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**NOSTRA AETATE AND SPACE FOR RELIGIOUS MODERATION:
INTERFAITH DIALOGUE IN MULTICULTURAL INDONESIA**

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Abstract: The spirit of *aggiornamento* (bringing up to date) that underpinned the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, and that has continued to be promoted and articulated in everyday human life, is also needed in Indonesia's plural society. This article explores the concept of religious moderation as a translation of the concepts contained within *Nostra Aetate* (NA), a document produced by Vatican II that has remained little studied despite its promotion of interfaith dialog. Recognizing the limited exploration of NA's actual implementation, this article investigates how the Catholic Church has actualized the moderate principles of NA in its religious and social activities in Indonesia. This article finds that the spirit of *aggiornamento* has been capable of creating an inclusive Church that positively addresses the world and honors the truths and good found in non-Christian religions. Furthermore, the concept of religious moderation enshrined in NA has also promoted interfaith dialog as a concrete manifestation of the Church's moderate stance. This article recommends that NA be socialized among the Catholics in Indonesia in order to ensure that its and its principles and values are not only recognized by Church leaders, but also by all lay persons; by doing so, these principles and values can be implemented in Catholics' everyday lives.

Key words: Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate*, Religious Moderation, Interfaith Dialogue, Indonesia.

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1. Introduction

The concept *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (there is no salvation outside the Church), first recorded in a third-century letter by Saint Cyprian of Carthage, was initially proposed within the context of questioning the baptisms conferred by heretics. Over time, this dogma was expanded and misinterpreted as the Catholic Church intersected and conflicted with other faiths and cultures both within and without Europe. It remained a prominent part of Church doctrine until the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (henceforth Vatican II) in the 1960s (see Riyanto 2010, 20-22).

Since Vatican II, the Church has revised this view, seeing it as irrelevant to the socio-cultural context of contemporary society. However, specific misinterpretations of this statement remain influential, especially in Indonesia. This can be seen, for example, in the tendency for Catholics to not truly and sincerely treat others as their brothers, to promote familiarity over "simple etiquette", or to work closely with non-Christians. For example, at the neighborhood level (in Indonesia, *rukun tetangga/rukun warga*), Catholics tend to avoid becoming actively involved in administrative and social activities as they feel uncomfortable or even afraid when interacting and working with persons of other religious backgrounds. However, this sense of anxiety seemingly melts away as Catholics participate enthusiastically in their Church activities.

There thus exists a significant gap in how Indonesian Catholics actualize themselves as citizens of the nation-state and how they actualize themselves as citizens of the Church. As a result, interfaith activities and dialog are limited and easily disrupted. This is reflected in a study by the Center for Community Religion Research and Guidance of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which found a decrease in the national socio-religious harmony index (measured through the variables of tolerance, collaboration, and equality) between 2015 and 2018; in 2018, the socio-religious harmony index reached 70.90, a decrease of 1.37 from the previous year (72.27) (Antaranews 2018). This has been attributed in part to the increasing prominence of religious issues in national politics.

This has occurred even as the Church has adapted the concept of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* for a new socio-historic context. For example, following the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (1962-1965) the Church produced *Nostra Aetate* (NA), a document that was signed by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965. Consisting of five articles, NA was the first official Church document to recognize that faiths around the world seek meaning, truth, and goodness (Furnal 2016). It became part of the Church's official dogma and position, as well as a guideline for the Catholic Church's interactions with other religions (Wilhemus 2014). In 2005, Pope

Benedict XVI even called the NA the Church's *Magna Carta* in Muslim-Christian relations (Locklin 2017).

NA recognizes diversity, pluralism, and inclusivity as part of modern society (Nwanaju 2016) and has the noble goal of creating reciprocal relations between Catholics and non-Christians (Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, etc.) (Nwanaju 2016). In other words, NA emphasizes the importance of responding positively to persons of other faiths, of recognizing their beliefs, and of being open itself to familiar relations with all persons, including non-Christians. More concretely, it asks that Catholics show moderation in their religious lives and remain open to creating dialog with others in order to promote social justice, morality, freedom, and peace (Riyanto 2010, 113). The leaders of the Catholic Church—Popes John XXIII, Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis—have regularly identified maintaining dialog with all persons (of all faiths) as an example of religious moderation. Pope John Paul II (r. 1978–2005) became the first Pope to enter a Muslim place of worship when he spoke to the congregation of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus in 2001. He taught Catholics the importance of maintaining mutual respect and recognizing the values shared by Christians and Muslims (Nwanaju 2016).

