

Nostra Aetate and the Spirit of Dialogue among Religious Believers in Larantuka City, East Flores

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Abstract

This study analyzed the community interaction in Larantuka City, East Flores with the aim of determining the implementation of the *Nostra Aetate* document and the reciprocity between Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants. The qualitative data of this study were obtained from studies on documents and interviews with sources from Catholics, Muslims, and Protestants living in Larantuka. This study was conducted between January and June 2021. The researcher drew three conclusions from this study. First, Larantuka residents are open to accepting and acknowledging the presence of other religions besides Catholicism. Other religions are given the liberty to express their faith in Larantuka. Second, the *Nostra Aetate* document has been practiced, albeit not perfectly. The spirit of rivalry that grew among Catholics in the past is turning into a spirit of dialogue. Third, the "tulun talin" spirit, the Lamaholot customs and habits of supporting those in need or helping each other, which are the cultural background of the Larantuka people, serves as a way for the people to express the spirit of equal reciprocity among religious believers in Larantuka which *Nostra Aetate* inspired. The dominant attitudes are cooperation, mutual respect, and mutual acknowledgment that the presence and existence of other people with all religious and cultural backgrounds attached to them is a prerequisite for building human civilization and the common good.

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Penelitian ini menelusuri interaksi warga Larantuka sesuai dengan latar belakang budaya dan agamanya. Tujuannya ialah mengetahui model penerimaan agama-agama non Katolik di kalangan Katolik, mengetahui model implementasi dokumen Nostra Aetate dan bagaimana resiprositas antarumat Islam, Katolik dan Protestan di kota Larantuka. Data-data penelitian kualitatif ini diperoleh melalui studi atas dokumen-dokumen dan wawancara dengan para narasumber dari kalangan Katolik, Muslim dan Protestan yang tinggal di Larantuka. Metode dan teknik analisis data yang digunakan ialah kualitatif interpretatif. Keseluruhan data yang diperoleh diklasifikasikan, dikomparasikan dan diinterpretasi. Dari kajian ini peneliti menarik tiga titik simpul atas permasalahan yang diangkat dalam penelitian ini. Pertama, warga Larantuka pada dasarnya memiliki keterbukaan untuk menerima dan mengakui kehadiran agama lain selain Katolik. Agama lain diberi ruang kemerdekaan untuk mengekspresikan iman mereka di Larantuka. Kedua, dokumen Nostra Aetate sudah diimplementasikan walaupun masih jauh dari sempurna. Semangat rivalitas yang tumbuh di kalangan Katolik di masa lampau tengah berubah menjadi semangat berdialog. Ketiga, spirit “tulun talin” yang berarti menopang yang berkekurangan atau saling membantu dalam adat dan kebiasaan Lamaholot yang menjadi latar budaya warga Larantuka menjadi jalan bagi para warga untuk mengekspresikan semangat resiprositas setara antarumat beragama di Larantuka yang diinspirasi oleh Nostra Aetate. Sikap yang dominan adalah kerjasama, saling menghargai, dan saling mengakui bahwa kehadiran dan keberadaan orang lain dengan segala latar agama dan budaya yang melekat pada mereka adalah sebuah prasyarat demi membangun peradaban kemanusiaan dan kebaikan bersama.

Keywords: Nostra Aetate; reciprocity; *tulun talin*

Introduction

Every religion wants its adherents to live peacefully amidst religious and cultural diversity (Groff, 2002; Makin, 2016). However, this expectation is often far from the truth in Indonesia with all the interreligious and interethnic conflicts (Adam, 2008; Varshney et al., 2004; Wilson, 2008). Conflict experience is a never-ending lesson for realizing peace and religious harmony. Several local initiatives were raised to unravel the tangled threads of inter-religious conflicts in Indonesia by promoting a balanced way of religious life that does not see others as opponents (Aksa & Nurhayati, 2020; Hannan et al., 2020; Haryanto, 2022; Hendriks & van der Braak, 2022; Yunus & Hanafiah, 2020).

