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First Communion Celebrations in Manggarai Flores and The Pastoral Implications on Faith Family Education

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Abstract

The Eucharist, one of the seven sacraments in the Catholic Church, holds a central and pivotal role in Christian life. Through this sacred ritual, Christians find communion with Christ, who is presented in the consecrated bread and wine. The celebration of the Eucharist is fundamental to the spiritual journey of believers. When a child receives their first communion, the church marks this significant milestone with great enthusiasm. Simultaneously, parents also take part in the celebration. This article explores the diverse ways in which Flores parents in East Nusa Tenggara celebrate their child's first communion. This research employed ethnography as the research methodology, with observations and interviews as the tool to collect data. Our findings revealed various ways of celebrating the first communion within the community. Among them, parties were the prevailing mode of celebration. Each celebration carried both positive and negative implications. While parties fostered familial prestige, they could also be wasteful and fail to prioritize child-friendliness. Regrettably, these festivals often lean more toward adult-oriented gatherings rather than child-centered or spiritually enriching events. As the conclusion, the First Communion ceremony among the Flores people transcended their religious practice; it transformed into a joyous occasion that involved the entire family and served as a social gathering. Given the potential drawbacks of excessive partying, the church should implement a pastoral strategy that emphasizes comprehensive family faith education and eucharistic understanding.

Keywords: First Communion, Catholic Church, Flores, Family Education

INTRODUCTION

First Communion is a momentous religious ceremony in the Catholic Church. During this ritual, Christians partake in the sacrament of the Eucharist by receiving the consecrated bread and wine, which symbolize the body and blood of Christ, for the first time. The Eucharist plays a prominent and crucial part in the spiritual life of Catholics. Through their active involvement in the Eucharist, Christians attain complete membership in the Mystical Body of Christ and discover an abundant source of faith. The act of receiving the body and blood of Christ creates a deep connection between the believer and Christ ([Martasudjita, 2013](#); [McGrail, 2016](#); [Schultz, 2004](#)).

As a result of the Eucharist's profound importance, the Church maintains a customary practice of requiring particular preparations from children who meet the criteria to receive First Communion. These preparations have multiple objectives, including helping individuals understand the importance of the Eucharistic celebration and enabling them to receive divine favour from this hallowed occasion. It aids in becoming essential participants in the church community, nurturing a deep affection for the Eucharist, and promoting active engagement in church activities. The preparation also emphasizes the cultivation and advancement of children's religion. It involves individuals in the process of recalling past events, withdrawing from daily life, admitting to wrongdoing, and participating in various forms of prayer or spiritual practices. The Church also provides instruction and guidance to parents of children who are preparing for their first communion. Parents have a vital role in the religious education of their children, and rigorous preparation provides them with a comprehensive

awareness of their duties for their child's First Communion (Lipiec, 2022; Araujo et al., 2022; Tusting, 2015; Weaver, 2021).

In addition to the liturgical rites, First Communion maintains a position of deep significance in the hearts of Catholic families. It is a celebration that brings happiness and thankfulness, symbolizing the moment when young followers participate in the Eucharist, which represents the physical presence of Jesus Christ (McGrail, 2016). During this spiritual celebration, a less commonly addressed aspect arises—the collective and familial practice of First Communion. Although widely celebrated, there is a lack of extensive research on the ways in which people in Indonesia remember this sacrament. Prior research has predominantly concentrated on individual readiness, learning that utilizes multimedia, and ceremonial elements. Hayon and Leu (2021), for instance, investigated the function of visual media in the process of preparing for First Communion. Pacheconai (2023) examined the degree to which youngsters commit important church prayers to memory throughout their preparatory phase. Araujo, Yuniarto, and Hartutik (2022) investigated the extent to which parents were involved in helping their children prepare for First Communion at designated stations. Furthermore, Juliet and Adinugraha (2022) examined the role of parents in this particular scenario. Rasuh (2012) did a theoretical analysis on whether it is proper for 7-year-old children to have First Communion.

However, there is still a deficit in research when it comes to studying the family and community celebrations associated with First Communion. The objective of our study is to fill this gap by investigating the existing practices of Catholics in Flores when it comes to celebrating this sacrament. The objective is to understand and analyze the various types of First Communion ceremonies that take place within families and communities. Moreover, it investigates the consequences of these festivities for religious instruction. The research sheds light on an undiscovered dimension, offering insights that can help churches and families negotiate spiritual events and community responses.