Just recently, on February 4, 2019, Pope Francis met with Sheikh Ahmed el-Tayeb (the Grand Imam of al-Azhar Mosque in Egypt). During this meeting, the two religious leaders signed a document urging all individuals to seek peace. They emphasized that "religions must never incite war, hateful attitudes, hostility and extremism, or must they incite violence or the shedding of blood" (Zenit.org 2019).

This is a particularly important message for Indonesia, a plural and multicultural nation where religious differences have nonetheless created conflict. "It is not uncommon for religion to be used as a 'tool' or to be identified as a cause of social violence and conflict. There has been a tendency for religion to be used to 'justify' and even 'escalate' conflict" (Retnowati 2014), as in Situbondo in October 1996 and in Ambon between 1999 and 2004. In recent years, Indonesia's democratic elections have been marred by politicians exploiting religious issues and otherwise gathering votes while threatening national harmony and integrity. As such, the Indonesian government (through the Ministry of Religious Affairs) has called for 2019 to be the Year of Religious Moderation.

The concept of religious moderation found in NA offers Indonesian Catholics a real means of becoming moderate in their everyday religious lives, as it suits Indonesia's dynamic multiculturalism (Nwanaju 2016). As such, this article seeks to (1) explore how NA may provide the foundation for developing a model of religious moderation, (2) elucidate Catholicism's theological views of religious moderation, and (3) identify the historical basis for religious moderation among Catholics.

This article departs from the assumptions that NA contains within it a concept of religious moderation that can be embraced by Catholics in their everyday religious lives, and that moderate religious concepts and practices will improve interfaith relations and interactions in a multicultural Indonesia. It should be recognized that, in Indonesia, the concept of religious moderation has been dominated by the Islamic concept of *tasamuh*. As such, perspectives of moderation from Indonesia's other recognized religions (Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) might offer new or complementary approaches that may facilitate mutual understanding and interfaith dialog. It is hoped that this discussion of NA will help fill that gap while offering a practical example of the religious moderation promoted by the Indonesian government.

2. Religious Moderation and Christianity

2.1. The Concept of Religious Moderation

The concept of religious moderation covers a broad spectrum. It is usually associated with a quite broad understanding of the elements of religion. Where religion is often associated with specific religious symbols and practices, moderation is more of a consequence of or response to historical phenomena. Gutkowski (2015, 215), for instance, has argued that religious moderation has occurred as religions have responded to the democratic and liberal government structures that emerged in post-World War II Western societies; implicitly, this means that religious moderation is not a purely religious phenomenon, but a phenomenon offered as a solution to social issues within a specific social structure. Tezcur (in Brocker 2013, 171), meanwhile, framed religious moderation as a non-confrontational and peaceful approach to creating compromise and resolving disputes that has been chosen over non-electoral, provocative, and confrontative strategies that, while not always violent, tend to be widely opposed.

Where religion is understood as one aspect of the social structure, religious moderation can be understood as a cultural phenomenon. However, Williams recommends that the social construction of moderate identities should be recognized as more than cultural, as such constructions may in fact conceal authoritarian or anti-democratic practices (Gutkowski 2015, 16). Some scholars have framed religious moderation as resulting from the historical process of religion becoming institutionalized within the context of practical politics, with political leaders using paternalistic relations with religious leaders to gain electoral support (Warner 2012). Other have examined religious moderation using a Bakhtinian approach, positioning the moderation process within a specific

socio-historical framework wherein moderation offered the potential for significant social change (Curtis 2013, 141).

Religious moderation has been defined as the willingness of religious persons to adapt themselves to their environments, to adapt their behaviors and attitudes to applicable cultural standards and thereby maintain peace (Liebmant 1983); It may provide a persuasive strategy, or a means of convincing others to repent, or a means of protecting a religious community from its enemies (Danner n.d.). Moderation implies concepts of individual rights, pluralism, and cooperation (Schwedler 2019), the foundation for which can be laid with dialogic education (Nwanaju 2016). Indeed, so long as differences are recognized within the value framework of *ukhuwah basyariah* (fellowship of man), *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (brotherhood of the faithful), *hablu minannaas* (good relations with all of humankind), and *ikhhtilafu ummati rahmatun* (difference is a blessing), they will cause no problems (Miftahuddin 2010). If this occurs, all religions can become blessings for the whole world, what Muslims term *rahmatan lil alamin*.