Facing past inter-religious conflicts and as an effort to open to other religions, The Catholic Church drew up a document called *Nostra Aetate*. This document on the Church's views on non-Christian religions is regarded as a guide for Church members in building harmonious relations with adherents of other religions in the world, including in Indonesia. This study focused its attention on the effort to track the extent to which the teachings of the Church through *Nostra Aetate* affect the pattern of relations between its adherents and adherents of other religions in the context of the life of the Catholic, Muslim and Protestant communities in Larantuka, East Flores, East Nusa Tenggara. The chief question is what are the concrete outcomes of the decree *Nostra Aetate* regarding the relationship of reciprocity among religious communities in Larantuka? In a more specific context, this study aimed to suggest thinking that *Nostra Aetate* can be an inspiration for the reciprocal life of the Catholic, Muslim, and Protestant communities in the city of Larantuka.

A study on *Nostra Aetate* was initiated by Fredericks dan Tiemeier, stating that if *Nostra Aetate* transforms the Church, then interfaith friendship inspired by *Nostra Aetate* is changing the world. *Nostra Aetate* makes friendship possible (Fredericks & Tiemeier, 2015). Ellis emphasized that since its promulgation, *Nostra Aetate* has shown more positive ways as a basis for Christians and other religions to have dialogue and collaboration (Ellis, 2021). Meanwhile, Bronislaw Malinowski conducted a study on reciprocity and found a form of exchange of partnership reciprocity among the natives of Trobriand. These residents have built an economic network that unites the two partners and then spreads to thousands of partners throughout the archipelago where they exchange gifts and services. The same desire bound them: to be involved in the gift exchange and many ties to follow. The main principle underlying the exchange is the exchange of gifts of approximately equal value without coercion. There is reciprocal service, and the partnership is permanent (Malinowski, 1978).

Ghafar et al., described the practice of praying on the 1000th day of the death of the Muslim and Catholic communities and the process of acculturating religious harmony between the Muslim and Catholic com-

munities in tradition and culture in Bandungan Village, Saradan Subdistrict, Madiun Regency. This tradition has given birth to the religious harmony of the Muslim and Catholic communities, which can be seen in mutual respect and appreciation for sacred and profane religious activities. Communal harmony formation refers to the theory of communal harmony built with five basic theories: value theory, structural theory, idealist theory, reciprocity theory, and interaction theory (Ghafar et al., 2019).

Azizah et al., studied a form of donation such as goods, services, or money to people who hold weddings, circumcisions, and mourning events. Azizah et al. found that the rural community social system is often characterized by mechanical solidarity in the form of cooperation and mutual assistance in which natural reciprocity is established (Azizah et al., 2021).

Siswadi studied the concept of reciprocity in the *nelubulanin* ceremony in Banjar Klumpu, Klumpu Village, Nusa Penida Subdistrict, Klungkung Regency, and found that in this ritual, the principle of reciprocity is apparent. This ritual is motivated by several factors, namely social and economic factors. From a social perspective, this ritual aims to maintain harmony, brotherhood, and continuity of relations between people. While from an economic perspective, reciprocity may alleviate the burden of people who hold an event or celebration, especially those from the lower middle economic level (Siswadi, 2018).

Syukur, in his study, found that reciprocity in the *massolo* tradition contained mechanical social solidarity, which simultaneously imposed social burdens on society. The community recognized the moral obligation to participate in *massolo* activities in the context of establishing the relationship. However, on the other hand, society is burdened with *massolo* values that must be given, causing them to resort to borrowing from neighbors, relatives, and the rich (Syukur, 2019). Meanwhile, Agusthina Christina Kakiay, who studied the socioeconomic exchange system in Saparua Island, found that cooperation in the form of selfless help among the community began to weaken along with the introduction of the money economy into the market economy system (Kakiay, 2019).

