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Empowering Youth as Protagonists in the Light of *Christus Vivit*: A Phenomenological-Theological Study

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study explores how five companions of Catholic youth in Kelapa Gading Parish empower young people to become protagonists of parish life in the post-pandemic Church. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, transcribed, and analyzed using Moustakas' horizontalization and thematic synthesis. The findings were interpreted through Donald Wallenfang's contemplative phenomenology and the Church's magisterial teaching, particularly *Christus Vivit*. The analysis yielded seven themes: (1) youth as the present and future of the Church, (2) trust and responsibility as catalysts for empowerment, (3) accompaniment as presence and spiritual companionship, (4) faith formation and catechesis as essential foundations, (5) communal approaches to engagement, (6) challenges and vulnerabilities, and (7) collaboration with parish and diocesan structures. These findings indicate that youth ministry thrives when trust, accompaniment, catechesis, and structural support converge to affirm youth as protagonists of faith and mission. The study concludes with a pastoral vision that encourages co-responsibility, deepens catechesis, fosters small communities, and strengthens collaboration between companions, families, and Church leadership so that the parish remains vibrant and continually renewed through the creativity and energy of its young people.

Keywords: Catechesis, *Christus Vivit*, Phenomenology, Protagonism, Youth ministry

Abstrak

Penelitian fenomenologis kualitatif ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana lima pendamping Orang Muda Katolik di Paroki Kelapa Gading memberdayakan kaum muda sebagai protagonis kehidupan menggereja pascapandemi. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, ditranskrip, dan dianalisis menggunakan metode horizonalization dan sintesis tematik menurut

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Moustakas. Hasil analisis ditafsirkan dengan pendekatan fenomenologi kontemplatif Donald Wallenfang serta ajaran Gereja, khususnya *Christus Vivit*. Penelitian ini menemukan tujuh tema utama: 1) kaum muda sebagai masa kini dan masa depan, 3) pendampingan sebagai kehadiran dan persahabatan rohani, (4) pembinaan iman dan katekese sebagai fondasi, (5) pendekatan komunal yang membangun keterlibatan, (6) tantangan dan kerentanan yang dihadapi OMK, dan (7) kolaborasi dengan struktur paroki dan keuskupan. Temuan-temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pelayanan OMK berkembang ketika kepercayaan, pendampingan, katekese, dan dukungan struktural terintegrasi untuk menegaskan kaum muda sebagai protagonis iman dan misi. Penelitian ini ditutup dengan tawaran visi pastoral yang mendorong ko-responsibilitas, memperdalam katekese, membangun komunitas kecil, dan memperkuat kolaborasi antara pendamping, keluarga, dan pimpinan Gereja sehingga paroki tetap hidup dan diperbarui melalui kreativitas dan energi kaum muda.

Kata-kata Kunci: Katekese, *Christus Vivit*, Fenomenologi, Protagonis, Pelayanan pemuda

Introduction

Youth participation in parish life declined noticeably after the Covid-19 pandemic (2020–2023). Although young people have gradually returned to Mass and parish activities, many remain only minimally involved and are seldom entrusted with leadership roles. Pope Francis reminds the Church that young people are called to be protagonists of faith and mission as he addresses the youth: "You are the now of God, and he wants you to bear fruit."[1] They need guidance and accompaniment, but they must also be "left free to develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity."[2]

Empirical studies confirm this concern. Sutrimo et al. found that OMK *(Orang Muda Katolik*, Catholic Youth) in the Diocese of Ketapang had limited involvement. They concluded that parish guidance must be designed more intentionally so that youth could realize their identity as the hope and future of the Church and society.[3] Similarly, Ignasius Budiono et al. reported low enthusiasm and participation among OMK in

[1] Francis, *Christus Vivit: Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2019), no. 178.

[2] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 203.

[3] Kristinus Sutrimo, Antonius Denny Firmanto, Nanik Wijiyati Aluwesia, "Keterlibatan Orang Muda Katolik Keuskupan Ketapang dalam Kegiatan Pastoral," *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Missio* 13, no. 2 (July 2021): 160–176, https://garuda.kemdiktisaintek.go.id/documents/detail/2100974

the Maria Bunda Karmel Parish, Probolinggo. They recommended continuous catechesis to strengthen fraternal ties and create an atmosphere of mutual respect and commitment among youth.[4] These studies underline the urgent need for pastoral strategies that support youth and empower them as key actors in parish life.

Theologically, *Christus Vivit* frames youth as a unique blessing for the Church: "Youth is a blessed time for the young and a grace for the Church and for the world."[5] Pope Francis highlights three essential themes. First, friendship with Christ grounds young people's identity and joy.[6] Second, growth and development call youth to discover who they are and become saints by becoming fully themselves.[7] Third, service and mission invite youth to build community, serve others, and create a better world.[8] Cameron has critically noted that while *Christus Vivit* encourages enthusiasm and mobilizes youth, its reception can be limited because young voices are still mediated through ecclesial structures. Nonetheless, Cameron affirms Pope Francis' Christocentric vision of youth and his invitation to see youth as God's gift in the present.[9]

Other commentators reinforce this vision. Gallagher argues that *Christus Vivit* challenges the Church to remain open, to listen, and to stay humble, lest it become a "museum" that loses its youth.[10] Ronaldo and Sala insist that youth are the "today of God." They argue that they must be accompanied toward solid friendship with Jesus through synodality and evangelization by education.[11] Arthur Canales considers *Christus Vivit* a

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[4] Ignasius Budiono, Juli Antonius Sihotang, Antonius Denny Firmanto, "Katekese untuk Membangkitkan Antusias dan Keaktifan OMK Paroki Maria Bunda Karmel Probolinggo," *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan* 20, no. 1 (2022): 80–91, https://garuda.kemdiktisaintek.go.id/documents/detail/4564542

[5] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 203.