2.2. Moderation Theology

The theological elements of Joseph Smith III's reorganization of Christian denominations are associated with the 'spiritual'; Vlahos (1981, 5) argues that they apply a legalistic model that positions Christ more as a condemner than a savior. The principle of moderation that Smith promoted, likewise, has been seen as applying a legalistic model that requires agreement on specific shared beliefs and moral principles. The concept of moderation in this study is derived from Blair's "middle road" between different doctrines, beliefs, and structures (Vlahos 1981, 5). This emphasizes the compromistic element of moderation, wherein older doctrines may become less widely practiced than other doctrines that are viewed as more relevant to the contemporary situation.

In practice, theology is 'implemented' in society through the institutionalization of religion. When discussing theology, various definitions may be used. Some have understood theology as a multi-dimensional field of study or science, one that examines various aspects of human life. Ibn Furak has argued that theology positions God and humanity within an epistemological framework, rather than an ontological one, and as such may refer to both using similar terms while still holding them to be incommensurable (Key 2018, 110). Such a concept appears to be the soundest, especially within the context of moderation discourse. Others have considered theology through a historical lens, or conversely seen history as a theological construct. For them, thus, history not only provides a stepping stone for understanding religious moderation (Vlahos 1981), but also for understanding theology itself.

2.3. Moderation and Church

According to Clayton (1995, 107), moderation of the Church emerged as a consequence of different perceptions of religious institutions. Clayton writes that Black congregations viewed the Church as too conservative and too slow to accommodate them, and as such left the Church in significant numbers. The Church thus recognized that, when communicating with communities, it is necessary to not only convey the Church's own message but also to recognize the communities' hopes and needs. For instance, Father Yves Congar (a key figure in Vatican II) wrote that it was necessary for the Church to adapt to worldly changes and to promote progress. Moderation, thus, offered a means for the Church to bridge the gap between its central authority in the Vatican and its pastors in parishes around the world (Philibert 2014, 350).

Moderation has, however, also been seen as a means of claiming primacy over the Church's opponents. For example, Streete (2016, 19-30) writes that moderation has been a response to internal fragmentation, with similarities being emphasized over the often-sharp criticism of the Church's detractors; Streete writes, for example, that moderation has been used to suggest reconciliation with Arminianists and Calvinists. Over time, moderation began influencing relations between the Church and practical politics, including political structures and religion-based parties (Clayton 1995). Warner (2012, 270) clarifies that, as party systems and state ideologies developed, moderate Christian political parties gained prominent positions in many European countries; however, these parties often ignored spiritual achievement in order to create coalitions with non-religious parties.

3. *Nostra Aetate* and its Concept of Religious Moderation

Article 1 of *Nostra Aetate* (NA) identifies religion as one of humanity's fundamental needs. All religions seek to answer questions such as "What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness?" (NA in *Dokumen KV II*, 1993, 309-310). In other words, all religions give meaning, value, and direction to human life. NA further explains that all humans must recognize that they are simultaneously individuals, social entities, and part of a human race that shares the same origin and final destination: God. This transcendental value must serve as the foundation for a fellowship of man, through which peace and collaboration may be achieved. Such a view was underscored by Pope Francis following his meeting with Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb, when he invited "all persons who have faith in God and faith in human fraternity to unite and work together so that it may serve as a guide for future generations to advance a culture of mutual respect in the

awareness of the great divine grace that makes all human beings brothers and sisters." (Indonesia.ucanews.com 2019).

Citing this existential awareness, the Church expressed its sincere reverence for "those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men" (NA 2). This quote implies a degree of religious pluralism, in which all religions—no matter their different doctrines, forms of religious expression, and practices—are recognized as essentially seeking truth and salvation (read: God). The Church thus clearly recognized that "religious and cultural pluralism need not be seen as an obstacle, as something to be despise or as something resulting from the degradation of religious and cultural institutions; rather, pluralism is a source of new life" (Danner n.d.). Difference is an irreducible and undeniable fact, part of God's design; this holds true for religious pluralism as well (Janah 2016). People holding different religious views is not a new phenomenon, as the history of human civilization has shown that religions evolve and grow over time. By recognizing religious pluralism, the Church indicated that humanity's broad range of religious traditions could not be forced to fit a single model (Gada 2016).

