalam Sosok Paus Fransiskus,” *Jurnal HUMANIORA* 5, no. 45 (2014): 1246–1250; Gerwin Bernardus Putra, Antonius Denny Firmanto & Nanik Wijiyati Aluwesia, “Implementasi *Gaudium et Spes* Art. 1 dalam Konteks Eklesiologi Keuskupan Agung Pontianak,” *Borneo Review* 1, no. 1 (2022): 33-45, <https://doi.org/10.52075/br.v1i1.71>.

nations.

In Church history, it can be said that the Second Vatican Council has inspired the existence of a truly synodal Church. Since it has initiated a very positive interpretation of the world and a new relationship in which the Church can even open the door to learn from the world.² Here, the Church is not only busy managing and confining itself to its stability, but wants to go out and walk together (synodal) with the world outside itself. Thus, the catholic character of the Church has truly shaped its presence since the Second Vatican Council.³ It appears that the Second Vatican Council recognized and positioned the Church in a weak, fragile, and limited position, so that the Church continues to be called to continually renew itself by learning from the world outside itself. The Church no longer calls itself the owner of perfection because this perfection *par excellence* belongs only to Christ. There is an essential awareness that the existence of the Church in the world is not to replace Christ, but to take part in Christ's perfection. So, with others, the Church is on a pilgrimage towards the perfection of Christ, towards communion with God in Him, and towards the salvation of all people.⁴

In a positive paradigm regarding the world, the Church — through the Second Vatican Council — approached the world through dialogue. By this means, the Church acknowledges the truth of the world and is ready to open itself always to be questioned by other entities in the world with their differences. At this level, the idea of recognition is processed not only along the lines of the question of how the Church knows itself through the recognition of the otherness of others, but also about the Church's efforts to recognize and study others in their differences. Several documents of the Second Vatican Council embody the spirit of this recognition. The most obvious example is found in the *Sacrosanctum Concilium* document, where the Catholic Church recognizes and respects the cultural richness of the nations and enables Christians around the world to celebrate the Eucharist in their mother tongue.⁵

The effort to embrace the world with all its dynamics that began during the Second Vatican Council is now truly being echoed and lived out by Pope Francis. In contrast to his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, who was quite aware of the world, culture, and the context of human life, Pope Francis makes culture and the context of human life a *locus theologicus*. That is why Pope Francis has promoted the discourse and practice of inculturation in the life of the Church.⁶

An attitude of openness to the world is evident in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. *Evangelii Gaudium* became the continued expression of the 2012 synod on new evangelization, which

² Sefrianus Juhani, Benediktus Denar & F. E. A. Riyanto, "Dialektika Konsep Ketuhanan dalam Ritual Lea Sose pada Masyarakat Manggarai dan Gereja Katolik," *Melintas* 36, no. 3 (2020): 360–378, <https://doi.org/10.26593/mel.v36i3.5388>.

³ Wilibaldus Gaut, "The Catholicity of Salvation and Its Ecological Implications," In *Creation – Transformation – Theology International Congress of the European Society for Catholic Theology*. Osnabrück/ Germany, 2021, 327–337.

⁴ Antonius Denny Firmanto, "Pembaruan Hidup Gereja," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 20, no. 1 (2020): 100–102, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v20i1.200>.

⁵ E. P. D. Martasudjita, "Proses Inkulturasi di Indonesia," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 10, no. 1 (2010): 39–60; Ignasius Ledot, "Spirit Sacrosanctum Concilium Mendorong Sebuah Liturgi yang Hidup, Kontekstual, Inkulturatif," *Jurnal Ledalero*, 12 no. 1 (2013): 97–122.

⁶ E. P. D. Martasudjita, "Inkulturasi dan Tata Perayaan Ekaristi 2020 Gambaran Berinkulturasi dalam Konteks Indonesia," *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 22, no. 2 (2022): 159–180, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v22i2.441>.

focuses on proclaiming the Kingdom of God to a secular society. Pope Francis appears to be moving a step further by broadening his perspective so that his understanding of evangelization is more accurately expressed through the concept of “missionary discipleship.”⁷ As a document that marked the first year of his leadership, *Evangelii Gaudium* can be considered the compass that guides the direction of Pope Francis’ pontifical program. Over time, this was proven through the pastoral renewal of the Church initiated by him during his pontificate years. Pope Francis’ various pastoral movements have been planned and programmed deeply in *Evangelii Gaudium*, for example: the Year of Mercy (2015/2016); attention to the family through the Synod of Bishops on the Family (2014/2015); the environment in the encyclical *Laudato Si’* (2015); strong criticism of the capitalist system; and special attention to the existence of the poor.⁸

Before discussing the topic of the “Church with Open Doors” in *Evangelii Gaudium*, it is very important to provide an adequate introduction to this expression. In this historic document, Pope Francis does not merely offer a conceptual idea, but presents an image or identity, namely a Church whose doors are always open. As an image, this expression demands theological-pastoral interpretation. An idea usually produces a declarative statement, whereas an image presents a symbolic picture that invites understanding, reinterpretation, and deep contemplation. Thus, the “Church with Open Doors” is not merely Pope Francis’ idea, but an ecclesiological symbol that opens up space for interpretation about how the Church should be present and active in the world.