The study was carried out in Flores, East Nusa Tenggara, which is recognized as the sole "Catholic Island" in Indonesia. Indonesia, despite being the most populous country with a Muslim majority, has around 8.43 million Catholics, which make up 3.08% of the entire population. Surprisingly, almost 70% of these Catholics live in Flores. In addition to residing on the island, numerous Flores inhabitants engage in employment, education, or relocation to different areas within Indonesia. Individuals who are actively involved in church activities also have a role in mobilizing the community. Flores' identity has become intricately intertwined with Catholicism. The people of Flores Island have a strong Catholic identity, "even the trees, rocks and birds are Catholics" (Webb, 1990, p. 1) The religious leaders on the island hold a highly respected position, and Catholic religious events are celebrated with great respect, seamlessly woven into the daily lives of the island's inhabitants (Widyawati, 2018; Widyawati & Lon, 2019).

Flores is the central hub of Catholicism, housing four dioceses: the Archdiocese of Ende in the central region, the Diocese of Ruteng in the western part, the Diocese of Maumere in the eastern region, and the Diocese of Larantuka in the eastern part of Flores. The influence of Catholicism in the local community is easily noticeable. Church

celebrations, rich in liturgical intricacies, frequently harmonize effortlessly with indigenous cultural festivities. These religious assemblies attract substantial numbers, forming a lively mosaic of faith and tradition. An intriguing aspect investigated in this study is the celebration of the First Communion. In addition to its religious importance, First Communion has transformed into a widely celebrated event and a cherished family banquet. Families enhance the celebration by incorporating local cultural customs, with a focus on promoting togetherness and reinforcing familial connections.

THEORY

The Sacrament of Eucharist

The Catholic Church acknowledges three sacraments of initiation: baptism, Eucharist, and chrismation. The sacraments function as a means for individuals to join and integrate into the complete Christian community (Alfsvåg, 2022). Of all the elements, the Eucharist carries a unique and important meaning. In the Eucharist, Christ is physically present, offered as a sacrifice, and consumed by the faithful. By engaging in this sacred ritual, the members of the church consistently experience spiritual development, fostering a connection between the human and divine realms. When a Christian takes part in the Eucharist, they come into contact with the divine presence of Christ (Canon 840, 897, and 899).

The Eucharist, as a sacrament, bestows God's favor. It symbolizes the highest point of Christian worship and existence (LG 11). During this celebration, all the challenges and hardships faced by Christians are presented as an offering to God. Furthermore, the Eucharist acts as a source of vitality for individuals as they participate in their everyday tasks and negotiate the difficulties of life. The event is a jubilant commemoration of existence and belief, during which individuals convey their appreciation, aspirations, and concerns. Through the Eucharist, believers are empowered to engage in the battle for faith, truth, and salvation on behalf of all individuals (Angiola, 2021).

The Liturgical Constitution (SC Article 10) emphasizes that the Eucharist serves as a divine intermediary, transmitting God's gift to humanity. During this divine meeting, individuals attain holiness and glorification. Christians are sanctified via the divine act of God giving Himself in the form of His Son, Jesus Christ, who is genuinely present in the Eucharist. The Eucharist enables a conversation between humanity and God, fostering a fellowship that nurtures the soul. Christ, the origin of life, is completely present in His sacraments. Moreover, the Eucharist serves as a commemoration of Christ's act of self-sacrifice on the cross (Eka et al., 2019.; Ristanto, 2020).

The origin of the practice of First Communion can be traced back to the biblical narrative of the Last Supper, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew (26:26–28). Jesus instituted the Eucharist during this momentous occasion. During the disciples' last dinner, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body." He then offered them a cup, expressed gratitude, and told them, "All of you should drink from this." In the Gospel of John, Jesus is identified as "the true bread of life" (John 6:35) and "the true vine" (John 15:1). Additionally, Jesus states that his blood is the blood of the covenant, poured for the remission of sins. These descriptions affirm Jesus as the supreme

provider of spiritual sustenance. Individuals who participate in the Eucharist experience a spiritual connection with Him as they partake in His divine presence.

Eucharistic theology offers an understanding of the essence and significance of the First Communion. When children partake in their First Communion, they are bestowed with the divine favor of the Eucharist, which fortifies their belief, enhances their connection with God, and nurtures their state of holiness. This significant spiritual advancement marks a turning point in a child's religious development. During the sacrament of First Communion, children undergo a profound connection with Christ the Lord, actively sharing in the divine nature of God. At the same time, it signifies their increased assimilation into the Christian community, particularly the church. Through participation in the Eucharist, Christians attain a vital role within the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, and experience spiritual rejuvenation and empowerment. A child can become a part of the enigmatic oneness that other devotees feel as they are bound together by their shared love and belief by taking part in this sacred ritual (Lipiec, 2022; Martasudjita, 2013).