According to Muhammad Legenhausen, the concept of religious pluralism began to develop in the 18th century in response to widespread intolerance and the rise of liberalism, and resurfaced in the 20th century within the broader context of salvation. In other words, religious pluralism may be understood within a Christian context as a theological basis for the tolerance of non-Christian religions (Gada 2016). According to the theologian John Hick (1987), the world's major religions are but concrete human responses to the revelations of God. Hick writes that "the great world religions constitute variant conceptions and perceptions of and responses to the one ultimate mysterious divine reality." Pluralist theology, thus, is rooted in a desire for religious communities to respect and honor each other, thereby enabling them to live in harmony and work together for the greater good. Human beings must understand each other and live peacefully together as they strive to promote social welfare (Sunarko 2016, 168).

The Church's recognition of other religions, thus, contains within it the pluralist view that all human beings seek salvation. As such, Article 16 of the *Lumen Gentium* (LG) refers to all that is good, true, and holy outside of Christianity as "a preparation for the Gospel". The good, true, and holy of non-Catholic religions are not rejected, but accepted, as firmly stated in Article 2 of the NA that "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men."

Article 5 of the NA then clarifies the logical consequence of faith. One must live peacefully with and love all others as God does all of His children (see 1 John 4:8, "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."). Ultimately, the NA concludes by emphasizing the Church's need to create dialog with other religions as a manifestation of its religious moderation.

3.1. Catholic Theological Views of Religious Moderation

Human beings can never sever their relations with God, as the fundamental purpose of human life is to live together with God (Martasudjito 2003, 40-42). As such, it is Church doctrine that God desires the salvation of all people, without exception. As stated in Article 1 of the NA, "His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men" (NA in *Dokumen KV II*, 1993, 309). As such, it is the Church's duty to promote "unity and love among men, indeed among nations" (NA in *Dokumen KV II*, 1993, 309). The universal call to salvation underpins humanity's oneness with God as well as the oneness of humankind itself as indicated that "One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth." (NA in *Dokumen KV II*, 1993, 309).

As such, the call to salvation is not merely a matter for the future, but also for the present; it is not only heavenly, but worldly, involving human beings' relations with their fellows. The oneness of humanity was initially catholic in design—"catholic" meaning "all-embracing" or "encompassing all differences". The oneness of humanity, thus, is a oneness of diverse human beings and communities, without exception. Such oneness is a manifestation of salvation. The Catholic Church has embraced a model of oneness that recognizes and respects difference, for at its essence this model identifies humanity as one nation created by God (Riyanto 2010, 99).

Since Vatican II, the Church has rejuvenated its theology. Where previously it had held that there is no salvation outside the Church, the Church has taken a positive view of other religions and open itself to dialog and fellowship with all of God's creations. There has been a shift from exclusivism to inclusivism. In previous centuries, the Church had claimed exclusive authority over the truth and salvation, and as such promoted the conversion of others to Catholicism (Janah 2016). Since Vatican II, however, the Church has recognized that non-Christian religions have the right to exist (Janah 2016); inclusivism has been further supported by Church's promotion of dialog and growth within diverse communities and societies (Nwanaju 2016). In other words, since Vatican II the Church has become more positive, open, and dialogic in its interactions with other religions.

From a theological perspective, the Catholic Church is positioned as the sacrament of Christ's gift of salvation. The Church, in other words, is simultaneously a symbol and a means of salvation (Riyanto 2010, 205).

The Church must thus promote the oneness of humankind and universal love (as a manifestation of God's love for humanity). The Church believes that, as all of humanity comes from and moves towards the same place (i.e. God), all nations should unite in a single community. Furthermore, human beings have long turned to religion to answer fundamental questions about the meaning of humanity, the purpose of life, etc.