It is in this context that the image of an “open-door Church” takes on a deeper meaning. As a symbol, this image reveals the urgent need for the Church to present itself as a community of Christ’s disciples actively engaged in responding to human suffering and anxiety. The response to human suffering and anxiety is not merely a socio-political issue, but an intrinsic part of the Church’s identity, which opens its doors through concrete actions and taking sides with the weak, the poor, and the marginalized. The Church’s social concern, which constantly opens itself to those who suffer, aligns with Pope Francis’s message that the Church is called to proclaim the Gospel through words and deeds, bridge distances, practice self-giving, and embrace human life by responding to the suffering face of Christ in others (*EG* 24). Here lies the dynamic of solidarity, which simultaneously expresses the synodality of the Church that Pope Francis has been advocating since 2015.

One of the interesting ideas in *Evangelii Gaudium* is the idea of an open-door Church. An open-door Church is an urgent need amidst the complexity of problems faced by humans. The basic point is that the Church needs to present itself as a community that is actively involved in responding to human suffering in the world, not only because suffering is a socio-political issue, but especially because the response to suffering is an intrinsic part of the life of the Church, which always opens the door through action and taking sides with the weak, poor, and marginalized.⁹ The Church’s social concern which always opens its doors to others who suffer is in line with Pope Francis’ message about the Church having the duty to

⁷ Stephen Bevans, “The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today’s World Implications and Prospects,” *International Review of Mission*, 103, No. 2 (November 2014): 304-305.

⁸ Martin Chen, “Menjadi Gereja Pintu Terbuka (Refleksi Atas Bab I dan II *Evangelii Gaudium*),” dalam Panitia Sinode Pusat Pastoral Keuskupan Ruteng, *Tahun Pewartaan 2017* (Ruteng: Sekretariat Puspas Ruteng, 2017), 22-36.

⁹ Alexander Jebadu, “Dimensi Politik dari Misi Pembebasan Gereja Bagi Orang Miskin dan Pemeliharaan Alam Ciptaan,” *Jurnal Teologi* 06, no. 2 (2017), 2017: 167–186.

proclaim the Gospel with words and actions in daily life, bridging distances, practicing self-servitude, and embracing human life by responding to humanity of Christ's suffering in others (*EG* 24). Herein lies the synodality of the Church which has been echoed by Pope Francis in 2015.

The idea of an open-door Church leads the Church to a readiness to be present and actively involved in the joys and sorrows as well as the anxieties and hopes of today's world (*GS* 1). The Church's involvement certainly does not just depart from the urgency of sad social realities but also departs from its identity as a fellowship of Jesus' disciples tasked with continuing the mission of partnership and the hope of liberation for those who are oppressed and marginalized. The sacrificial dimension — as the main fruit of the Church's liturgy, especially the celebration of the Eucharist — must be lived out in the service of love for marginalized others.¹⁰

The Church must get out of the comfort of liturgical-centered or altar-centered pastoralism and dare to touch social reality with the complexity of its challenges.¹¹ The Church's service with an orientation towards social care is a calling from God and is an integral part of the Christian tradition.¹² The open-door church is a community of believers that carries the responsibility of "giving justice to the oppressed of the nation, helping the poor, but crushing the exploiters!" (Ps. 72:4). To support the realization of this Word, Pope Francis raised people's awareness of the world situation which is being eroded by "globalization of indifference" which results in self-isolation. Thus, the Church must be actively involved in helping to ease the burden of others' suffering. In the context of a world marked by such globalization of indifference, the Church must present itself as a community of God's People with missionary characteristics. This means that the Church must open its doors and involve itself actively in the struggles of human life. Pope Francis prefers the model of the Church as a community that looks fragile, injured, and dirty because it has thrown itself into the streets rather than a Church that is sick because it is closed and established to take care of itself (*EG* 49).

The urgency of portraying the Church as an "open door" is rooted in the Church's own teachings. *Evangelii Gaudium* 46-49 affirms the Church's call to open its doors, step out of itself, and reach those who are wounded. The same spirit is emphasized in *Gaudium et Spes* 1, stating that the Church must be involved in the joys and sufferings of the world, especially those who are suffering. In the context of Indonesia, various pastoral studies indicate a tendency for pastoral practice to remain liturgy-centered and less engaged with social issues such as poverty, agrarian conflict, and the marginalization of the underprivileged.

It is often complained that the Church in Indonesia is trapped as an institution busy only with religious piety through liturgy-centered pastoral care without attending to the complexity of human life, which demands active involvement in the form of pastoral diakonia.¹³ Excessive emphasis on rites and

¹⁰Daniel Franklin Pilario, "Eucharist and Human Suffering: Retrieving "Sacrifice" in the Contemporary Magisterium," *Modern Theology* 30, no. 2 (2014): 340-356, doi: 10.1111/moth.12100.

¹¹ Jean Loustar Jewadut dan Fransiska Rosali Nirmala, "Peran Komunitas Basis Gerejawi bagi Efektivitas Pelaksanaan Karya Pastoral Partisipatif dan Kontekstual," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Katolik (JPAK)*, 23, no. 2 (2023): 10-26, <https://doi.org/10.34150/jpak.v22i1.504>.

¹² Herry Susanto, "Panggilan Sosial Gereja berdasarkan Pelayanan Yesus dalam Lukas 4:18-19: Sebuah Upaya Merevitalisasi Pelayanan Gereja," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan*, 19, no. 1 (2020): hlm. 97-112, <https://ojs.seabs.ac.id/index.php/Veritas/article/>.