Accounts of the implementation of the *Nostra Aetate* document and the cultivation of the spirit of reciprocity in inter-religious relations from several studies above come from outside Larantuka. Nevertheless, no similar study has been found in the local context of Larantuka, East Flores. This blank space is what this study aimed to fill. The author saw that it is in this position that this study was carried out as a new work that contributes to the civil dialogue and religious harmony in the local area (Flores and NTT) and Indonesia in general.

The object of this study was reciprocity behavior among religious communities in Larantuka city. The experiences, knowledge, opinions, and feelings of the people of Larantuka about the object were analyzed (Ratna, 2010). From a sociological point of view, this study explored the interaction patterns of reciprocity in everyday life. The scope of the study covered the urban area of Larantuka, East Flores, whose population was diverse in terms of religion and cultural background. Primary data was attained from field observations and structured interviews with informants (religious leaders, government leaders, women, and youth) from different religious backgrounds. The informants were determined using the purposive sampling technique, a data collection technique based on specific considerations, including the fact that informants were activists and interreligious dialogue observers. Secondary data were also used in this study as references to the research theme. Three data collection techniques were used in this study: observation, interview, and document study (Creswell, 2014). The data analysis method and technique in this study was qualitative interpretation. The results of the analysis were presented informally in a descriptive way. The analysis results are conveyed here through words, sentences, and other narrative forms.

***Nostra Aetate* and the Spirit of Dialogue among Religious Believers**

Essentially, through *Nostra Aetate*, the Catholic Church invites its members to dialogue and cooperate with adherents of other religions wisely and lovingly, while recognizing, maintaining, and nurturing spiritual and moral wealth and socio-cultural values found in other religions (Ellis, 2021).

The document tears down the exclusivism of the Catholic Church which for centuries saw itself as the only way to human salvation in this world and in the hereafter. It is also regarded as a universal instruction from The Catholic Church for its members amidst the reality of religious pluralism. Article 2 of *Nostra Aetate* mentions:

“The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.”

Nostra Aetate is fifty-six years old. Two keywords that dominate the entire content of this document are dialogue and cooperation. Recognition of other religions' spiritual and moral wealth and socio-cultural values encourages Christians to develop dialogue and cooperation with adherents of other faiths (Cunningham et al., 2007; Ellis, 2021). Interreligious dialogue and cooperation are absolute requirements for the creation of religious harmony. According to the researcher, the spirit that underlies interfaith dialogue and cooperation is the practice of reciprocity among religious people. Reciprocity in this discourse is intended as an attitude of mutual respect, need, and acknowledgment that other religions are important and equal.

According to the researcher, the instructions of this theological directive of the Church have not been grounded holistically by all members of the Catholic Church. For example, it is mentioned that many Catholics from Larantuka refused the construction of a Mosque and Muslim houses as well as the construction of Bethel Church in the Catholic area. The daily interaction normally runs until a gathering related to religious symbols takes place which creating unfriendly atmosphere. The researcher surmised that although *Nostra Aetate* has been around for half a century, the Catholic Church members' knowledge about it is still minimal. If so, the dialogue and cooperation as aspired by *Nostra Aetate* have not yet reached their final point.

Nostra Aetate is one of the documents produced by the Second Vatican Council, published on October 28, 1965. It comes from Latin, meaning: “In

Our Time," having a special position in interreligious relations in the world because the Church announces to all humankind on this document. That he recognized the truth of other religions outside of Catholicism, this document does not stop at confession but encourages its followers to form cooperation for the sake of humanity (Hardawiryana, 1993).

This document is clear proof of the greatness and humility of the Church in exchanging suspicious and hostile attitudes with other religions for constructive openness, dialogue, and cooperation. According to Kroeger, through *Nostra Aetate*, The Catholic Church does not reject all that is true and holy about these religions. Likewise, the Church humbly honors every way of life and acting and the commandments and teachings that reflect the ray of truth that illuminates everyone (Kroeger, 2021).