[6] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 150.

[7] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 162.

[8] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 174–175.

[9] Cynthia L. Cameron, "You Are the Now of God: *Christus Vivit* and the Need for a Theological Anthropology of Youth," *Horizons* 50, no. 1 (June 2023): 110–135, https://doi.org/10.1017/hor.2023.3

[10] Gerard Gallagher, "*Christus Vivit*: A Reflective Reading," *The Furrow* 70, no. 6 (2019): 343–350, https://thefurrow.ie/product/christus-vivit/

[11] Paskalis Ronaldo, "Misi Kaum Muda di Era Milenial menurut *Christus Vivit* dalam Konteks Gereja Indonesia," *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Rohani Katolik* (2022): 54–58, https://conference.um.ac.id/index.php/SNRK/article/view/3636/2042; Rossano Sala, "Youth Ministry after the Synod on Young People: Ten Points of No Return," *Religions* 11, no. 6 (2020): 313, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060313

landmark document because it is the first papal exhortation dedicated entirely to young people, which makes youth ministry a priority in the Church's mission today.[12] These voices portray youth not only as the Church's future but as its present, entrusted with a mission of evangelization and renewal.

Previous research published has explored various aspects of youth ministry and adolescent faith formation. Gultom and Simanjuntak analyzed pastoral strategies to address the loneliness epidemic among digital youth and emphasized the need for relevant counselling and online pastoral engagement.[13] Susanti and Tarigan examined the relationship between parenting style and adolescent character and highlighted the importance of family formation in shaping Christian values.[14] More recently, researchers have explored religiosity and faith support among adolescents and emerging adults, identifying key social and ecclesial factors that sustain youth faith.[15] Other studies have sought to contextualize theology for Generation Z and offer transformative approaches to discipleship in the digital era.[16]

While these contributions are valuable, they share a common emphasis on youth primarily as recipients of pastoral care rather than as active subjects who shape and participate in the Church's mission. Few studies have examined the lived experience of companions, the adults who walk with young people in parish settings, and how they empower youth as pastoral protagonists, as urged by Pope Francis in *Christus Vivit*.[17] Little attention has been given to how companions understand and respond to

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[12] Arthur D. Canales, "Special Issue on Catholic Youth & Young Adult Ministry," *Religions* 12, no. 6 (2021): 1–3, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060403

[13] Joni Manumpak Parulian Gultom and Fredy Simanjuntak, "Pastoral Strategies for the Loneliness Epidemic of the Digital Generation," *Jurnal Jaffray* 20, no. 1 (2022): 17–37, http://doi.org/10.25278/jj.v20i1.640

[14] Lidia Susanti and Candra Tarigan, "The Effects of Parenting Style and Adolescent Character on Adolescent Spirituality during the Pandemic," *Jurnal Jaffray* 19, no. 2 (2021): 184–201, https://doi.org/10.25278/jj.v19i2.599

[15] Aileen Prochina Mamahit, Ferry Y. Mamahit, "Psychological and Biblico-Theological Exploration of Spirituality and Religiosity using Grounded Theory: Clergy's Perspective," *Jurnal Jaffray* 22, no. 1 (2024): 56–81, https://doi.org/10.25278/jj.v22i1.909

[16] Joni Manumpak Parulian Gultom, "Transformative Theology in the Digital Era: A Qualitative Exploration of Generation Z's Perception of the Fullness of Life in Christ (Colossians 2:6–7)," *Jurnal Jaffray* 23, no. 1 (2025): 35–57, https://doi.org/10.25278/jj.v23i1.1006

[17] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 178.

the obstacles they face, including youth busyness, low participation, emotional vulnerability, and adult scepticism toward youth leadership.

This study addresses that gap by examining the lived experience of OMK companions in Kelapa Gading Parish, Jakarta, within an explicitly Catholic parish setting. The study first describes how accompaniment is experienced, understood, and practiced by those entrusted with walking alongside young people in parish life. It then interprets those findings theologically in the light of *Christus Vivit* and related ecclesial sources. Phenomenology is used here as a disciplined way of attending to what participants actually describe before moving toward broader interpretation through horizonalization and synthesis.[18] On that basis, the article asks how concrete experiences of trust, accompaniment, formation, and collaboration may also disclose grace, ecclesial co-responsibility, and renewal in the Church's life, in a manner informed by Wallenfang's contemplative phenomenology.[19]

Method

This study used a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore how OMK companions in Kelapa Gading Parish experienced the task of empowering young people to become active protagonists in parish life.[20] The aim was not to test a prior model of youth ministry, but to describe as carefully as possible how accompaniment was lived, interpreted, and sustained by those who practiced it. The study drew on descriptive phenomenology, especially the effort to attend to participants' accounts before imposing conceptual explanation.[21] The analysis proceeded through phenomenological thematization and synthesis of meaning.[22] At the same time, the analysis did not end with description. After the phenomenological analysis was completed, the findings were read theologically through Donald Wallenfang's contemplative

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[18] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, trans. F. Kersten (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983), 34–35; Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 97–103.

[19] Donald Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 12–15.

[20] Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 34–35.

[21] Husserl, 35–36.