¹³ Florida Imelda Seran, Seperuri Tanggul, S., & Suryani, B., "'Omnia in Caritate': Model Pelayanan Pastoral terhadap

spiritual practices makes the presence of the Church closed and isolated, less synodal, and also becomes irrelevant and insignificant for the real challenges of God's people. In fact, the entire existence of the Church, both its prayers and its testimony, must be on the side of those who suffer and tend to become victims.¹⁴

Starting from this problem, the revitalization of the idea of an open-door Church in *Evangelii Gaudium* becomes increasingly urgent to be developed in Indonesia. The idea of an open-door Church needs to be implemented so that the presence of the Church is truly contextual, relevant, and significant for the mission of the Church in Indonesia. Moreover, the Church in Indonesia is in a context of poverty and cultural diversity, including religion.¹⁵ By keeping its doors open, the Church can embrace the poor, embrace various local cultures, and live in peace with those of other religions and beliefs. These embraces make the Church truly synodal, embracing, and saving all.

Discussion of the idea of an open-door Church echoed by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* has been reviewed by several researchers with different study focuses. For example, Martin Chen explains the meaning of an open-door Church as a Church that is inclusive, open to whatever is good outside itself, and to anyone who seeks God's goodness.¹⁶ More thoroughly, Steven Bevans ties the concept of an open-door church to the obligation to preach the gospel with a message of hope, a message of kindness and compassion, a message of understanding, and a message of support for the underprivileged. According to him, the Church should be made up of "missionary disciples," be "poor and for the poor," be de-clericalized, and engage in conversation.¹⁷

This article seeks to reflect the meaning of the idea of an open-door Church in *Evangelii Gaudium* and its implications for the pastoral work of the Church in Indonesia. Different from previous research, this article tries to draw the main meanings of the idea of the open-door Church in *Evangelii Gaudium* and provide critical notes on it wherever possible, including relating it to the concept and praxis of the synodal Church.

To achieve this novelty, this research uses qualitative methods by focusing on in-depth reference reviews complemented by systematic content analysis of primary and secondary sources. The main document studied is *Evangelii Gaudium* to gain a comprehensive understanding of the idea of the open-door Church. This document was analyzed in depth to extract themes related to the open-door Church and their implications for the pastoral work of the Church in Indonesia. Apart from analyzing primary sources, various secondary sources are also analyzed to support and deepen the findings from primary sources without requiring direct interaction with participants.¹⁸ This includes books, journal articles, and credible

Orang Miskin di Tengah Pandemi Covid-19," *Jurnal Pelayanan Pastoral* 3, no. 2 (2022): 105-112, <https://doi.org/10.53544/jpp.v3i2.324>.

¹⁴ Yosef Keladu, Ignas Ledot & Kris Ibu, "John Prior, SVD and the Option for the Marginalized in Maumere," *Verbum SVD* 64, no. 2 (2023): 224-225.

¹⁵ Paulus Budi Kleden, "Challenges for the Christian Mission in Indonesia 20 Years after Ecclesia in Asia," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection*, 85 (January 2021): 59-74, <http://repository.iftkledalero.ac.id/598/>

¹⁶ Martin Chen, "Menjadi Gereja Pintu Terbuka (Refleksi Atas Bab I dan II *Evangelii Gaudium*), 22-36.

¹⁷ Stephen Bevans, "The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World Implications and Prospects," 297-308.

¹⁸ A. Johnson, "Metode Studi Dokumen dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Membuka Jendela Wawasan Tanpa Interaksi

online publications that discuss themes related to the open-door Church and the pastoral work of the Church in Indonesia.¹⁹

The selection of sources is based on an analysis of their relevance to the research objectives, thereby ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Content analysis involves coding the collected data to identify recurring themes and patterns.²⁰ This method allows for a systematic evaluation of how the idea of an open-door Church is discussed and implemented in the context of pastoral work in Indonesia. The analysis was carried out in several stages, starting with identifying relevant passages, categorizing the quotations based on predetermined themes, and interpreting the data collected to form a coherent insight into the implications of the idea of an open-door Church for the Church's pastoral work in Indonesia.²¹

The Meaning of the Open-Door Church Concept in *Evangelii Gaudium*

In *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis called the term open-door Church with several important meanings. *First*, an open-door Church means welcoming and accepting all people who are moved by the Spirit to seek God (EG 47). The open-door Church presents a Father who is always ready to embrace with love everyone who comes to Him. The fellowship built by the open-door Church is a fellowship that is synodal and inclusive, open to whatever is good outside itself and to anyone who seeks God's goodness within themselves.

At first glance, an open-door Church that welcomes everyone may appear to be passive. This assumption, however, is certainly wrong because an open-door Church is an active Church that is moving outward (EG 46; 23). It is a church that dares to move out affirms its identity as a pilgrim to proclaim the Kingdom of God in the world. So, an open-door Church is a Church that engages itself in the real struggles of human life. Such a Church, in the language of the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, is the Church that also feels and appreciates the "joys and sorrows, hopes and anxieties" of the people of this age (GS 1). The idea that there is a world full of impurity or unbelief is refuted by the Church's role in world renewal. The Church engages the world as a place of mission to spread the gospel of God's Kingdom.

Second, open-door Church provides services by prioritizing the poor. The Church goes forth to meet those on the margins of society (EG 46). In connection with this aspect, Pope Francis gave self-criticism to the Catholic Church, which often "remains shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37) (EG 49).

As a pilgrim, the Church seeks to greet everyone and, in particular, the main priority is given to

Langsung dengan Partisipan," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmiah* 18, no. 3 (2022): 201-220.

¹⁹ J. Smith, "Metode Kualitatif dengan Pendekatan Studi Kepustakaan: Mengumpulkan dan Menganalisis Data dari Berbagai Sumber," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmiah* 20, no. 2 (2023): 78-95.