The reception of First Communion occurs in two separate contexts: one for adults and another for infants. For adult individuals who experience baptism, First Communion frequently occurs concurrently with their baptismal rite. In certain instances, the sacrament of marriage may promptly ensue, particularly if the individual is undergoing preparations for matrimony. The preparation for receiving the Eucharist is closely connected to the preparedness for other sacraments. These individuals participate in a thorough procedure that includes both Eucharistic and marital preparation.

Infants who have undergone baptism as infants generally partake in their First Communion during their elementary school years, typically between the ages of 8 and 12. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that this age range is not universally standardized. Every diocese and parish have the autonomy to develop distinct criteria according to its individual circumstances. First Communion may be administered to children in the third, fourth, or sixth grade. The decisive factor for awarding First Communion is the child's ability to comprehend the great meaning of the Eucharist and the reason behind its bestowal upon them.

The sacrament of First Communion is both a divine favor and a sacred duty. The Eucharist symbolizes God's benevolent bestowal upon His followers. This blessing is broadly disseminated through Christ. The Eucharist functions as a channel, enabling all those who become part of the Church to bring Christ into the world. The concept is essentially communal, placing emphasis on our duty to enlighten the lives of others and society as a whole. Families and the Church play a significant role in shaping children's understanding of the Eucharist. Through genuine firsthand experience, infants establish a profound bond with Christ the Lord and participate in His divine nature. Furthermore, First Communion symbolizes a child's enhanced assimilation into the Christian community, specifically the Church. Through their participation in the Eucharist, individuals are transformed into essential members of the Mystical Body of Christ, equipped with the strength of faith and love (Dutton & Robinson, 2023; McCallion et al., 1996; McGrail, 2016).

Faith Education in Family

Christian family life places a premium on faith education, which includes discussions of the Eucharist and the religious upbringing of children. Christian families serve as exemplars of religious piety, dignity, significance, and active participation in the sacrament of the Eucharist. To facilitate the successful execution of this vocation, family members benefit from priestly education conducted within their own residences. Family religious education is of paramount importance in the lives of devout individuals, as it fosters the growth of their spiritual selves and nurtures a profound sense of devotion ([Delfra et al., 2018](#); [Rønkilde et al., 2018](#); [Wu, 2020](#)).

While not physically raising their children, parents also bear the responsibility for their spiritual development. Additionally, parents play a vital role in character formation, ensuring that their children develop into dependable and responsible individuals. Parents serve as spiritual educators, educators, and role models for their children's faith. The objective of Christian education is to mold children into individuals who exemplify Christ in every way—constantly infused with the Holy Spirit and bearing the fruits of faith. Parents promote to their children, from a pragmatic standpoint, an understanding of God, religious doctrines, the Holy Bible, prayer, Christian virtues, and social responsibility.

The Scriptures and Church tradition both prescribe the family's responsibility in faith education. The Israelites ensured that their children received a solid education in the Old Testament so that they might produce fruitful offspring. In the Jewish family, the role of parents in shaping children to become pious, moral, and obedient is crucial. Children are shaped in the family and environment.

Numerous passages in the New Testament underscore the significance of Christian education within the familial context. For instance, Timothy's presentation of the story of Eunice and Lois could serve as the foundation for Christian faith education. Paul demonstrates in his epistle to the people of Ephesus (Ephesians 6:4) that Christian families are obligated to instill discipline in their children and encourage them to follow Christ. As the archetypal Christian family, the sacred family of Nazareth—Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—exemplifies steadfast adherence to the Word, obedience to God's will, and the execution of His plan for salvation.

The responsibility for the education and preparation of minors with regard to the Eucharist and first communion rests with the church and the family. Children are instructed by their families and churches on the significance of the Eucharist and the repercussions of participating in it. By engaging in comprehensive preparation, individuals are able to establish a profound connection with the divine and approach the sacrament with reverence. The conviction that the Eucharist constitutes the physical presence of Christ is essential for all who partake in it ([Lipiec, 2022](#); [Tusting, 2015](#); [Weaver, 2021](#)). This preparation ultimately empowers individuals to live a Christian life consistent with the mission of the Eucharist. The process of eucharistic preparation is influenced by theological, liturgical, and missiological factors, as delineated in Canon 913. However, it is important to note that particular practices may differ due to regional variations and contextual factors.

Those who wish to partake in the Eucharist must not only be adequately prepared, but also possess a comprehensive comprehension of its significance and acquire knowledge concerning the liturgy, faith, Holy Scriptures, and church life. Customary observances include engaging in prayer, reciting significant liturgies from memory, studying the Bible, familiarizing oneself with liturgical elements, and participating in retreats or recalls. Certain candidates may be required to pass knowledge examinations in order to ensure their readiness for communion. The church and family collaborate in order to provide children with sufficient knowledge in this regard. This location facilitates faith education within the family unit.