[22] Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, 97–103.

phenomenology and through *Christus Vivit* so that the pastoral experiences described by participants could also be interpreted in terms of ecclesial meaning, grace, and co-responsibility.[23]

The research took place in Kelapa Gading Parish, Jakarta, a large urban parish with active OMK programs. Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they met criteria relevant to the phenomenon under investigation: currently serving as OMK companions for at least two years, actively involved in planning or leading youth activities, and willing to share their experiences. Five companions (three men, two women) participated, representing a range of ministries including catechesis, music, liturgy, social service, and pastoral coordination. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews lasting 45–60 minutes, conducted in a quiet parish setting. Open-ended questions invited participants to narrate their experiences of accompanying youth, the challenges they faced, strategies they used to empower youth, and their hopes for the future of OMK. Interviews were audio recorded with informed consent and then transcribed verbatim for analysis. Field notes captured non-verbal cues and researcher reflections.

The analysis moved in two stages. In the first stage, the researcher read the transcripts repeatedly in order to identify significant moments, recurring tensions, and meaning-bearing patterns in the companions' narratives. These statements were coded, clustered into meaning units, and developed into themes that described both what participants experienced and how they interpreted those experiences.[24] In the second stage, those phenomenological findings were interpreted theologically.[25] Here the researcher asked how specific pastoral experiences, such as entrusting youth with leadership, remaining present without control, or sustaining accompaniment through difficulty, might also be understood as signs of grace, ecclesial maturation, and renewed participation in the Church's mission.[26] This sequence is important: phenomenological reduction and thematic synthesis came first, and theological reflection followed from them.

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[23] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 6–8.

[24] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (London: Sage, 2022), 31–33.

[25] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 12–15.

[26] Wallenfang, 12–15.

One example may clarify this analytical movement. Participants described the 2023 Easter celebration as a decisive moment because OMK were entrusted with full responsibility for planning and coordinating the parish liturgy and related events. At the phenomenological level, this was first described as an experience of trust, risk, creativity, and shared ownership. At the theological level, that same moment was then read as a concrete sign of ecclesial co-responsibility: youth were not merely helping the Church's mission from the margins, but participating in it from within as subjects of action. In that sense, a pastoral event first described as lived experience could also be interpreted as a moment of grace and ecclesial renewal. Credibility was strengthened through member checking, where participants reviewed summary findings for accuracy, and through peer debriefing with a fellow researcher experienced in phenomenological methods.

The researcher maintained a reflexive journal not only as a formal exercise in bracketing but also as a way of identifying prior assumptions about youth ministry, parish leadership, and the value of accompaniment. These assumptions included a prior sympathy toward youth participation and an expectation that accompaniment is pastorally important. Throughout the study, these presuppositions were critically examined through journaling, peer debriefing, and repeated return to participants' own words so that the analysis remained grounded in the data rather than in the researcher's preferences. Ethical approval came from the parish pastoral council before data collection. All participants gave informed consent and received assurances of confidentiality. Pseudonyms replaced real names in reporting, and potentially identifying details were removed.

In this study, "companions" refers to adult parishioners formally entrusted with accompanying Catholic youth in their faith journey and pastoral engagement. This role includes guidance and catechesis, but also a commitment to walk alongside young people, fostering mutual discernment and shared responsibility for the life of the Church.

This study does not seek statistical generalization. Its value lies in depth rather than breadth, since it examines the experience of five companions in one large urban parish. Even so, the findings may have analytical transferability to similar Catholic urban parish contexts in Indonesia and Asia where youth ministry faces comparable tensions concerning trust, participation, family expectations, digital mediation, and ecclesial support.

Results

The interviews revealed a layered picture of youth accompaniment in Kelapa Gading Parish after the pandemic. Across the five participants, several recurring patterns emerged concerning trust, responsibility, relational presence, formation, vulnerability, and structural support. Rather than forcing the accounts into pre-set categories, the analysis followed the companions' own descriptions of what helped young people grow, what discouraged them, and what made accompaniment meaningful over time. The themes below present the main structures of that experience while preserving the distinct voices of the participants.

What emerged was a dynamic interaction of trust, responsibility, accompaniment, structural support, and spiritual growth. Youth appeared as both a source of vitality and a point of vulnerability. They showed remarkable creativity and leadership when trusted. They became discouraged when they were overburdened, ignored, or left without proper formation. The themes below present these findings and include participant perspectives (P1–P5) to preserve the phenomenological focus of the study.

Theme 1: Youth as the Present and Future of the Church

Across all interviews, companions affirmed that young people are not only the future but also the present of the Church, echoing Pope Francis' exhortation that youth "are the now of God."[27] Participants consistently described OMK as the "face of the parish," a sign of vitality and renewal. For P1, youth were the Church's vanguard, whose energy and creativity show the parish "what the Church looks like today." P1 and P2 stressed that young people are not merely recipients of pastoral programs but co-responsible agents who can shape parish life through their gifts, initiatives, and decisions.

Companions also saw youth involvement as crucial for the continuity of faith across generations. P2 reflected that "the character of tomorrow's Church will be determined by today's youth," pointing to the long-term consequences of how parishes engage OMK now. P3 expressed concern about the possibility of an "empty church" within a decade if young people are not intentionally invited and accompanied. She noted

[27] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 64.

that when youth disengage, the whole community feels the absence in the liturgy and in parish events.

Participants spoke of youth as carrying a dual potential: a "wealth of talents, passion, and creativity" (P1) that can make parish life dynamic and joyful, but also a fragility that risks discouragement when parish structures fail to offer meaningful participation. P4 used the image of a flame and urged that companions must "keep the fire alive" in key youth leaders so their enthusiasm does not fade beyond recovery. Companions did not see OMK as a secondary concern but as central to parish renewal. When youth are affirmed as protagonists rather than passive attendees, they generate momentum that draws peers, parents, and even older parishioners into deeper engagement with parish life.