²⁰ Mojtaba Vaismoradi, Hannele Turunen & Terese Bondas, "Content Analysis and Thematic Analysis: Implications for Conducting a Qualitative Descriptive Study," *Nursing & Health Sciences* 15, no. 3 (2013): 398-405.

²¹ J. Smith, "Langkah-langkah dalam Penelitian Kualitatif: Metode Studi Dokumen," *Jurnal Penelitian Ilmiah* 20, no. 1 (2023): 45-67.

those who bear the burdens of suffering in their lives, namely the poor and suffering (EG 48). Pope Francis is trying to continue and live out the Church's spirituality of the poor which has long been raised by the Latin American Church at the Bishops' Conferences in Medellín in 1968 and Puebla in 1978. Pope Francis emphasized that prioritizing the poor shows the dimension of grace in the work of salvation carried out by Church. The poor are those who cannot repay you (Luke 14:14). This is a picture of the Church that upholds the true nature of its selfless mission to present Christ. The Church must give herself freely to the poor because she has also received everything freely from Christ (cf. Matt. 10:8).

In the face of materialism and consumerism that attack the Church, Pope Francis calls on Christians to reject materialism as a source of happiness in life. According to him, true happiness is not found in materialism and consumerism, but rather in the Gospel of Jesus Christ (EG 3). Specifically, in the apostolic letter *Gaudete et Exultate*, he offers the "Blessed Word" (Matt. 5:1-12) as a roadmap for Christians to follow towards holiness and happiness (cf. EG 63-94). According to Pope Francis, the beatitudes are an identity card that Christians need to have and act on.

Not content with theological doctrine alone, the rejection of materialism and consumerism is demonstrated by Pope Francis through a simple lifestyle by rejecting the luxurious facilities of the papacy. This lifestyle is lived, of course, because he actively involves himself in the life struggles of other poor by listening, observing, and experiencing their lives directly. Pope Francis reflects theologically on his involvement with others who are poor so that he can develop pastoral approaches that are contextual to the situation of the poor. In this case, Pope Francis has carried out a contextual theology with a praxis based on the principle of reflection on action and action on reflection. The praxis model tries to find and carry out correct and good actions for others, especially those who are poor. Correct and good actions for them can only be realized if there is readiness to see analytically, consider theologically, and act pastorally.²²

Pope Francis asked the clergy to be the shepherds of the flock. A "sheep-smelling" shepherd seeks to proclaim the Gospel with words and deeds in daily life, bridging distances, willing to abase itself if necessary, and embracing human life by touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others (EG 24). The concept of shepherd intended by Pope Francis is not to display an aspect of power, but rather an aspect of service based on love for the faithful. The prophet Isaiah likened God's relationship with His people to that of a shepherd who gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young (cf. Isa. 40:11).

Third, apart from being outward-oriented, the open-door Church is also inward-oriented. The Church needs renewal and conversion within itself. The conversion of the Church internally recalls the Church's identity as a sinful entity, *Ecclesia in proprio sinu peccatores complectens, sancta simul et semper purificanda, poenitentiam et renovationem continuo prosequitur* (the Church, embracing in its bosom sinners, at the same time holy and always in need of being purified, always follows the way of penance and renewal).²³ Moreover, the communion of the Church must be lived out so that everyone can take part in it in some way. Everyone must feel that they are part of the community (EG 47). In connection with this,

²² Stephen Bevans, *Model-Model Teologi Kontekstual*, cet. ke-2 (Mauwere: Penerbit Ledalero, 2020), 143.

²³ Tom Jacobs, *Konstitusi Dogmatis Lumen Gentium Mengenai Gereja. Terjemahan, Introduksi, Komentar*, jilid I (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1970), 197.

Pope Francis wants a more inclusive sacramental ministry. The sacraments must be opened widely to people who need them (EG 47). This applies especially to the sacrament of baptism which is the entrance into communion as a member of the Church. Even more so for the sacrament of the Eucharist. According to Pope Francis, the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak (EG 47).

Fourth, an open-door Church is a Church that respects people's culture. According to Pope Francis, the People of God is incarnate in the peoples of the earth, each of which has its own culture (EG 115). Grace is mediated through culture; it cannot exist apart from human existence. As the saying goes, "God's gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it" (EG 115). Christianity does not only enrich culture; it is also enriched by it. The Holy Spirit works to uplift culture; in doing so, the Spirit gives the Church "a new face" and shows "new aspects of revelation" in line with cultural values (EG 116).

According to Pope Francis, theological resources for a correct and potent presentation of the Gospel include context and culture in particular. Although Pope Francis states this clearly in reference to "popular piety" (EG 126), it is obvious that this also pertains to the broader setting and culture. Evangelization is the act of inculturation or contextualization itself (EG 122). This type of process, which aims "to encourage, to foster, and to reinforce a richness which already exists," is mostly seen in Christian nations (EG 69). This entails "sparkling new processes for evangelizing culture, even though these will demand long-term planning" in situations where other religious traditions are still prevalent or in "highly secular" contexts (EG 69). In fact, no culture is flawless, but according to EG 68 and EG 115, "grace presupposes culture," every culture contains the Holy Spirit. Consequently, "purification and growth" are necessary in every culture and situation (EG 69). However, evangelization joyfully acknowledges these varied treasures which the Holy Spirit pours upon the Church. We would not do justice to the logic of the incarnation if we thought of Christianity as monocultural and monotonous (EG 117).