With this document, the Church found and announced explicitly positive things that are the spiritual and moral treasures of the world's major religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Islam. Based on this wealth, the Church urges all her sons and daughters to initiate dialogue and cooperation with adherents of these major religions, with love and care, to promote and propagate these good, high and divine values without losing their respective faith identities (Kroeger, 2021).

With a long tradition of faith across ages and geographies, Hinduism has diligently and persistently explored the world of divine mysteries and described this divine experience through countless myths and critical philosophical investigations. Hindus have also cultivated their minds, feelings, and thoughts through *Samadhi* (meditation) to be free and liberated from the world's suffering. In their Samadhi they are actually displaying an attitude of loving trust in God's protection. Buddhism departs from human knowledge and awareness of a changing world. From this point on, they then look for a path that can lead them to find true freedom. Efforts to reach higher enlightenment are usually through two paths, namely through efforts on the part of humans and assistance from higher parties. The Church then

paid great attention and respect to these two religions (Kroeger, 2021; O'Collins & Farrugia, 1996).

Islam also practices in their daily life a core of their faith that the God they worship is the one living and existing God, the Merciful and the Almighty, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. They believe that God speaks to man. Therefore, they obey, with all their heart, all of God's decisions, including decisions that are still hidden. The Church publicly announces its reverence for all the wealth of faith that these Muslims have (Kroeger, 2021; O'Collins & Farrugia, 1996).

Furthermore, the Church admits that, essentially, the Church has the same history of faith as Judaism. They continue to store in their history the spiritual treasures that began with Abraham, the story of the deliverance from Egypt, and the formation of the family of God's chosen nation. Throughout the ages, they have preserved their priceless treasures of Monotheism, Scripture, the Sabbath, Circumcision, Obedience to the Mosaic Law, and all its inherited teachings. This council found the solid foundation of the unity between Judaism and the Church in the Old Testament Scriptures. This fact is likened to the statement that "the Church professes to receive the riches of Old Testament revelation, and that its fertility is through the appreciation of the Old Testament and is nourished from the root of the good Olive tree." (Kroeger, 2021; O'Collins & Farrugia, 1996).

Pope Benedict XVI analogizes *Nostra Aetate* with the Magna Carta (from Latin: Great Charter). With this, Benedict informs all Catholics worldwide that the *Nostra Aetate* document is normative and has binding power. Apart from its normativity, this document is also a reference in the preparation of other related documents and the truth remains unchanged. This speech gave a strong message that the attitude of the Church in establishing friendship and mutual understanding with all religions has never subsided (Viviano, 2020).

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Ahmed al-Tayeb, went further in interpreting the contents of the *Nostra Aetate* document when the two religious leaders signed the document "Human Brotherhood for World

Peace and Living Together.” Both agreed that God desires the reality of religious diversity. This theological foundation gives new horizons in applying the contents of the *Nostra Aetate* document. It is why *Nostra Aetate* has become a relevant foundation for the multireligious Asian context and is also suitable for the context of the Indonesian nation and Larantuka with the reality of Bhineka Tunggal Ika and the third precept of Pancasila, i.e., the unity of Indonesia.

The Trace of Reciprocity among Religious People in Larantuka City

Reciprocity in Local Culture

Catholics and Muslims in Larantuka City come from the same cultural background. However, the religious differences did not separate them culturally (Rahman et al., 2022). Family events, including traditional events, all gather and experience life as brothers.

The activity of helping and reciprocating in an event is called *tulun talin*. Circumcision in Islam, the Sacrament of Baptism in Catholicism, weddings, the ordination of priests/Fathers, and welcoming the Hajj have also become part of *tulun talin*. Because of that, there is a moral obligation to visit each other and give each other some presents in the form of traditional cloth or animals. This reciprocity has been carried out long before today's world religions were present in Larantuka land. The teachings and values of religions beautify, strengthen, reinforce, and develop a harmonious life, mutual cooperation, and good relations that already exist in Larantuka City. *Tulun talin* culture has a high bonding power among a large family or an ethnic group, without discriminating against religion and belief.