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative methodology, primarily ethnography, to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the behavior and activities within the Flores community during First Communion ceremonies. Data collection encompasses the process of gathering information through the means of observation and interviews. For a span of multiple years, researchers actively took part in over 60 First Communion celebrations in Flores. By participating as both guests and committee members, researchers were able to obtain a holistic perspective on the celebrations, enabling them to make more perceptive observations. Interviews were carried out with party hosts, invited guests, children, parents of First Communion recipients, teachers, and other members of the community. Qualitative analysis entails the process of analyzing, interpreting, and deriving conclusions from the data collected in the field. In addition, the research examined the consequences for Christian faith education within families.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Preparation within the Family

First Communion carries great importance for youngsters in Flores. During casual talks, it is common for people to ask young children if they have already undergone their first communion. "Or, at what time did your first communion occur?" "These questions indicate the significance of the event." Both deliberately and inadvertently, families, including the children themselves, consider and plan for this significant event over a prolonged period of time, occasionally lasting for years. Nevertheless, when it comes to preparations, families typically prioritize the way they commemorate within the confines of their own residences rather than at the church. Elements such as liturgy and the child's internal development are given less focus. Certain parents hold the belief that schools and churches are largely responsible for things concerning liturgical and mental preparation.

Meanwhile, parents focus on pragmatic matters such as organizing the celebration, managing finances, and making logistical arrangements. While they recognize the spiritual importance of First Communion, their preparations tend to focus more on the physical aspects. Family preparations for First Communion manifest in diverse, tangible ways. Certain families diligently accumulate funds in advance, expressly with the purpose of organizing a festive event for their children. Some individuals choose to participate in social gatherings or raise animals that will be sacrificed as part of the celebrations. Some moms reported that they

rear pigs, typically one or two, for a period of one to two years before their child's first communion. The price of meat is significantly elevated; thus, it is imperative to take proper care of the animal intended for the feast in order to prevent excessive financial burden. The price of a single pig can range from 3 to 8 million rupiah. Usually, a minimum of one pig is sacrificed during the festivities. Furthermore, certain households engage in the rearing of hens, dogs, and goats, perceiving it as a pragmatic means of economizing.

Another crucial step that should be done ahead of time is choosing the appropriate clothing for both children and parents for the Eucharist celebration or the following party. Parents want to appear their most attractive, frequently adorning themselves in celebratory attire. Fathers typically choose to wear suits, while ladies often prefer to wear a kebaya combination combined with a sarong. Children are provided with unique attire that resembles that of young brides. These garments are expensive and can be priced in the millions of rupiah. Some families even make remote "instalment payments" to purchase these distinctive outfits. As a perceptive mother once stated, "If all the purchases are made just before the party, the responsibility becomes overwhelming." She had already stitched and ordered the kebaya and sarong well ahead of time.

Further arrangements for First Communion involve allocating funds for the event. Families in Flores rely on the help of their relatives a lot. The inhabitants of Flores have a profound bond with their traditions and familial relationships. When a family gives a party or takes part in a traditional rite, certain privileges and responsibilities are assigned to other family members according to their roles and positions within the family network.

While First Communion may not be considered a conventional event, several families nonetheless uphold their usual responsibilities. During this period, families fulfill their traditional obligations by bringing animals, such as pigs, goats, chickens, and even cows, as well as other items like rice and coffee. In addition, there are instances where families are required to fulfil financial responsibilities towards other relatives, leading to a barter of items that helps alleviate the financial strain of the celebration.

In addition to making necessary arrangements, local customs require parents to participate in the First Communion celebrations of their own relatives and acquaintances prior to organizing their own event. By accepting invites, they aim to establish a mutual expectation that their own visitors will respond in kind when invited. The inhabitants of Flores take great delight in the significant attendance during the event. On the other hand, if visitors are not present, it can elicit sentiments of disappointment and sadness, unless there are severe barriers preventing them from attending.

The precise particulars of preparations differ depending on the individual approach each family adopts to commemorate the occasion. When having a party, families coordinate and prepare a range of amenities, such as erecting tents, supplying seats, cutlery, and a sound system, purchasing groceries, cooking, adorning the house, and serving food. These tasks require the involvement of not just the parents but often neighbors, extended family members, and occasionally hired labor. This collective endeavour becomes most noticeable when families host extravagant celebrations.

Various types of First Communion Celebrations

There are numerous ways for families to commemorate and convey appreciation and happiness for a child receiving first communion. There are many types of festivities observed by families in Flores. The most prevalent method of celebrating First Communion among Flores locals is by hosting a party or banquet. Parties can differ significantly, spanning from modest gatherings to lavish events. Budget, guest list, meal, facilities, and general excitement are a few examples of the factors that affect this diversity.