Fifth, an open-door Church is a Church that dares to step out of its comfort zone. The church in the comfort zone is marked by its refusal to coordinate pastoral care with the signs of the times. For that reason, Pope Francis proclaimed the reform of the structures of the Church, so that it can increasingly become a means of God's salvation with the dynamics that are occurring in the world. In this regard, Pope Francis emphasized the urgency of renewing parish life to become a house whose door is always open for the people to appreciate fellowship, participation, and mission (to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented) (EG 28); renewal of Church institutions and grassroots communities (EG 29); reform of the Church in particular dioceses (EG 30), Bishops (EG 31), and even papal reform (EG 32).

A Church in its comfort zone is also associated with the application of rigid laws and rules that place a burden on the congregation. Pope Francis reminded that "the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people's lives" (EG 43). Pope Francis hopes that the Church will not provide excessive regulations, "so as not to burden the lives of the faithful and make our religion a form of servitude" (EG 43).

Sixth, an open-door Church is a synodal Church. All the meanings of the open-door Church as explained above lead to a new understanding that the Church is truly synodal. This means a Church with its doors open to the realities of the world, the dynamics of human life, and the community of all believers

becomes a synodal Church. Synodality is both a way of life and work (*modus vivendi et operandi*) which is typical of the Church as God's people. In this way of living and working, the meaning of community life is increasingly emphasized. The existence of the Church as a community is realized when all its members walk together, gather in fellowship, and actively take part in the mission of evangelization.²⁴ Synodality means the involvement and active participation of all the faithful in the life and mission of the Church.²⁵ Synodality as the principle of participation of all believers refers to the word *synod*, which consists of two Greek words, namely *syn* and *hodos*.²⁶ The word *hodos* (road) expresses the essence of the Church which continues on pilgrimage, while the word *syn* (together) expresses the togetherness and participation of all.

Synodality highlights the dynamic elements of a fellowship (community) based on brotherhood and active involvement, rather than structural and organizational elements.²⁷ Additionally, the Greek word *syn* and *hodos* emphasizes the identity of the Church who is on a journey together and the essence of the Church as God's pilgrim people. As pilgrims, the Church is certainly faced with varied life contexts. Because of this, the Church's journey together is not about altering the tenets of Christian teaching; rather, it is about figuring out how to apply them in a way that is both acceptable and godly given the circumstances.²⁸

The synodal church is the concretization of the communion Church and the Communion Church even requires synodality as its constitutive element. As a constitutive element, synodality requires the active involvement of all elements on the basis of equality in determining the Church's role in carrying out ministry work. The synodal church is closely related to the concept of the people of God which is the main characteristic of the Church. The concept of the people of God goes beyond the understanding of conciliarity and collegiality which only includes the clergy. On that basis, Pope Francis described the synodal Church as an inverted pyramid Church, where the top of the pyramid is actually at the bottom as support. This means that the authority inherent in the clergy must be understood in the context of service to God's people.

The concept of a synodal Church strengthens the Second Vatican Council's concept of a participatory and dialogical Church, namely a Church that is first baptized, not consecrated. By rooting itself in the sacrament of baptism, the synodal Church rejects the practice of centralization of power in the Church inherent in the ordained. The implication is that the Church does not only belong exclusively to the ordained, but also to all people with their diverse charisms. In its practice, the synodal Church fully understands that it is called to begin a process of listening to all subjects who collectively constitute God's people in order to reach a consensus regarding the need to pursue a mission path and the pursuit of the

²⁴ Komisi Teologi Internasional, *Sinodalitas dalam Kehidupan dan Misi Gereja* (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia, 2022), artikel 6.

²⁵ Komisi Teologi Internasional, *Sinodalitas dalam Kehidupan dan Misi Gereja*, artikel 7.

²⁶ Hilario Didakus Nenga Nampar, "Menuju Gereja yang Sinodal: Memahami Gagasan Sinodalitas sebagai Cara Hidup dan Cara Bergerak Gereja di Milenium Ketiga," *Jurnal Ledalero* 21, no. 2 (Desember 2022): 77, <http://dx.doi.org/10.31385/jl.v21i2.294>.

²⁷ Konstantinus Bahang, "Paus Fransiskus dan Gereja Sinodal," *Limen* 19, no. 1 (2022): 62, [https://doi.org/10.61792/lim.v18i2%20\(April\)](https://doi.org/10.61792/lim.v18i2%20(April)).

²⁸ Innocent Joshua Chiawa Igbokwe, "A Synodal Church: The Church in a Journey or a Journey in the Church?," *The Chatolic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life* 20, no. 1 (2023), 61.

truth.²⁹

From the perspective of a synodal Church, Church leaders are required to serve the people more effectively and efficiently by prioritizing direct and active participation in the lives of the people, so that they can know more precisely the needs of the people. In this participation, there is an attitude of mutual listening between Church leaders and the people they serve. The synodal church prioritizes an attitude of mutual listening and is open to learning from one another. On one hand, the people served are given the freedom to convey anything concerning pastoral life and ministry. On the other hand, Church leaders are required to be responsive to the aspirations of the people and work together to find solutions to the pastoral challenges they face.