This habit has a bonding power. As a result, differences in political and religious views cannot separate or stretch the ties of brotherhood and unity. It had been practiced long before world religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Catholicism, and Protestantism entered the Lamaholot land. Rites related to marriage, birth, death, dance, planting and reaping, and the warding-off of calamities (disasters) show the unity of a large family or community.

If we look more closely, the attitude of mutual assistance expressed by the people of Larantuka, both Muslim and Catholic, was born from the spirit of "*gemohing*" in the Lamaholot language, which in Indonesian is translated as the spirit of mutual assistance or cooperation. The community expresses basic values in common life, such as brotherhood, justice, human rights, and customary law, and remedies each other's shortcomings. Through *gemohing*, the spirit of deliberation for consensus is cultivated which in the Lamaholot language is called "*pupu wekiket maring oneket*."

This fact is in line with the view that Asians are used to living side by side with other religions and beliefs in their daily life. They have and always strive to live peacefully and harmoniously amidst diversity (Panda, 2013). regardless of the event, all parties are always involved as brothers in the house without distinction of religion.

What Muslims, Catholics, and Protestants practice in Larantuka, such as providing services or energy to each other to help others or exchanging goods to meet the needs of others, has never been judged merely as an economic activity but as an "exchange of sacrifices." There is the fulfillment of desires, symbolic values, the embodiment of social meaning, social relations, community and solidarity, mutual respect, recognition of equality and generosity, and interrelatedness to each other (Appadurai, 1986; Durkheim, 2014).

Reciprocity in Economics

The sea along the coast of Larantuka sub-district and north of Flores is a living place for fish. The largely Muslim fishermen leave early in the morning and return before sunset. When fortune is on their side, they can go home with a big smile on their face with their 1-5 GT motorboats full of fish. Some of the fish hauls were bought by Muslim women and girls from Posto and Kampung Baru to be sold from house to house or customers from Maumere and to the Primo Fish Factory or Sang Surya Fish Factory. If the fresh fish bought by the women and girls are not sold out, they will be split, salted, and then dried in the sun to be sold back to markets in inland villages

around Ile Mandiri or other islands such as Adonara and Solor. The women or girls selling fish usually have routes or selling areas around Larantuka city. This routine has been carried out since ancient times and continues today.

Unlike the people of Trobriand, who use *Kula* as a medium to exchange fairness and friendliness in a spirit of lasting partnership reciprocity, the people also have several commodities from nature, such as fish, corn, rice, coffee, and coconut, which are used as a medium to establish a sense of kinship between one another. For example, people from Posto Village and Baru Village sell fish for money and basic necessities: rice, corn, banana, coffee, or coconut, or for establishing kinship with buyers from house to house, from village to village around Larantuka City and Mandiri Mountain.

The researcher saw that such interactions between sellers and buyers in the context of Larantuka City are not foreign. By delivering fish directly to the customer's door, the sellers provide services to meet needs directly on the spot. Busy customers such as farmers, employees, or traders are delighted because their needs are available right before theirs. This activity represents economic action between sellers and buyers and helps build social relations between buyers and sellers. Money or equivalent goods become the medium of that exchange. However, it is much more than just an economic system (Gaduh, 2012).

The daily story that shows the spirit of reciprocity among religious believers in economic activities in Larantuka is one valid proof that the spirit of reciprocity is universal, as underlined by the American sociologist Alvin Gouldner. Gouldner, a follower of Malinowski, explains that the reciprocity spirit of the local community is not a "blind" act. People have the sharpness to judge to the extent of believing what consequences they will face when they forget, neglect, or ignore the reciprocity in the exchange of goods or services they have lived. The fishermen of Posto and Baru Villages definitely would not be able to eat. There would not be any smoke from their kitchens. The same thing happened to the Catholic residents who enjoy services from the residents of Baru Village. If they fail to show fairness and respect for their partners from Baru Village, there would be no personalized delivery service

for them. From Malinowski's point of view, as Gouldner said, it can be said that the accumulation of feelings or beliefs determines the quality of reciprocity fostered in the daily circle of interaction (Amri, 1997; Gouldner, 1960).