In terms of number of guests, a party is commonly known as a "small gathering" or informally as a "family dinner." The number of families invited usually varies. A small gathering, typically consisting of less than 10 to 30 households. A medium party has the capacity to invite a maximum of 70 households. A larger party is a large event that invites up to 300 families. Surprisingly, research has even uncovered events that have more than 500 families invited. Comprehending the rationale behind party invitations is essential. Each invitation is associated with a single family. Therefore, when a family states that they are inviting 20 individuals, they are actually expecting approximately 40 people to attend. This factor has a big impact on the process of preparing food and making other arrangements for the celebration. Invitations can be conveyed using conventional invitation cards, face-to-face interactions, oral communication, or even via social media platforms such as WhatsApp. Social events and work communities also function as means of extending invitations.

Regarding the budgeting, the amount of money given depends greatly on various aspects, including the number of invitations, the type of party equipment and facilities, and any other special charges. For a basic celebration, taking into account all expenses related to the family, including apparel and accessories for both children and parents, as well as food, drinks, and party supplies, the projected budget falls between 5 and 10 million rupiah. For a normal celebration, the expenditure may range from 10 to 30 million rupiah; however, larger and more expensive celebrations can cost an amazing 100 million rupiah. These quantities are extremely extraordinary and might be compared to the usual budget set aside for a wedding ceremony.

Regarding party etiquette, celebrations usually begin around "12 noon onwards." Unlike regular gatherings where guests arrive, eat, and leave about the same time, First Communion parties in Flores continue throughout the day and late into the night. The host consistently offers sustenance and beverages throughout this prolonged festivity. Grand gatherings showcase an ample array of culinary delights, encompassing a wide-ranging menu. In addition, alcoholic beverages are frequently offered as a gesture of respect to distinguished visitors.

During the event, loud and powerful music emanates from enormous speakers. Rental providers provide customized music and sound system packages at significant expense. The music may begin playing a day or more before the actual party, acting as a distinct indication that the celebrations have begun. The amplitude of the music mirrors the magnificence and vibrancy of the celebration, serving as a "representation of honor" for both the party host and the music service provider. In the midst of the resounding melodies, engaging in conversation becomes practically impracticable—individuals can only convey their emotions through

smiles or maintain a state of silence. When it is necessary to communicate anything of great importance, shouting becomes the sole recourse.

Invited attendees at First Communion receptions tend to leave sooner than they would at regular gatherings. Some individuals only stay for a short duration of 3-5 minutes, engaging in polite conversation with the children and parents before departing to attend another occasion. Some individuals briefly exchange handshakes and immediately proceed to the dining table, where they taste the cuisine before proceeding to the next gathering. While a small number of individuals may extend their duration, the majority of them have a short stay. In Flores, there is a proverb that states that once guests have "shown their face," they have completed their duty to attend.

During these festivities, attendees demonstrate their benevolence by bestowing pecuniary contributions on the children. Usually, the funds are enclosed in an envelope and then placed into a specified receptacle for deposit. Many families anticipate that these donations will suffice to cover the costs of the party, but this confidence is sometimes unfounded. According to a local proverb, while organizing a party, one should be prepared to be frugal because guests typically give only small amounts. It is understandable that many attendees attend various parties, occasionally even multiple events on the same day.

Amusingly, a mother revealed that she was given an envelope without any money inside during her child's party. However, this tiny error does not generate significant worry among the local people. Invited guests are relieved of the responsibility of bringing significant amounts of cash to attend many parties by offering sealed envelopes. As a result, when students earn their first communion, families in the entire community rejoice at the same time. If there are 200 children in a parish, then it may be inferred that approximately 200 parties take place on the same day. Individuals with strong social networks can obtain invitations and participate in more than 30 parties, beginning at midday and continuing throughout the day. The streets have a high level of traffic as individuals move from one residence to another, enjoying the celebrations. Guests frequently indicate fatigue after attending several social events, indulging in copious amounts of food, and expending substantial sums of money.

Regarding the child at the party, they usually occupy a diminutive platform next to their parents. Upon the arrival of guests, the child rises in order to receive felicitations. This process persists until the guests leave. Many children experience both fatigue and euphoria—they also crave a celebration. Curiously, children frequently fail to identify the guests, as they happen to be relatives of their parents. Invitations primarily originate from individuals who are either older or younger than the child, with classmates seldom included among the attendees. The invitations are exclusively directed at parents, and it is rare for youngsters to attend the events. Although these activities are intended for children, they are characterized by adult behaviors such as smoking, alcohol use, intoxication, and occasional fights. The songs and music played have a mature tone, which is characterized by boisterous and quick beats. Several community members have observed the absence of brilliant colors and the spiritual mood typically associated with children's celebrations in this context.