Implications of the Open-Door Church Concept in *Evangelii Gaudium* for the Pastoral Work of the Church in Indonesia

The idea of an open-door Church in *Evangelii Gaudium* has implications for the pastoral work of the Church in Indonesia. The following are several proposals for the forms of pastoral work of the Church in Indonesia as an implication of the idea of an open-door Church in *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Church with Pastoral Signs of the Times

As an implication of the idea and image of the Church as an open-door institution, it is very necessary for the Church to carry out pastoral praxis that is sensitive to the signs of the times.³⁰ Pastoral signs of the times stem from human beings with the dynamics of their struggles in life in the world. The Church is required to get out of the altar room and enter the world to discover God's presence. With a pastoral pattern that is in line with the signs of the times, it is hoped that an engaged Church will emerge, namely a Church that is sensitive to and concerned about the struggles of human life and moves in solidarity with others who need help. In this case, pastoral signs of the times become a form of autocriticism of the Church, which tends to close its doors in order to enjoy stability, a Church model criticized by Pope Francis.

In providing pastoral services that are participatory and in harmony with the signs of the times, there are several stages that must be undergone.³¹ *First*, observation of the situation, including problem mapping and determining the main problem. *Second*, carrying out social analysis, namely looking for key causes of the main problems experienced. *Third*, carrying out theological-biblical reflection, namely an effort to see the main problem that has been analyzed in the light of the Word of God or the teachings of the Church. *Fourth*, determining the pastoral response, including the preparation of programs, activities, and budgets. *Fifth*, carrying out effective and targeted pastoral activities. This kind of pastoral work method characterizes the implementation of synods at the Basic Ecclesiastical Community (*Komunitas Basis Gerejawi/KBG*), ward/station, parish, and diocesan levels.

Pastoral signs of the times require sensitivity to concrete problems that are part of people's life

²⁹ Komisi Teologi Internasional, *Sinodalitas dalam Kehidupan dan Misi Gereja*, artikel 94.

³⁰ Y. I. Iswarahadi, "Inter Mirifica: Dalam Semangat Konsili Vatikan II Memahami dan Mengintegrasikan Media Komunikasi Sosial dalam Karya Pastoral Gereja," *Jurnal Orientasi Baru* 22, no. 2 (2013): 111–124.

³¹ Benediktus Denar, *Mengapa Gereja (Harus!) Tolak Tambang?* (Maumere: Penerbit Ledalero, 2015), 297–299.

struggles. The problem findings are then analyzed to find out the key causes, then reflected in the light of the Christian faith according to the teachings of the Holy Bible or the teachings of the Church. Then, in the light of the inspiration of the teachings of faith, the Church tries to design a contextual model of pastoral response to the problems found, through appropriate programs and pastoral activities, either according to the main problem (problem analysis) or according to the community's capability to solve it (capacity analysis).

Pastoral signs of the times are implemented by prioritizing participatory and contextual principles. Participatory pastoral work is realized through the principle of subsidiarity.³² Practically, the principle of subsidiarity provides opportunities for communities at a lower level to carry out certain programs effectively and efficiently without having to be dictated excessively by communities at a larger/higher level. In Church life, for example, the diocese must not take care of what can be carried out by a vicariate, the vicariate cannot take over tasks that can be done by a parish, the parish cannot take over regional work, and the region cannot take over tasks that can be done by a Ecclesial Basic Community (*KBG*).³³

Effective pastoral work is not only carried out by providing opportunities for God's People to participate. The contextual dimension is urgent in the implementation of pastoral work, so that it can respond to the needs of the people in a particular context. According to Steven Bevans, context includes four important things.³⁴ First, it includes personal or social experiences that influence a person. Second, context includes culture. Third, context includes the social location of a person or group of people. Fourth, it includes social realities in people's lives which are marked by change.

Contextual pastoral work uses the context of the people's lives as a reference in making pastoral policies, so that the pastoral work carried out can answer the concrete needs of the people. Pastoral work that originates from the context of the people's lives makes people more enthusiastic about actively involving themselves in its implementation, rather than having to impose pastoral work that seems foreign or does not originate from the context of the people. So, there is a harmonious relationship between participatory pastoral work and contextual pastoral work. The more contextual a pastoral work is, the higher the congregation's participation will be.

Church with Pastoral Diakonia for the Poor

The privilege of the poor does not lie in their material conditions, nor because of their being better than others, nor because of their being better prepared to receive the Kingdom of God, but because God wants to make His Kingdom a concrete expression of justice and love for the poor. Jesus' concern for the poor must continue to be lived out by the Church. Where the Church lives and is located, it is also there that the Church must be consistent in its struggle to prioritize the poor.

A Church that serves the impoverished and stands in solidarity with them is a poor Church (*EG* 198). The goal of the Christian community is to exude the pleasure and hospitality of the Gospel by making

³² Denar, *Mengapa Gereja (Harus!) Tolak Tambang?*, 112-114.

³³ John Mansford Prior, "Antara Monarki dan Demokrasi: Melacak Jejak Laku Hierarki Gereja 40 Tahun Terakhir", dalam P. B. Kleden, O. G. Madung, & A. Meo (eds.), *Allah Menggugat Allah Menyembuhkan* (Maukere: Penerbit Ledalero, 2012), 120.

³⁴ Bevans, *Model-Model Teologi Kontekstual*, 5-10.

“the poor feel at home” (*EG* 199). Pope Francis expressly mentioned “lack of spiritual care” as the “worst discrimination” that the impoverished face (*EG* 200). Pope Francis urged the Church to be a place where the poor might celebrate the sacraments and develop their religious maturity, and where friendship and God's blessings are freely given. Pope Francis states that “our preferential option for the poor must mainly translate into a privileged and preferential religious care” (*EG* 200). A missionary Church that welcomes the impoverished must be a poor Church and require Christians to lead basic lives. Even though these defences are “commonly heard in academic, business or professional, and even ecclesial circles,” there should be no justification for them (*EG* 201).