Gouldner's argument about establishing mutual trust due to reciprocal interactions also applies to the Muslims of Baru and Posto Villages and the Catholics of Larantuka. They do not only operate at the level of economic exchange or goods and services but transcend material things.

Reciprocity in Religious Holidays

Larantuka, the capital of East Flores Regency and the port city that replaced the port of Solor since the sixteenth century, inherited the major religious celebrations, namely Christmas, Semana Sancta, Easter, Eid al Fitr, and Vesak. Since the mixing of these religions, the celebration of religious holidays is no longer just a day celebrated exclusively within themselves but a day where relatives, friends, and acquaintances make friends from house to house and even from village to village. The same ancestral and cultural background gives a high sense of kinship even though they are different in religion and social strata.

According to Daniélou, Dupuis and Rahner, religion is nothing but a human effort to respond to God's self-revelation, which initiates communicating Himself to humans. That is, religion is not man-made. God himself took the initiative to communicate with himself, and then humans answered Him. So, it is not humans but Allah who initiates the existence of religions. Allah is the source of the diversity of tribes, nations, and religions. Suppose God Himself communicates freely with anyone, then in line with that. In that case, humans should be willing to openly and generously relate to anyone, regardless of ethnic background, religion, education, and social strata. Only in that way do humans participate in God's own will in concrete daily life (Rahner, 1963, 1970; Sparks, 2008).

Muhammad Wildan and Moch Nur Ichwan emphasized strongly that Indonesian Islam is also widely known by the outside world as Islam with

moderate characteristics. The acculturation process of Islam, with all its values derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, is tightly integrated with the cultural values of the Indonesian tribes. Whether we like it or not, that reality has been rooted so deeply that sometimes separating the two (Pribadi, 2020).

Samovar et al. said that the act of togetherness in religious celebrations: helping to maintain order and security, visiting each other, and greeting each other during religious holidays, are the family spirit of Asian cultures. They help each other because they feel that the owner of the celebration is not someone else but their own family. They show each other harmony not only in economic activities but also in religious matters. According to Samovar et al., by thinking and acting or being involved in a special day of another religion, we begin to enter and think like they think so as to reduce or even eliminate the potential for intercultural and religious disputes (Samovar et al., 2012).

In Malinowski's words, visiting each other and being involved in each other's big celebrations also deepen the spirit of partnership and exchanging mercy, love, and opposites with one another. There is a distinction between Islamic religious identities, such as Sunni and Shia or Christian, with Catholic and Protestant. However, these differences should not rule out mutual respect, acknowledgment, assistance inequality, and generosity (Samovar et al., 2012).

Reciprocity in Education

Darmaputra and Effendi's work entitled *Kemusliman dan Kemajemukan Agama* opened the eyes of all readers to the fact that Indonesian society is a pluralistic society. All citizens live in an atmosphere of pluralism without exception because pluralism itself infiltrates and occupies the entire time and space of Indonesian people (Darmaputra & Effendi, 1993). It is no different from Larantuka City and all its Catholic schools. There are always students with different religions in Catholic educational institutions, starting from kindergarten, elementary, junior high, and high school/vocational school.

Leonard Swidler has believed since he was in college that the world of education has a significant contribution in shaping tolerant, dialogical human beings who understand each other in all aspects of life: religion, economy, politics, and culture. Because he saw the benefits of inter-cultural, inter-ideological, and inter-religious blending, Leonard promised to promote the movement of building reciprocal relations through the world of education, both formal and non-formal. All the wealth of human abilities, such as thinking, speaking, and acting in a dialogical manner, can only be realized full of responsibility when humans are allowed to explore and deepen them through the world of education, both formal and non-formal (Swidler, 2014).