Theme 2: Trust and Responsibility as Turning Points

Companions repeatedly emphasized that the moment they entrusted youth with real responsibility was the moment everything changed. Rather than simply inviting OMK to help, they handed them full leadership, including planning, decision-making, and coordination. The clearest example was the 2023 Easter celebration, which participants described as "historic" because, for the first time in the parish's 37-year history, OMK coordinated the entire liturgy and its related events.

This decision was not without hesitation. P1 and P2 recalled that some senior parishioners and council members questioned whether the youth were ready. They feared mistakes or lack of preparation. "My friends in the council asked, 'Are you sure?'" P2 admitted, reflecting the initial anxiety. Yet companions intentionally stepped back. They remained present but resisted the urge to micromanage. P5 described this as requiring "a lot of patience and spiritual presence." She allowed youth to make mistakes and learn from them.

The results exceeded expectations. Youth leaders organized everything from budgeting to volunteer coordination. They even introduced innovations such as QR codes to replace printed Stations of the Cross booklets. They reduced costs and made resources more accessible. This strengthened youth confidence and surprised skeptical adults. "The council was surprised by how well they carried themselves," P1 remarked, while others noted the pride and maturity that emerged among OMK. Companions came to see trust not as a simple strategy but as a catalyst for growth. Responsibility became a formative space where

youth learned perseverance, problem-solving, and collaboration. Mistakes were no longer failures. They became part of the process that shaped youth into co-builders of the parish community.

Theme 3: Accompaniment through Spiritual Presence

Another strong theme was the conviction that real accompaniment is about presence, not control. Companions described accompaniment as a ministry of "being with." It was a way of walking beside youth rather than leading from ahead or observing from behind. P1 called this a "spirituality of presence." He drew inspiration from Jesus' walk with the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

This kind of presence meant more than attending events. P3 explained that it meant joining youth for coffee, chatting casually after activities, or simply being available when someone was struggling. These informal moments often became the most meaningful. They created space for trust to grow and for deeper spiritual conversations to unfold.

Participants also emphasized that accompaniment required companions to adapt to the rhythm of youth life. Meetings sometimes took place late at night. "That's when the youth are free," P2 explained. Communication also moved into digital spaces like WhatsApp, which companions used to send encouragement and stay connected. P4 described this constant attentiveness as "keeping the flame alive" by checking in regularly so that youth leaders did not lose heart.

For companions, presence was not just a method but a witness. They understood that young people can quickly sense when an adult is merely supervising instead of genuinely accompanying them. P2 warned that companions who only show up to monitor risk alienating the very youth they want to guide. Authentic presence, on the other hand, invited youth to share ideas and take initiative. It created an environment where they felt seen, valued, and free to grow in faith.

Theme 4: Faith Formation and Catechesis as Essential Foundations

Companions repeatedly stressed that youth ministry cannot stop at events or entertainment. Formation was the heart of OMK empowerment. It helped youth grow from mere participants into mature disciples. P1 explained that creative events must lead to a deeper encounter with Christ and a clearer understanding of baptismal identity. Without this foundation, several companions warned, OMK risk becoming a group that

"gathers only for fun," missing God's presence and the Church's call to mission.

Efforts to integrate catechesis took many forms. P2 and P5 described youth Masses where OMK planned the liturgy, selected music, and served as lectors, ushers, and choir members. These moments were not routine obligations but formative opportunities where faith and responsibility came together. P3 added that retreats, recollections, and informal sharing sessions became spaces to "hone faith" through prayer, reflection, and peer conversation.

Companions emphasized that catechesis must be relevant. P4 noted that content should connect with youth realities such as digital culture, career pressures, and moral dilemmas so that faith is seen as a companion to daily life. P1 recommended inserting short Scripture reflections into casual gatherings so that ordinary moments became occasions for spiritual growth.

Some companions linked catechesis with leadership development. They taught decision-making, conflict resolution, and service-oriented leadership as essential preparation for future parish councils and liturgical teams. As P2 said, "When they know who they are in Christ, they will know what they can do for the Church." Faith formation was not an optional add-on. It was the foundation for all youth ministry. When youth understood their identity in Christ, they moved from passive attendance to mission.

Theme 5: Communal Approaches to Engagement

Companions agreed that post-pandemic youth ministry thrives when it is local, relational, and small-scale. Large parish gatherings, though valuable, no longer reached everyone. P4 used the image of "five flames" to describe the core administrators in the Franciscus Xaverius sub-parish. He warned that once those flames die, rekindling enthusiasm becomes much more difficult.

Examples illustrated the strength of small communities. P1 and P2 described parish visits to neighbourhood groups where they joined meals and charity projects. These encounters became entry points for disengaged youth. P2 explained that such gatherings often drew new members who might hesitate to attend formal parish events.

Proximity played a key role. P3 observed that youth with busy schedules often could not come to the parish centre. When activities took

place closer to where they lived, participation increased. P5 described sub-parish management teams that gave youth ownership of local initiatives. These teams later came together for parish-wide celebrations.

These smaller circles also became evangelizing communities. "Community attracts community," P3 said. He explained that once young people saw peers actively engaged, they invited friends. Small groups became a means of retention and a seedbed for mission. Their influence radiated outward into parish life.

Theme 6: Challenges and Vulnerabilities in Youth Ministry

Companions spoke openly about the challenges that made youth ministry fragile. The most common obstacle was busyness. Students had heavy academic schedules. Young workers balanced jobs and family responsibilities. "Those who work struggle to manage their time," P2 said. P3 added that weekends were often reserved for family, which made regular gatherings difficult.

Emotional sensitivity was another challenge. Companions mentioned the "*baper virus*" (*bawa perasaan*, or "taking things too personally"), which could spread discouragement quickly. They viewed conflict as an opportunity for growth. They taught forgiveness and resilience so that disagreements became moments of formation rather than division.