Solidarity expresses the quality of life of faith and the loyalty of believers to Jesus who has previously stood in solidarity with sinful humans for the sake of liberating them from the slavery of sin (*GS* 32). Carrying out the duties of diakonia is a form of solidarity with others who suffer. Diakonia expresses the existence of the Church as a community of followers of Jesus who came not to be served, but to serve (cf. John 13:34). Diakonia makes the Church carry out the task of showing the face of Christ who truly sacrifices and serves (cf. Mark 10:45).

In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, the Church's diakonia work consists of two types. First, diaconia work which is closely related to the spiritual needs of the people, such as teaching, giving advice, consolation, forgiveness, and the generosity of giving forgiveness. Second, diakonia work related to the physical needs of the people, such as giving food to hungry people, giving shelter to the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the poor and prisoners, and burying the dead.³⁵

The two forms of diakonia work as described in the Catechism of the Catholic Church are types of charitable diakonia work which focus on efforts to provide direct donations to the poor and suffering, both physically and spiritually, with the aim of enabling them to continue living. However, there are several further considerations in implementing charitable diakonia.

First, charitable diakonia must not make poor fellow citizens the object of the Church's assistance. The lack of life they experience does not have implications for reducing their human identity as subjects who must always be respected. Ethically, poor people should receive special attention not only because they need help, but also primarily because of their existence as subjects who are able to change the Church: from a triumphalist Church to a Church that is serving and dialogical.³⁶ On that basis, the Church must view poor neighbors first as a theological subject.

Second, charitable diakonia should not be used as a moment to seek self-popularity. It needs to be recognized that the Church does not have many of the material resources needed to overcome poverty. In carrying out charitable diakonia, the Church usually embraces donors. It often happens that donors are tempted to glory in themselves because they have provided aid to the poor. Poor people are used as objects that help achieve self-popularity. This attitude needs to be prevented: charitable diakonia must not fall into social arrogance.

Diakonia not only deals with efforts to improve material well-being, but also includes holistic self-

³⁵ Herman Embuiru (Penerj.), *Katekismus Gereja Katolik* (Ende: Percetakan Arnoldus, 1995), 616. Nomor 2447.

³⁶ Otto Gusti Madung, “Provokasi Kasih,” dalam Max Regus dan Fidelis Den (eds.), *Lakukanlah Semua dalam Kasih* (Jakarta: Penerbit Obor, 2020), 161.

change. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus* reminded that all development activities should not only be oriented towards achieving prosperity, but also towards realizing solidarity with the poor so that their dignity remains protected.³⁷ A complete and holistic transformation of the poor themselves is the aim of implementing the Church's diaconal work. The support of social structural conditions encourages the realization of self-transformation among the poor. Poor people are not lazy people. They suffer the consequences of unjust structures. On that basis, charitable diakonia must be complemented by transformative diakonia which has structural characteristics. Church diakonia is not enough just to implement an agenda to empower the poor economically, but must also seek structural transformation that is more supportive of their lives.

Transformative diakonia is one form of the Church's public role. Transformative diakonia is the development of the mission of liberation carried out by the Church in confrontation with social reality to express support for the poor and fight for the living rights of the poor.³⁸ The manifestation of faith is clearly visible when the Church is actively involved in criticizing and dismantling the socio-political and socio-cultural structures that cause them to suffer. This means that the definition of the existence of the Church does not refer to its authority as an institution, but rather to its practical involvement in siding with those who suffer.³⁹

The Church's diakonia for the poor can be realized concretely through a holistic approach that combines spiritual ministry and socio-economic empowerment. Pastoral programs integrate spiritual services, skills training, and entrepreneurship mentoring. Through this model of service, the poor experience a more complete life transformation. In addition, the Church must actively promote improvements in socio-economic structures through local policy advocacy, collaboration with community organizations, and transparent management of donations involving local communities as partners. Participatory monitoring and evaluation are necessary to ensure programs are relevant to the actual needs of the poor and foster solidarity between givers and recipients. Thus, the Church's diakonia not only provides material assistance, but also fosters independence, social awareness, and spiritual maturity among the poor, realizing a service that is innovative, transformative, and practical.

Church with Pastoral Evangelization "Inter-Gentes"

Evangelization in the context of an increasingly modern world must be understood in a meaningful way as *inter-gentes*. *Gentes* - is nations, cultures, and groups of people with different views.⁴⁰ Evangelization *inter-gentes* expresses the meaningfulness of the incarnation in more depth. In the incarnation, it is believed that God not only came to the world but also lived among humans and became the same as humans (Phil. 2:6-7), except in the case of sin (Heb. 2:14; 4:15). Among humans, Jesus shared

³⁷ Paus Yohanes Paulus II, *Centesimus Annus* (Jakarta: Departemen Dokumentasi dan Penerangan Konferensi Waligereja Indonesia, 1991), artikel 58.

³⁸ Benediktus Denar dan Paulus Tolo, "Teologi Publik dan Praksis Pengembangannya dalam Pastoral Pariwisata di Keuskupan Ruteng," *Jurnal Alternatif*, 11 no. 2 (2022): 37-38.

³⁹ Benediktus Denar dan Jean Loustar Jewadut, "Respons Gereja terhadap Persoalan Feminisasi Migrasi dalam Perspektif Teologi Publik," *Jurnal Alternatif* 12, no. 1 (2023): 11-14.

⁴⁰ Peter C. Phan, "Asian Christian Theologies: Present Tasks and Future Orientations," *Concilium*, 1 (2022): 11-21.