Within the framework of human salvation, the Church is positioned as serving the Kingdom of God, as it is dedicated to serving, sharing, and realizing the Kingdom of God. For all of humanity, the Church offers salvation. This further underscores the Church's desire to invite persons of all faiths to "work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom" (NA in *Dokumen KV II*, 1993, 312). As the Church recognizes the shared essence of the world's religions, it holds that dialog and pluralism are necessary (Baum and Baum 2018).

3.2. Historical Reasons for Religious Moderation among Catholics

In the lead-up to Vatican II, the Church recognized that humanity was being increasingly united owing to modern advances in technology. Historically, however, moderation was known even in the early years of the Church, and as such has deep roots in Church traditions. A dialogic approach can be seen in the testimonies of the Church's founders and missionaries, as well as Papal writings. However, such moderation was sporadic, rather than fundamental. More dominant was exclusivism and triumphalism. Consequently, before Vatican II the Catholic Church was widely perceived as closed to outsiders.

Jadot (1983) explored the Church's historical attitude towards other religions. He cites Paul and the other apostles as Church leaders who took a positive view of other religions, prioritizing peaceful approaches over violent ones, and thereby concretely manifesting moderation. Such moderation was also practiced by such Church Fathers as Irenaeus, Origen, Hippolytus, and Gregory of Nazianzus, who offer positive examples of the Church's previous interactions with other religious communities. Only after the Church gained prominence and dominance did it become exclusive and position itself as the sole source of salvation.

Based on this discussion, it may be concluded that Vatican II represented a new approach to the Church's theologizing and self-reflection. The Church considered it necessary to ask its congregation to abandon metaphysical and dogmatic understandings of theology that ignored the reality of human life and embrace understandings that were rooted in concrete phenomenological experiences (Riyanto 2010). NA thus welcomed a new era, a new attitude, a new discourse, one previously unknown in the Catholic Church (Brockner 2013). It offered a fundamentally different understanding of being Catholic, one that was

better suited to pluralistic times (Furnal 2016). NA presented a new, moderate Catholicism, one that invited persons of all religions to recognize and accommodate each other without denying their own essence and identity (Gada 2016). Furthermore, it underscored the importance of understanding religious teachings contextually, of creating mutual understanding, and of recognizing all religions as part of the beauty of God's Creation (Miftahuddin 2010).

3.2. Religious Moderation and NA

The Catholic understanding of religious moderation did not emerge within a vacuum. It was driven by numerous factors, including the social, economic, and cultural conditions in which it was developed. Before Vatican II, the Church presented itself as the sole road to salvation, thereby promoting a sense of exclusivity that denigrated other religions. Thanks to the spirit of "*aggiornamento*" that underpinned Vatican II, the Church found a new identity. It became the Church of the servile, of the poor, of the subjugated. It became a Church that could create dialog and work with others. In other words, Vatican II gave the Church a new moderate "face", one necessitated by the changing times. The Church viewed itself as serving a plural global community, reaching out to persons of all cultural, religious, social, and economic backgrounds. It thus began embracing the diverse cultural traditions of its members while recognizing non-Christians as its partners in service and creating dialog with them.

Since Vatican II, the Church has offered a new, inclusive theology, one that can better promote interfaith peace around the world. Karl Rahner (1978) understands this theology as holding that other religions are implicit forms of our own religion. Salvation is thus possible both through the Church and outside it. Rahner describes this as "Anonymous Christianity" and identifies this moderation as one of Vatican II's most important contributions. The Church was transformed from an "institution of salvation" into a "sacrament of salvation", becoming "a sign and instrument both of a very closely-knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (LG 1). This further underscored that Salvation is found not only in the Church as an institution, but also in the union of humanity and God as explained by Janah (2016).

As a theological consequence, all of humanity is "called to belong to the new people of God" (LG13) even as they follow different roads (LG 15 and 16). In other words, so long as people seek union with God and with their peers, they are following the path to salvation. Such a view represents a positive development in the direction of the Church, which has made progress towards creating interfaith dialog as a means of creating a fellowship of man and ensuring humanity's oneness with God. The Church does not deny that which is true and holy (NA 2), and it explicitly recognizes that Catholics and Muslims worship one God (NA 3)

(Nwanaju 2016). As such, it may be ascertained that religious moderation within the Catholic Church emerged following reflection on the need for renewal (*aggiornamento*), dialog, collaboration, and openness. Fundamental to this moderation are the Church's new approach to the outside world, its new perspective of non-Christian religions, and its new theological paradigm. Through this moderation, the Church has sought to recognize and respond to the demands of the times, viewing different (religious) teachings as sharing a fundamentally similar goal (Riyanto 2010, 82). In other words, religious moderation has enabled the Church to become one and work together with those it had once positioned as "others". The Church has identified all of humanity as belonging to a single community and as having been created by the same God; human beings of all faiths, thus, share an origin and a final destination.