Parental resistance also surfaced frequently. Some parents feared church involvement would distract from school or career goals. Others did not see parish life as a priority. P1 noted that even the most motivated youth struggled to remain active without family support.

Leadership regeneration posed a structural challenge. OMK membership ends at marriage or at age 35, which regularly leaves gaps in leadership. "Finding new administrators is increasingly difficult," P2 admitted. Companions worried about over-relying on the same small group of youth leaders.

Despite these difficulties, companions remained hopeful. They emphasized patience and consistency. They modelled perseverance to inspire youth to remain engaged. As P1 said, "They need to be reminded who they are, beloved children of God, so that when difficulties come, they respond not only as human beings but as Christians."

Theme 7: Support and Collaboration with the Wider Church

Companions repeatedly stressed that youth accompaniment is never a solo effort but part of a wider ecclesial network. Parish council support was essential for sustaining youth initiatives. P1 and P2 emphasized that coordination with the Parish Executive Council (*Dewan Paroki Harian*, DPH) was especially crucial during major events. They ensured that OMK projects received the resources and legitimacy they needed. The 2023 Easter celebrations became the prime example. Youth received full responsibility to coordinate liturgy and logistics while adult leaders stayed available for consultation. Companions called this a "mentoring balance." It allowed youth freedom to lead while ensuring they were never left unsupported.

Deanery gatherings were equally important. P1 noted that meetings with companions from other parishes helped them realize they were "not alone." These meetings allowed companions to exchange ideas and strengthen their parish work. They saw inter-parish collaboration as crucial in times of low participation because it helped mentors and youth stay motivated.

At the archdiocesan level, companions reported both positive and negative experiences. P3 recalled meetings with the archbishop as moments when youth felt genuinely acknowledged by Church leadership. P2 said that diocesan processes often felt overly bureaucratic and that administrative requirements sometimes overshadowed formation. Several participants expressed a desire for more structured archdiocesan programs. They wanted leadership training, discernment workshops, and formation resources to prepare OMK for active roles in the Church's mission.

Even with these challenges, companions viewed collaboration as a sign of trust. When parish, deanery, and diocesan leaders supported OMK initiatives, youth felt valued and became more willing to take bold steps. "When young people see that the parish and the diocese trust them," P2 said, "they gain the courage to lead, and that is what makes them the protagonists of today's Church."

The Easter case illustrates the inner logic of the findings. When OMK were entrusted with real responsibility, they did not merely complete assigned tasks. They responded with initiative, creativity, and a stronger sense of belonging, as seen in the planning of the celebration and

in innovations such as the use of QR codes in place of printed materials. What first appeared phenomenologically as trust received and responsibility assumed also points beyond itself: it shows how youth can become visible as co-responsible agents of ecclesial life when adults remain present without taking over.

Synthesis of Findings

The findings present youth accompaniment in Kelapa Gading Parish as a living process that forms OMK into both disciples and leaders. Companions described youth as the pulse of the parish. Their energy and creativity kept the Church vibrant and missionary. Trust proved decisive. When OMK received real responsibility, they responded with ownership and innovation. Accompaniment became less about running programs and more about walking beside youth, listening with care, and guiding them without control. Faith formation and catechesis grounded this accompaniment. It helped youth grow from casual participation into mature discipleship. Small, neighbourhood-based gatherings reawakened engagement after the pandemic. Collaboration with parish, deanery, and archdiocesan structures gave stability and encouragement. Companions were honest about challenges such as busyness, emotional fragility, parental hesitation, and leadership gaps. They interpreted these challenges as opportunities for patient formation. Youth ministry in this context emerges as a relational and formative journey where trust, presence, formation, and collaboration converge to empower young people as protagonists in the Church's mission.

Discussion

The discussion begins from a central observation: youth ministry in Kelapa Gading Parish becomes transformative when responsibility is entrusted within a relationship of accompaniment rather than delegated from a distance. The findings do not portray OMK merely as recipients of pastoral care. They show young people becoming agents of initiative, collaboration, and renewal when adults remain close enough to support them without controlling them. This interpretive movement, from lived experience to theological meaning, is crucial to the article. Experiences first described as trust, presence, formation, and vulnerability can also be read as moments in which the Church learns again how to recognize the

gifts of its young members and to receive them as co-builders of ecclesial life.

Youth as Protagonists and the Transformative Power of Trust

This study shows that young people are not passive recipients of pastoral care but vital participants in the life of the Church. Companions consistently called OMK "the face of the parish," a sign of vitality and renewal. This echoes Pope Francis, who affirms that young people are "the now of God, and he wants you to bear fruit,"[28] and who insists that they belong to the Church's present, not only to its future.[29]

Phenomenology invites a return to what youth actually live and say. Husserl calls us to "return to the things themselves," so the experience of youth appears as both gift and challenge without reduction to stereotypes of immaturity.[30] Wallenfang extends this by viewing youth initiatives as givenness in which grace and ecclesial renewal come to light.[31] Companions remained present but did not control. This posture reflects Heidegger's *Mitsein* ("being-with"), which allows the other's freedom to emerge.[32] Pope Francis similarly urges the Church to let youth act with "creativity and a certain audacity."[33]

Trust and accompaniment should not be separated too sharply. The findings suggest that trust is the decisive act by which adults' hand over meaningful responsibility, while accompaniment is the ongoing relational posture that makes that act safe, fruitful, and sustainable. Trust without accompaniment may become abandonment. Accompaniment without trust may remain protective but never empowering. In Kelapa Gading Parish, youth protagonism emerged most clearly when both were present together: companions stayed near enough to listen, encourage, and guide, yet stepped back enough for OMK to act, decide, and learn through practice.