His life with humans. Thus, evangelization means sharing the rich experience of faith in God. Evangelization does not mean that there is a certain party who teaches or speaks and another party who is only tasked with listening, but rather an interaction with the main motive of mutual learning between people and cultures that already have traces of the Divine within them. *Inter-gentes* has implications for the understanding and appreciation of evangelization as dialogue.

Two community groups receive special attention in *Evangelii Gaudium* for evangelization *inter-gentes*. First, other religious communities. The Indonesian Church lives in the context of a multi-religious environment. The idea of an open-door Church encourages the Indonesian Church to acknowledge the fact of religious diversity and build cross-border relations without making distinctions based on majority and minority considerations.⁴¹ The idea of an open-door Church upholds the principle of religious pluralism and invites adherents of every religion to build partnerships in the project of salvation and liberation. The public involvement of the Indonesian Church becomes more meaningful insofar as it becomes a means for fellowship with adherents of other religions.⁴²

Engaging with individuals of diverse religions aids Catholics in cultivating a cognitive framework that enables them to logically justify their Catholic beliefs. The Church has a duty to engage in dialogue with adherents of other religions in “an attitude of openness in truth and in love,” despite various obstacles and difficulties (EG 250). But interreligious dialogue will never devolve into relativism and lead to “facile syncretism” (EG 251). However, “True openness involves remaining steadfast in one’s deepest convictions, clear and joyful in one’s own identity, while at the same time being ‘open to understanding those of the other party’ and ‘knowing that dialogue can enrich each side’” (EG 251).

Second, the poor group. So far, the poor have often been used as the target address for various actions, including those of the Church. This kind of practice is good. However, what also needs to be done is to live up to the spirit of *inter-gentes* evangelization is the attitude of learning from the poor. The poor have many values that can be transferred to the Church for the renewal of Church life. According to Pope Francis, God’s voice and presence often appear in and through the poor. So, when the Church ignores the poor, God’s message is no longer heard, the quiet joy of His love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good disappears. Thus, the Church must be “poor, and for the poor” in order for evangelism to be genuine (EG 198).

In this apostolic exhortation, Pope Francis expresses his concern for the impoverished, which is particularly evident in the fourth chapter, especially in the section titled “Inclusion of the Poor in Society.” “Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society.” (EG 187). This entails supporting the integral development of impoverished communities and “working to eliminate the structural causes of poverty and stand in solidarity with them in everyday practice” (EG 188). Christians hold a particular place in their hearts for the impoverished, therefore we should pay attention to them and even embrace the gospel

⁴¹ Felix Wilfred, “Religious Freedom in Asia,” *Concilium*, [http://www.hymnsampublications.co.uk/emages/Miscellaneous/Concilium 164/index.html#](http://www.hymnsampublications.co.uk/emages/Miscellaneous/Concilium%20164/index.html#), hlm. 63-64.

⁴² Felix Wilfred, “Asian Theological Ferment (For Doing Theology in Contemporary Indonesia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives),” *International Journal of Indonesian Philosophy & Theology* 1, no. 2 (2020): 77, <https://doi.org/10.47043/ijipth.v1i2.11>.

from them. They have much to teach others who were not impoverished because they were a part of Christ's sufferings (EG 198). Pope Francis exhorted every Christian community to be a place where the impoverished feel at home, citing John Paul II. He noted that this kind of witness would be "the greatest and most effective presentation of the good news of the kingdom" (EG 199). According to Pope Francis, missions serve as a living example of the pleasure of transformation that comes from trust in Christ. This kind of faith inspires Christians to embrace the impoverished as part of their purpose by demonstrating the kindness and mercy of God in the life of the church.⁴³

Conclusion

The idea of an open-door Church describes the Church's commitment to embracing the world with all its dynamics as a source for theology. The positive view of the world that began with the Second Vatican Council continues and is strengthened through the idea of an open-door Church. The open-door Church gives respect to the reality of otherness, both in religious and cultural aspects, and opens itself to a mutual exchange of values that support human civilization.

An open-door church is an urgent need amidst the complexity of problems faced by humans. The Church needs to present itself as a community that is actively involved in responding to human suffering in the world, not only because suffering is a socio-political issue, but especially because the response to suffering is an intrinsic part of the life of the Church, which always opens its doors through actions of taking sides with the weak, the poor, and the marginalized. By becoming a Church whose doors are always open, the synodality aspect of the Church becomes increasingly stronger. It is hoped that the idea and practice of the open-door Church will guide the implementation of the Church's pastoral work in Indonesia.

This study shows that the "open-door Church" is not merely a conceptual theological pastoral term, but can implicitly be experienced and applied in pastoral practice that is participatory, transformative, significant, and relevant to the needs of the faithful, including the signs of the times. The implementation of the "open-door Church" concept requires the Church to truly engage the faithful actively, to love and respect local culture, and to be sensitive and present in society as an agent of social transformation.

Such pastoral ideas and practices are expected to truly serve as a guide for all pastoral services in Indonesia. Here, the identity and essence of the Church are measured not only by its institution, but by its real involvement in all the sorrows and anxieties, joys and hopes of the people and communities being served. Thus, the Church truly becomes a living, empowered, relevant, and transformative spiritual community in the contemporary world.

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⁴³ Stephen Bevans, "Life, Joy, and Love: Together towards Life in Dialogue with Evangelii Gaudium and The Cape Town Commitment," *International Review of Mission* 104, no. 2 (November 2015): 193-202.

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