A moderate attitude towards religion facilitates the recognition and acceptance of different religious practices (Sarkela 1997), and consequently makes it possible to create spaces where persons of different religions can work together towards social justice and the common good. Only through moderation that we can realize tolerance, justice, and balance. Religious education, thus, must convey religious teachings within their historical contexts; acontextual interpretations of religious texts and doctrines have historically led to conflict and discord (Gada 2016). Only through contextual understandings of religion can persons of all faiths work together and avoid falling into the extremism trap. Context and moderation, thus, offer potent instruments for curbing extremism (Curtis 2013).

4. The Importance of Religious Moderation for Indonesia's Catholics

It cannot be denied that the renewal promoted by Vatican II, particularly its stance on religious moderation, has provided significant momentum for creating dialogic relations with other religions (Sunarko 2016, 255). This is relevant in Indonesia, a diverse country with hundreds of ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic groups. Given this diversity, as well as the country's problematic majority-minority relations, it is important that Indonesians embrace religious moderation, recognize the unique values of all religions, and create dialog with their peers to realize social justice. Under this pluralist paradigm, Indonesians must respect each other and recognize each other's right to exist (Janah 2016). Only in this manner can true religious harmony, in which religious communities create fellowship and peaceful co-existence, be manifested.

Catholics may embody moderation by living their everyday lives dialogically, learning from their peers and supporting interfaith collaboration in social development. One challenge facing Indonesia today

is the creation of interfaith dialog and collaboration in the democratization process. Indonesians of different religious backgrounds must learn from each other as they seek to build a true democracy. Dialog must be constructed upon the basis of mutual understanding and respect and offer a means for "interacting and communicating with other religions [and] sharing thoughts and views" (Locklin 2017).

Four types of interfaith dialog may be recognized: life dialog, work dialog, theological dialog, and faith dialog (i.e. religious experience). Life dialog, being the most fundamental form of dialog, involves persons of all backgrounds. It is created out of a sense of solidarity and togetherness. Work dialog, meanwhile, is more intensive and requires collaboration between persons of different religions. Theological dialog is more specific, involving primarily religious scholars and others with the necessary expertise. Within such dialog, persons of different faiths attempt to enrich and better understand the doctrines of their respective religions, as well as apply these doctrines to everyday human problems. Finally, faith dialogue, the exchange of religious experiences, is intended as a means of enriching individuals' experiences with their respective religions and enabling them to make manifest the most fundamental values of their religions. Such dialog requires maturity and security in one's faith (Riyanto 2010, 213-214). As stated by Pope Francis, open interfaith dialogue, marked by collaboration and mutual respect, offers a means of protecting the freedoms enjoyed by all of humanity, including the right to life, the right to worship freely, and the right to express oneself freely. As Furnal (2016) writes, "Dialogue based on trustful respect can bring seeds of good that in turn become shoots of friendship and collaboration in so many fields, especially in service to the poor, to the little ones, to the elderly, in the reception of migrants, in the care of those that are excluded. We can walk together taking care of one another and of Creation—all believers of all religions."

5. The Contributions of Catholics' Religious Moderation to the Construction of Pluralism in Indonesia

Since Vatican II concluded with the rejuvenation of all aspects of Church life, the world has watched in awe. The Church has become more grounded, welcoming the worldly while offering more concrete applications of its teachings (rather than an abstract and metaphysical theology). However, the results of Vatican II also created significant turmoil in the lives of Catholics. As such, there have been arguments both for and against the transformations it has offered, with many Catholics voicing their personal opposition. In Indonesia, the Catholic Church has been relatively successful in implementing the NA and religious moderation, although it must be admitted that violence and conflict has

been perpetrated in the name of religion.