Additionally, some families choose to celebrate First Communion by organizing picnics or going on vacation. People who have access to automobiles frequently prefer this kind of celebration. Tourist places, typically located near beaches, are the most favored destinations for picnics. Individuals convene at that location to engage in recreational activities, consume food, and relish in one another's presence. Furthermore, augmenting the culinary experience by grilling fish or meat on the beach enhances the overall ambiance of the occasion. Family members also enjoy bathing and swimming in the beachfront environment.

In comparison to conventional gatherings, this celebration is more cost-effective, particularly if the family owns their own means of transportation. The amount of food offered is deliberately restricted. Certain families opt for this approach not due to monetary limitations but rather because they desire a convenient and trouble-free experience. Their goal is to experience bliss with greater intensity. In addition, youngsters have an inherent inclination to derive pleasure from engaging in outside activities, particularly when it comes to playing on the beach. In contrast to formal gatherings, where children may feel distressed, a beach picnic provides kids with the opportunity to be light hearted and unconcerned. By relieving the burden of serving others, families can fully immerse themselves in the enjoyment of their own company. From an economic standpoint, this alternative is highly viable.

Aside from picnics, several families commemorate First Communion by embarking on holidays and opting to stay in hotels rather than their own houses. Another more lavish alternative entails venturing beyond the island, even by air—a remarkable and expensive endeavor for the inhabitants of Flores. Economically, this decision is viable exclusively for affluent households.

A particular family chose this approach in order to circumvent the intricacies associated with organizing a social gathering. Instead, they chose to cultivate happiness within their intimate family circle, allocating their resources exclusively for their personal well-being. Another well-educated parent, occupying a prominent government post, sought an extraordinary experience for his child, one that encompassed air travel, accommodations, and urban areas. He openly acknowledged that his other children had previously derived pleasure from gatherings, but he had become tired of the resulting exhaustion. In addition, he had already responded to invites from others; hence, he did not feel any duty to host parties in return. Consequently, he did not feel any remorse when his other children chose to skip celebrations in order to have an unforgettable family vacation.

Additionally, several families opt to partake in festivities alongside the children residing in orphanages, thereby extending their happiness to others who are less privileged. These families visit orphanages, providing presents and donations to assist the orphans. Some individuals even bring food to partake in a communal lunch.

Their motivation for this type of celebration is two-fold: Firstly, they sincerely desire to share their delight with people who have few resources. Furthermore, organizing conventional gatherings may be both physically and mentally draining, as well as requiring a significant amount of time. During occasions of significance, they opt for a more laid-back

ambiance, valuing the closeness of their family. Moreover, by engaging their children in these acts of benevolence, they instill favourable principles—such as generosity and empathy—in the succeeding cohort. Instead of wasting cash on extravagant celebrations, they direct their efforts towards creating a significant impact for those who require assistance.

Furthermore, several families engage in negotiations with their children, presenting significant offerings in lieu of organizing a conventional celebration. The awards may consist of bicycles, laptops, cell phones, savings accounts, or musical instruments. These presents are seen as opulent and costly within the local community. Nevertheless, parents from the lower middle class may lack the willingness or financial capacity to offer such extravagant possessions. This alternative celebration is usually undertaken when there is something very extraordinary to make up for. In order to purchase these gifts, parents frequently set aside and designate dedicated funds.

Parents who choose this method emphasize that not all children have a need for monetary items. Typically, they initiate pre-negotiations or chats with their children. By doing so, individuals avoid potential disappointment in the event that their friends are engaged in celebratory gatherings. Despite the child receiving a gift, families frequently provide a modest supper within their own home.

A father recounted his experience: As his son was on the verge of receiving First Communion, the parents inquired whether he would prefer a present in lieu of a celebration. The son consented and wanted a bicycle valued at millions of rupiah. Subsequent to the arrangement, they procured the bicycle one week prior to the event. Nevertheless, upon receiving the present, the child wept and adamantly demanded to have a celebration. Although the parents initially considered the expensive gift to be a frivolous expenditure, they eventually acquiesced. As a result, they organized a party, with the father recognizing that his brothers' assistance allowed them to invite a large number of people and offer party amenities comparable to other festivities.

Instances such as this frequently act as illustrations for other parents, emphasizing the worry that even after providing a costly present, their child still wants a celebration. As a result, some parents agree, "Maybe it's best to simply have the party." In families with more than one child, parents sometimes bargain with a younger child, particularly the second or later child, to not have a party, especially if they have previously celebrated their elder siblings. Nevertheless, not all youngsters willingly acquiesce to these parental agreements.