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[28] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 178.

[29] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 203.

[30] Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 34–35.

[31] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 12–15.

[32] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 118–122.

[33] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 203.

A decisive moment came when the parish entrusted youth with real responsibility and asked OMK to coordinate liturgy, logistics, and communication. This trust deepened commitment and sparked creativity. Beck describes the power of intrinsic motivation in such contexts.[34] The parish affirmed baptismal dignity when it gave youth room to lead and treated them as co-responsible for the Church's mission. Pope Benedict XVI urges the Church to see the laity, including the young, not merely as "collaborators" but as "co-responsible for the Church's being and action."[35]

This dynamic became especially visible in the Easter celebration. Phenomenologically, the event can be described as an experience of risk, responsibility, and creative ownership on the part of the youth, and as an experience of restraint and confidence on the part of the companions. Theologically, however, the same event may be read as more than successful delegation. It becomes a sign of ecclesial renewal in which the Church receives the initiative of its young members not as a threat to order, but as a gift. In Wallenfang's terms, one may say that the event became a site of givenness, where what was disclosed was not only youth competence but also a grace-filled possibility for the parish to become more co-responsible and more alive.[36]

Youth protagonism and entrusted responsibility are not optional tactics but a theological imperative. The whole Church is called to form a community of co-responsibility where young people grow in leadership. Strommen and colleagues remind us that the entire Church must own the task of ministering to its young people and that parents bear a particular responsibility before God to raise their children in faith. However, Christian youth do not simply want ministry to be done for them but also desire to step into their roles as co-ministers among their peers.[37] As members of the Body of Christ, they are called to take ownership and exercise a ministry of influence in the name of Jesus Christ regardless of their age.[38]

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[34] Robert C. Beck, *Motivation: Theories and Principles* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), 306–307.

[35] Benedict XVI, "Letter to the Diocese of Rome on the Urgent Task of Education," January 21, 2008.

[36] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 12–15.

[37] Merton Strommen, Karen Jones, and Dave Rahn, *Youth Ministry That Transforms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 279.

[38] Strommen et al, *Youth Ministry That Transforms*, 292.

Accompaniment as Presence and Spiritual Companionship

The findings show that accompaniment is more than a strategy. It is a way of presence that helps young people experience the Church as near, compassionate, and invested in their journey. Companions did not limit themselves to managing programs. They chose to walk beside youth, to listen to struggles, and to rejoice in successes. The Emmaus narrative (Lk 24:13–35) illuminates this pattern as the Risen Christ draws near, listens, opens the Scriptures, and reveals himself in the breaking of the bread. Presence becomes the place where transformation occurs.

Pope Francis describes accompaniment as help for young people to "recognize the movements of the Spirit" and to discern in freedom.[39] He warns against authoritarian control that stifles creativity and against disengagement that leaves youth without support.[40] The 2018 *Instrumentum Laboris* calls this a "ministry of presence" marked by listening, closeness, and patience.[41] Accompaniment is not an optional add-on. It creates the relational environment in which faith matures. In ordinary, grace-filled encounters, young people learn to trust the Church and to take their place as disciples and leaders. This emphasis on listening, encounter, and accompaniment also resonates with recent international work on synodality in ministry with young adults, which sees ministry not merely as delivery of programs but as a process of encounter, listening, and discernment.[42]

A phenomenological lens clarifies why this matters. Heidegger's *Mitsein* presents human existence as relational.[43] Companions who walk beside youth do not stand over them as supervisors; they share life with them so trust can grow. Wallenfang adds that such presence can become

[39] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 242.

[40] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 243.

[41] Synod of Bishops XV Ordinary General Assembly. "Young People, The Faith and Vocational Discernment Pre-Synodal Meeting Final Document," 2018, no. 132. https://www.cbcew.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2019/07/xv-bps-synod-pre-synod-doc.pdf

[42] Tracey Lamont, "From Change to Transformation: Living Synodality in Ministry with Young Adults," *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 314, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030314.

[43] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 118–122.

a site of grace, even a liturgical moment, where the Church's maternal care takes shape.[44]

Presence took concrete forms: companions stayed for conversations after youth Mass, joined youth for coffee at convenient hours, or made themselves available late at night when youth were free. Some companions also visited youth during moments of difficulty or joined informal gatherings to deepen trust.

The use of WhatsApp and similar tools should not be treated as a minor logistical detail. In this study, digital contact functioned as an extension of accompaniment itself. It enabled companions to remain reachable, to follow up after meetings, and to communicate care during moments when face-to-face contact was not possible. In a post-pandemic context, accompaniment no longer occurs only in parish halls or after Mass. It also takes place through brief messages, timely check-ins, and ongoing digital presence that signal to young people that they are remembered and accompanied. For that reason, digital media should be understood not merely as instruments of coordination but as part of the pastoral form of accompaniment in contemporary youth ministry.

This pattern also resonates with Huong Nam's observation that young people do not avoid social interaction but choose efficient ways to connect. They move easily between online and offline spaces.[45] For today's youth, presence itself matters more than the medium. They value both physical and virtual interaction and experience them as complementary. This reflects Pope Francis' call for a "culture of encounter" and the "language of closeness," where the Church meets people where they are and makes God's nearness tangible in every space, whether digital or physical.[46] Participants emphasized that youth quickly recognize insincerity and respond positively when adults meet them with understanding and patience. Pope Francis underscores that true accompaniment demands patient listening and a willingness to walk with young people without controlling them, helping them integrate their desires and faith into wise decisions.[47]

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[44] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 15.

[45] Huong Nam, *Digital Media and Youth Discipleship* (Langham Monographs, 2023), chap. 2.

[46] Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2013), no. 169.

[47] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 243.