What is practiced in several Catholic educational institutions through inclusive acceptance and treatment of non-Catholic students signifies the hope that through education, non-Catholics can know more deeply who and what Catholicism is. The practice of being willing to educate non-Catholic children as well as possible has become a source of trust for non-Catholic parents so that they are willing to send their children to receive education in Catholic institutions, as well as shown the spirit of reciprocity in the exchange of services, as noted by Malinowski. Parents of non-Catholic students trust Catholic educational institutions by sending their children to participate in the entire teaching and learning process. Catholic institutions reciprocate by educating non-Catholic children to the maximum in terms of intellectual quality, maturity, and personality stability. It means that each party satisfies the other's needs, and through this medium, the good relations between communities: Catholics, Muslims, and Protestants are perpetuated. Education contributes greatly to maintaining and increasing the stability and sustainability of the community's social life, as underlined by Gouldner (1960).

Interfaith Reciprocity in the Interfaith Communication Forum

The Interfaith Communication Forum (ICF) of East Flores, located in Larantuka City, plays an important role in framing harmonious interfaith life. When issues and incidents of intolerance occur outside Flores on a

national scale, the ICF teams direct visits to the community to counter negative issues or directly seek joint solutions. The teams support each other to solve problems without getting into the feelings of a particular group. When there was a problem of host contamination and the murder of the perpetrators, the burning of Minang trading stalls, and also the demolition of the mosque building, the ICF teams united their opinion and refrained from attributing the issues to *SARA*¹ elements (tribe, religion, race, and intergroup), and instead determined the best solution while maintaining good relations between religious believers. When there are public complaints from priests or lay people who express objections to the sound of prayers from the mosque where celebrations are being held in the Church, the teams discuss it publicly and seek solutions as openly as possible. The familial spirit of the Lamaholot culture helped the teams to hear and understand each other.

Every time nearing holidays such as Christmas, Easter, or Eid al Fitr, all members of the ICF are gathered to listen to directions from the Regional Government and then forward them to the grassroots. As in the rejection of the presence of the Bethel Church, the refusal to build a mosque, the demolition of the mosque building, and the contamination of the *hostia*, the ICF team was facilitated by the government together with the relevant agencies to build vigilance to maintain tolerance and harmony among religious believers in Larantuka.

In terms of the roles played by ICF members and the government, there appears to be a close relationship with the norms of reciprocity or reciprocal relations between people. The presence of the ICF and the government guarantees security, justice, and law. Humans operate within their limitations; there will always be abnormalities, friction, and conflict in communal life. In such a context, where each party is carried away by emotions or acts irrationally, the enforcement of norms or laws serves to rearrange cracked or broken social relations and at the same time perpetuate

¹SARA: Suku, Agama, Ras, Antargolongan

exchanges of mutual understanding, forgiveness, friendliness, kindness as emphasized by Gouldner when he spoke about the universality of norms (Gouldner, 1960).

Reciprocity in Religious Society

Malinowski provided a factual picture in the Trobriand community about reciprocity, starting from the habit of exchanging gifts, namely necklaces and bracelets between two men (or women). The objects of exchange are called *Kula*. After exchanging *Kula*, the two are said to have become eternal partners. Partners outside the village or island, the host, protector, or ally in a dangerous and unsafe village or island. Being a host partner provides the ultimate guarantee of safety to guest partners. They provide homes, food, and gifts for partners (Malinowski, 1978).

There are two principles surrounding this custom of giving or exchanging gifts. First: *Kula* items received in magical ceremonies must be reciprocated or repaid. This reciprocation or repayment can occur within minutes, hours, or even longer. Second, recipients need to remember that the value of the goods paid for or given to partners must be equivalent to what was received. Good stuff deserves to be rewarded with a commensurate item. There is a common norm: “You have to give benefits to those who have helped you” (Malinowski, 1978).