Parents often choose to give gifts instead of throwing parties because they find the trouble, expense, and energy drain of hosting a party to be overwhelming. In addition, there are exceptional situations, such as grieving the recent demise of a family member or coping with a parent's illness, that cause families to abstain from hosting celebrations. On the other hand, certain parents sincerely wish to commemorate the occasion with a party, making sure that at least one child in the family gets to enjoy this festive event.

Furthermore, historically, First Communion celebrations were frequently coordinated by parishes, schools, or community organizations. Following the Eucharist ceremony, children and their parents would convene in the parish hall. At that location, they indulged in light snacks while being entertained by artistic acts from their peers. The occasion

additionally included introductory words from the priest. In several locations, lunch was offered in addition to the light refreshments. Students would make financial contributions or provide resources such as rice and chicks to assist in the celebration. After the celebration ended, families went back to their homes, and children continued their typical play activities.

Nevertheless, this type of commemoration has declined in popularity within the past twenty years. Based on the deposition of a former parish council administrator, individuals nowadays have a predilection for organizing their own exclusive gatherings. At first, a small number of families asked for authorization to depart ahead of time and organize their own meetings. Over time, an increasing number of families also chose to have their own celebrations. As a result, communal events became less important. Some individuals believed that collaborative festivities were not successful, as families continued to arrange their own separate events. Gradually, the practice of communal parish or church festivities diminished.

In addition to church parties, communal gatherings inside Basic Ecclesiastical Communities (KBGs) were also quite popular over twenty years ago. At these gatherings, all KBG families collectively contributed money and/or party goods. Collectively, they supplied nourishment and beverages for the entire gathering. These activities frequently served as opportunities for children and teens in the KBG to display their skills in various forms of artistic expression, such as dancing, singing, or reciting poetry. Nevertheless, this mode of collective revelry has progressively waned in popularity as individuals now favor exclusive gatherings. Certain KBGs continue to solicit financial contributions from families; however, the focus has transitioned from organizing parties to providing gifts for the children.

Furthermore, based on the recollections of older participants, it is worth noting that in the past, there were no elaborate familial or communal festivities. Individuals only adorned themselves with fresh clothes (some in white apparel, while others in simple clothing) and participated in the Eucharist ceremony. Following the act of receiving communion, they returned to their typical play.

A middle-class family, who were employed at the time, organized an exceptional supper. A chicken was sacrificed, and only one guest, the parish priest, was invited. Although not all families were able to host small events, it was common in the 1960s and 1970s to invite a restricted number of other families. For example, a mother, whose father was employed and whose mother was a teacher, might extend invitations to many families and neighbors to partake in a lunch at her residence. These rallies were modest, lacking any substantial attendance.

Effects and Consequences of Family Faith Education

From a religious standpoint, first communion is a significant event that represents a moment of faith and is commemorated by a religious ceremony. The Church anticipates that this celebration will facilitate the strengthening of families and children's religious beliefs, leading them to actively engage in the Eucharist. Nevertheless, according to the research findings, not all First Communion receptions adhere closely to the original spiritual and sacramental significance of the celebration. While many types of celebrations retain significant spiritual elements, others prioritize socio-cultural features, occasionally neglecting

the sacramental virtues and the growth of children's faith. Every selected mode of celebration possesses unique attributes and influences.

For example, the predominant First Communion celebrations among Flores residents prioritize social, cultural, and familial elements rather than placing emphasis on the spiritual development of the youngsters. These reunions provide occasions for relatives who are separated by geographical distance to come together again. Notably, certain individuals go as far as using parties as a means to promote political activity (Mbolang et al., 2020).

Parties have the potential to stimulate economic growth for service providers in industries such as music, catering, and transportation. However, they can also impose a financial burden on the family hosting the event. Key and Barus (2019) observed that some families resort to borrowing money and accruing debt in order to finance these celebrations. Participating in social gatherings might result in tiredness, decreased efficiency in tasks, and potentially even missing work. Regrettably, these celebrations frequently stray from their initial intention of fostering children's religious beliefs.

Detractors contend that Flores parties lack child-friendly elements. They frequently include cigarettes, alcohol, prolonged durations, and music inappropriate for young listeners. Fransiska emphasizes the need to provide children with a psychologically caring atmosphere for their growth. Observing adults consuming alcohol and engaging in physical altercations during social gatherings might have adverse effects on the psychological well-being of children. Surprisingly, there have been occurrences where gatherings have degenerated into acts of violence (Sudi & Rini, 2018).