Faith Formation and Catechesis as Foundations for Youth Protagonism

Companions judged that social gatherings do not suffice to sustain engagement. Formation and catechesis must anchor youth ministry. Without formation, OMK risk meeting only for entertainment and never grow into mature disciples. To prevent this, companions placed catechesis within youth Masses, retreats, recollections, and small-group sharing. These settings seek not only to transmit doctrine but also to foster friendship with Christ and a sense of ecclesial vocation. The *General Directory for Catechesis* calls catechesis an "indispensable moment" of evangelization that leads believers to maturity and mission.[48] Pope Francis urges "serious and dynamic" processes[49] and invites young people to growth in love that is fraternal, generous, and merciful.[50]

A phenomenological frame clarifies the effect of formation. Moustakas shows how each moment of teaching, prayer, or service contributes to the whole through horizonalization.[51] Wallenfang adds that catechesis can become a locus of divine self-gift that reshapes the interior life of the young.[52]

Participants reported that youth-centered Eucharistic celebrations proved especially fruitful. OMK read the Scriptures, sang in the choir, and coordinated ministries. These liturgies became a "school of faith" that turned attendance into active participation and creative ownership.[53] Pope Francis calls the Church to use the "language of closeness" in evangelization so that hearts open in concrete service and shared joy.[54] He also reminds the Church that the Word, the Eucharist, and the Spirit renew her youth.[55]

Faith formation is not an accessory but the backbone of youth protagonism. Griffiths reminds us that the success of youth ministry does

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[48] Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), no. 63.

[49] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 161–162.

[50] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 204.

[51] Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods*, 97–103.

[52] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 12–15.

[53] Michandra, Romana Essy Setyoasih, Marius Eduardoes Kakok Koerniantono, "Peran Orang Muda Katolik dalam Ekaristi Kaum Muda di Paroki Mansalong Keuskupan Tanjung Selor," *In Theos* 1, no. 7 (2021): 209, https://doi.org/10.56393/intheos.v1i7.1178

[54] Francis. *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, no. 47.

[55] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 34.

not depend primarily on programs or strategies but on a deep personal spirituality that sustains and inspires.[56] When young people know their faith and draw strength from it to face real struggles, they move from passive attendance to active missionary engagement.

Challenges and Vulnerabilities in Youth Ministry

The findings present hope, but they also expose the fragility of youth ministry in Kelapa Gading Parish. Companions most often named busyness. Students face rigorous schedules. Working youth balance professional and family duties. Participation often turns irregular. Other dioceses report similar patterns that reduce the effect of parish activity.[57] Francis nonetheless invites the Church to processes that foster growth and responsibility.[58] Companions saw that meaningful roles can teach young people to order time and remain committed.

Emotional fragility also appeared. Conflicts and hurt feelings sometimes spread quickly. Companions did not view these crises as failures. They used them to teach forgiveness, conflict resolution, and resilience. Pope Francis encourages the Church to see every crisis as a call to seek new ways and to grow.[59] Parents also influence participation. Some fear that church life will distract from academics. Others do not prioritize formation at all. Koten notes the direct link between parental indifference and youth disengagement.[60] Similar concerns appear in recent international research, which emphasizes the importance of parental cooperation, peer-group formation, and patient accompaniment rather than control in the formation of young people in faith.[61] Leadership regeneration raised a structural concern. OMK membership often ends

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[56] Steve Griffiths, *Models for Youth Ministry: Learning From The Life of Christ* (London: SPCK Publishing, 2013).

[57] Sutrimo, Firmanto, Aluwesia, "Keterlibatan Orang Muda Katolik Keuskupan Ketapang dalam Kegiatan Pastoral," 176.

[58] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 200.

[59] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 200.

[60] Hermina Bota Koten, "Partisipasi Orang Muda Katolik dalam Kegiatan Doa Bersama di Lingkungan St. Hendrikus Raja," *Jurnal Agama, Pendidikan dan Budaya* 1, no. 1 (2020): 25, https://doi.org/10.56358/japb.v1i1.40

[61] Wiesław Przygoda, Tomasz Chrupek, "The Formation of Young People to Faith in God: An Evaluation of the 'Youth on the Threshold' Programme Based on a Survey in the Diocese of Tarnów, Poland," *Religions* 15, no. 12 (2024): 1449, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121449

with marriage or by age 35, so gaps appear. Without succession planning, a small core risks burnout.[62]

The obstacles described by participants should not be treated as isolated features of Kelapa Gading Parish alone. The findings concerning busyness, inconsistent participation, and the need for stronger catechetical formation resonate with earlier studies that also identified weak engagement and the need for more intentional pastoral support among OMK.[63] In that sense, the present study confirms that these tensions belong to a broader pastoral landscape rather than to one parish only. At the same time, the phenomenological focus of this study adds something more specific: it shows how companions actually interpret these tensions from within their daily pastoral practice, and how they respond not only with programs but with trust, presence, and patient formation.

Seen in this light, these challenges are not merely obstacles to youth ministry but also part of the horizon within which vocation, growth, and ecclesial maturity take shape. A phenomenological perspective invites the Church to let these realities show themselves as they are rather than dismiss them too quickly as failure.[64] Wallenfang likewise suggests that grace may be disclosed even within limit and fragility.[65] Rondi Pogue also notes that human weakness can become the place where persons turn to God, recognize their need for Him, and learn dependence on His grace.[66] Theological reflection on such experiences therefore calls the Church to pastoral conversion, so that challenges may become occasions for renewal.

Communal Approaches and Structural Support

This study shows that youth ministry in Kelapa Gading Parish grows best in small, local communities rather than in a fully centralized model. Many young people hesitated to return to large events after the

[62] Budiono, Sihotang, and Firmanto, "Katekese untuk Membangkitkan Antusias," 90.