In the everyday lives of Indonesian Catholics, for example, we can see them manifest the values of fellowship and collaboration when they provide assistance to disaster victims, create interfaith dialog, become involved in humanitarian organizations, live harmoniously and peacefully with their neighbors and communities, and support others without considering their religious beliefs. Such experiences are only possible when people interact positively with others, without judging them by their religion and ethnicity. The Church has incessantly promoted and articulated moderation, urging Catholics to leave their 'comfort zones' and open their doors and windows to the world. Catholics are urged to welcome the world, to make friends, to actively work with their fellow Indonesians to achieve the greater good.

One concrete step towards moderation taken by the Catholic Church in Indonesia is the establishment of the Ecumenical Council of Prelates (Panitia Waligereja Indonesia Ekumene) in 1966, which was tasked with creating the Indonesian Supreme Council of Church Prelates (Majelis Agung Wali Gereja Indonesia, MAWI) as a body to facilitate interfaith dialog and relations. Since then, MAWI has asked for Catholics to learn about and understand Islam (1966), released guidelines to help Catholics collaborate with non-Catholics (1970), etc. (Sunarko 2016, 255–256).

One's internalization of the teachings of one's faith becomes evidenced when one behaves more humanely. In other words, as humans are social beings, it is normal for them to attract others, to seek truth and goodness, to respect life, and to avoid any violence or other actions that may taint their own sense of humanity or go against their own religious beliefs. Nothing would exist on Earth were it not for the Absolute, the one God shared by all of Creation.

As another concrete step towards moderation, the Catholic Church has also written a song titled "*Kita Berhikmat, Kita Bermartabat*" (We Are Wise, We Are Dignified). This song, reflecting the motto "*per ecclesiam pro patria*" (for the Church, for the Motherland), not only conveys the congregation's belief in the teachings of Catholicism but also its sense of nationalism as indicated in the following text of the song. The song, which is sung at the conclusion of Sunday Mass, builds upon the earlier motto "one hundred percent Catholic, one hundred percent Pancasilaist" popularized by Indonesia's first indigenous bishop, Mgr. Albertus Soegijapranata. Through it, the Church urges Indonesia's Catholics to dedicate themselves not only to their Catholic faith, but also to the Republic of Indonesia and its ideology of Pancasila. Pancasila means five pillars that have become the basis of the nation building of the Republic of Indonesia. Indonesians are to become a good citizen by having the Pancasila as their foundation of their life. The five pillars consist of believing in the Almighty God, a just and civilized humanity, the unified

Indonesia, democracy led by the wisdom in a consensus or representatives, and social justice for all Indonesians.

6. Conclusion

Religious moderation is inherently rooted in awareness that all of humanity shares an origin and final destination. It is derived from humanity's reflection on the nature of human existence, through which awareness of the value and meaning of life can be achieved. This rational thought is enriched by the teachings and revelations of the various religions practiced around the world. Through Vatican II, the Catholic Church had similar experiences, using *Nostra Aetate* (NA) to open a new chapter in Church history. NA represented the Church's first step towards creating dialog with Muslims and other non-Christians. The Church's "repentance" (i.e. revision of its long-held doctrines) came from its recognition that all human beings have the same origin and will reach the same destination: God. At this time, the Church also recognized religion as a fundamental and existential human need, as something that provides humans with the guidance and direction they need to find and understand the meaning and values of life.

Often, especially in societies as religiously and ethnically diverse as Indonesia, differences have proven problematic where persons of different religious backgrounds have been positioned as the "other", as "them" rather than "us". It is thus of paramount importance for persons of all religious backgrounds to embrace religious moderation and behave moderately. The faithful must avoid falling into the trap of extremism, choosing instead the middle road as a means of creating harmony. One must hold to the ancient Latin proverb "*in medio stat virtus*" (Virtue stands in the middle), to willingly enter dialog with persons of all backgrounds, to create a mutual sense of understanding, to work together towards social justice and the greater good, and to promote inclusivity. By creating an atmosphere of tolerance and empathy, persons of all religions can live side-by-side in harmony and peace. At its essence, religious moderation seeks the creation of human solidarity and harmony through religion. It attempts to unite persons of all religions in a shared struggle towards realizing the greater good (Janah 2016). In the context of Indonesia, it may even help realize the national motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Unity in Diversity) in everyday life.

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