Continuing Malinowski’s study, Gouldner explored the positive things obtained from the reciprocity system (Gouldner, 1960). First, Gouldner came from the belief that the norm of reciprocity is universal. All citizens support some form of the reciprocal norm; only the young, the elderly, and the sick are exceptions. Second, the norms governing the reciprocal exchange of goods and services dictate that people should help those who have helped them and not hurt those who have helped them. Punishment will be meted out to those who fail to repay what they have received. Third, the reciprocal exchange requires positive reactions. The goods or services exchanged can be heteromorphic: the goods or services appear different, but the content is the same, or homomorphic: goods or services are roughly equivalent or identical.

Mukti Ali translated the interfaith reciprocity concretely into five domains (Basuki, 2018): First, life dialogue. This dialogue is natural and has been practiced in citizens' daily lives. Muslims can go to Christian hospitals, and Christians have no problem working in Muslim homes. A Christian student can attend a Muhammadiyah school or vice versa. This phenomenon sends a message that everyone is valued for their existence. Everything flows as it is and people can greet each other and help each other in joy and sorrow without asking about religion, ethnicity, and background.

Second, dialogue in social activities. There is an ethical call to individuals and groups to help each other in various situations. It can be in weddings, building houses of worship, natural disasters, refugees, or famine. People from various ethnic backgrounds, religions and social strata work together to share the burden (Atasoge et al., 2022).

Third, religious experience communication dialogue. The experience of friendship on a social level turn into friendship and spiritual communication in the form of prayer, meditation, dhikr to God, fasting, pilgrimage to holy places, contemplation, and mysticism. In everyday life, people from different religions are willing to pray for their family or friends who are sick or have died. They will make pilgrimages to holy places during major religious celebrations.

Fourth, joint prayer dialogue. In daily life, people from various religions from time to time gather together to pray for reasons of illness, grief, or disaster. Sometimes Islam leads the prayer, and sometimes Christianity or Hinduism or Buddhism, and Confucianism according to the purpose of the meeting. All were carried out solemnly and willing to follow with full understanding and brotherhood.

Fifth, theological discussion dialogue. The discussion is carried out in the context of exchanging religious insights and knowledge because that is where understanding between one another begins. An example is books written by writers of various religions. In Catholic circles, often at the Supreme Council of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference (*KWI*), religious leaders and beliefs are invited to provide input for the continuation of the work of the

Indonesian Church, which is becoming more contextual and relevant to Indonesia.

Conclusions

The findings of this study revealed that the praxis/reciprocity that happened in Larantuka city could be used as an interfaith dialogue model in Indonesia and the cross-cultural areas. It can be seen by the ideas that had been searched in this study as follows: First, naturally, the people of Larantuka are open to accepting anyone from any ethnic or religious background. Therefore, the presence of other religions such as Islam and Protestantism was accepted from the beginning until today. The introduction of the *Nostra Aetate* document serves as the spirit in building this relationship of mutual acceptance and further purifying the attitude of acceptance by the Catholic community towards Muslims and Protestants and giving them space to express all their religious activities to this day. Second, regarding the implementation of the *Nostra Aetate* document in the form of appreciation and respect for all that is true and holy from other religions (Islam and Protestantism), the people of Larantuka deserve some recognition. Third, this study shows that both the Lamaholot culture and the religions in Larantuka, such as Catholicism, Islam, and Protestantism, have contributed their respective wealth of values or golden teachings to foster a spirit of mutual acceptance, mutual respect, and acknowledgment of each other's identity in hospitality and equality. These values contribute to the formation of Larantuka's modern façade.

Finally, it can be said that inter-religious reciprocity in Larantuka city is inspired by *Nostra Aetate*, one of the public social interaction forms that become an element that can create peace and social harmony among multireligious and multicultural people. At this point, the praxis of religious people in this study contributes to the development of inter-religious dialogue.[w]

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