Furthermore, these festivities have a tendency to give greater importance to parents than children. Party hosts frequently neglect the comfort of their neighbors by playing excessively loud music late into the night. Unhealthy rivalry and envy can also arise among families and children during these occasions. Alternative kinds of collective celebration, such as gatherings at churches, schools, and ecclesiastical base communities, have favorable qualities as they highlight unity and camaraderie. During these parties, all youngsters enjoy themselves collectively, and the disparities between the affluent and underprivileged diminish as everyone rejoices on an equal footing. Unfortunately, this particular style of commemoration is slowly diminishing and is no longer widely favored by households. Although community celebrations possess the natural qualities of cost-efficiency, efficacy, and a cheerful atmosphere, they appear to reduce individual prominence. Individuals seem to assimilate with the crowd, becoming inconspicuous within sizable gatherings.

Conversely, festivities involving picnics, holidays, and gift-giving tend to focus more on children. Parents have a responsibility to ensure their children's happiness without making them the exclusive center of attention for the entire celebration. These forms provide youngsters with opportunities to engage in new experiences, which promote their psychological development. Choosing to visit an orphanage has a beneficial effect on children, as it imparts qualities such as sympathy, empathy, and concern for those who are less fortunate. These behaviors are consistent with Christian beliefs and spiritual principles, as they involve tangible acts of assistance for individuals who are experiencing hardship.

Opting out of hosting parties can result in cost savings, improved time management, and enhanced work productivity for families.

From a pastoral standpoint, it is imperative for the church to acknowledge and commemorate positive influences. These positive aspects should be aggressively encouraged. Concurrently, it is important to take measures to reduce and eradicate adverse repercussions. The Church fulfills a crucial function in providing education to families and children, directing them towards improved methods of celebration that are advantageous to children, families, and the entire society.

It is crucial to highlight the importance of parents in fostering children's religion and overall development. Parents are responsible for preparing their children to partake in the sacrament of First Communion, where they receive the flesh and blood of Christ. Apostolicam Actuositatem (AA 11) emphasizes the role of parents as both witnesses and messengers of faith, guiding their children towards embracing the call of religion. Familiaris Consortio 26 emphasizes the importance of parents in fostering their children's spiritual growth. Lumen Gentium (LG) also highlights the parents' duty to cultivate their children's religious beliefs. Article 37 of Familiaris Consortio (FC) emphasizes the responsibility of parents to guide their children in embracing fundamental human principles.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

This study offers novel anthropological observations on the ways in which a community commemorates religious occasions within their families and communities. Although it has a notable impact on the disciplines of religious studies and education, additional comprehensive research is required. Examining the types of religious instruction that should be given to people during eucharistic ceremonies is essential. Furthermore, there is potential for further research on eucharistic theology within the specific local context. This research might explore the effects of celebrations on the economic aspects of the congregation as well as investigate how these celebrations impact the growth of children's faith and the overall life of the church. Although our research did not investigate these themes, they offer important opportunities for further investigation by other academics.

CONCLUSION

The study comes at the following conclusions: *firstly*, the first communion is a significant religious event for Catholics, especially those in Flores. As a result, the family, congregation, and church are carefully getting ready for this occasion. Churches and educational institutions that educate children slated to receive first communion prepare them spiritually by enhancing their understanding of the sacraments, faith, the Bible, and other church-related topics. All of this is done with the intention of educating and guiding young believers spiritually. *Secondly*, the first communion is seen as a unique occasion by parents, families, and society at large. As a result, they assisted in planning and attending the child's celebration. Nonetheless, this study discovered that first communion ceremonies are perceived more as familial gatherings than as spiritual events. That's why people express their thanks and happiness in a variety of ways during this celebration. Families celebrated in a variety of ways, such as get-togethers

with kids from orphanages, schools, churches, and ecclesiastical base communities, picnics, festivals, and the giving and receiving of unusual gifts. Every form has unique characteristics and effects. *Thirdly*, in Flores, parties are the predominant option for the majority of families. Notwithstanding their extensive appeal, parties have been subject to censure due to a multitude of detrimental consequences. These include, but are not restricted to, wastage, depletion of children's economic resources, disregard for their psychological and spiritual welfare, absence of child-friendliness, the potential for inciting conflict through fighting, disruption of residents' comfort, and intoxication. Joint celebrations that take place in communities, schools, or parishes, which are inherently more communal, exhibit a greater degree of positivity. Unfortunately, these sorts of gatherings have ceased to be attended by the inhabitants of Flores. Alternative pursuits, including outings, holidays, and the trading of one-of-a-kind gifts, are considered to be more child-centric and center around the nuclear family. This type of celebration with orphanage children is considered to be extraordinarily advantageous due to the fact that it teaches children to consider, share, and care for those in need. *Finally*, in order to encourage parents to take on a greater sense of responsibility and significance regarding their child's academic development and overall progress, the church must employ a pastoral approach that evaluates the benefits and drawbacks of a specific type of first communion ceremony. More precisely, the observance of first Communion empowers households to cultivate an enhanced reverence for the Eucharist and fully benefit from its sacraments.

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