[63] Sutrimo, Firmanto, Aluwesia, "Keterlibatan Orang Muda Katolik Keuskupan Ketapang dalam Kegiatan Pastoral," 160–176; Budiono, Sihotang, and Firmanto, "Katekese untuk Membangkitkan Antusias dan Keaktifan OMK Paroki Maria Bunda Karmel Probolinggo," 80–91.

[64] Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, 34–35.

[65] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 12–15.

[66] Rondi Pogue, *Lead Deeper: Equipping You to Empower the Young Women You Lead* (New York, NY: Morgan James Faith, 2021), Chap. 8.

pandemic, yet they welcomed neighbourhood gatherings such as shared meals, movie nights, and local charity. These became entry points where youth felt known and welcomed. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences describes Basic Ecclesial Communities as "living cells" in which faith takes root in daily life.[67]

These small communities also aided evangelization. One invitation drew another. Pope Francis urges evangelization through "the language of closeness," which reaches hearts where they live.[68] Such local encounters serve a theological purpose because they show an incarnational Church that moves near to people.

Parish leadership also mattered. When leaders provided funds, logistics, and public affirmation, OMK initiatives gained legitimacy and drew participation. The council asked youth to coordinate liturgy and related events and remained available for consultation. Pope Benedict XVI describes this stance as co-responsibility. He calls leaders to form youth as protagonists rather than to limit them to assistance. [69]

Deanery-level meetings added another layer of support. They connected companions and OMK leaders across parishes and created space to share ideas and to encourage one another. Francis calls this the path of a synodal Church that learns to walk together and to listen and discern as a body.[70]

Participants thanked the archdiocese for moments when youth met the bishop or diocesan leaders, which inspired a sense of ownership. They also asked for more structured programs in leadership, discernment, and youth spirituality. Such events and ideas are seemingly in line with an intergenerational approach that views the different generations as mutually beneficial to parish life and creates spaces where these groups interact meaningfully.[71] This insight reinforces the importance of communal structures that integrate youth fully into parish life. Small community gatherings and parish-wide events should involve youth while

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[67] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia* (1974), no. 12–13.

[68] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 211.

[69] Benedict XVI, "Letter to the Diocese of Rome on the Urgent Task of Education," January 21, 2008.

[70] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, no. 31.

[71] Kevin Muriithi Ndereba, *Youth Ministry After the Pandemic: A Practical Theology from the Global South* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2025), chap. 3.

bringing generations together so that faith transmission becomes a shared process. Pope Francis sees youth ministry as a "laboratory for synodality" and asks the Church to include young people in discernment and decision-making.[72] These communal and structural elements form the lifeworld in which youth discover identity and mission. They show that youth ministry is not merely a program but a way in which the Church lives as a community.

Youth as Protagonists and Key Actors

The findings make clear that young people in Kelapa Gading Parish now serve as protagonists, not only as helpers. Companions described how OMK moved from assisting with tasks to taking full responsibility for planning, coordinating, and executing parish initiatives. The 2023 Easter celebration confirmed this shift and surprised older parishioners with its quality and creativity.

This development aligns with *Christus Vivit* and resonates with recent international research among young Catholics in Rome, where the Church is experienced not as a single monolithic reality but, at its best, as a relational and community-cantered presence that supports belonging and believing.[73] Pope Francis calls young people "the now of God" and asks the Church to expect fruit today.[74] He also names youth "key actors in ecclesial activity," especially in catechesis, liturgy, care for the least, and service to the poor.[75] Youth-led Eucharistic celebrations stood out as a privileged place of growth. Research shows that youth-style liturgies can become a true "school of faith."[76] Pope Francis adds that the Word, the Eucharist, Christ's presence, and the Spirit make the Church ever new.[77] *Evangelii Gaudium* elaborates the missionary horizon of this renewal.[78]

Youth protagonism also appeared in social and charitable work, including programs for the elderly. Such action embodies what Francis

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[72] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 206.

[73] Casavecchia, Andrea, Alba Francesca Canta, and Benedetta Turco, "The Active and Critical Participation: A Study on Belonging and Believing Among Young Catholics in Rome," *Religions* 15, no. 11 (2024): 1389, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15111389.

[74] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 178.

[75] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 203.

[76] Michandra and Koerniantono, "Peran Orang Muda Katolik," 209.

[77] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 35.

[78] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, no. 176–180.

calls the social dimension of evangelization. It helps youth discover a missionary vocation. From a phenomenological angle, these moments reveal the givenness of vocation. Wallenfang shows how trust creates space for God's call to surface in the freedom of the young.[79]

Theologically, this protagonism expresses the vision of the Church as *communio*, where all members share in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly mission of Christ. It echoes the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium*, which calls the laity, including youth, to participate actively in the building up of the Body of Christ.[80] When youth are given space to lead, the Church does not merely delegate tasks but receives from them a renewed vitality, becoming what Francis calls "a Church that grows young."[81]

Toward a Pastoral Vision

The patterns in these findings suggest a pastoral vision in which trust, accompaniment, catechesis, and community life stand together as one integrated whole. Companions show that empowerment requires more than handing out roles. It calls for a spirituality of presence that listens, walks besides, and gradually entrusts leadership. Systematic formation and small-community engagement then help youth remain in parish life and grow as missionary disciples who help shape the Church's present and future.

Such a vision aligns with Pope Francis' call for a Church with "open doors," a Church that meets people where they are and invites them to a deeper encounter with Christ.[82] It also reflects the synodal model of ecclesial life, where all members, including youth, share in discernment and decision-making. It allows the Spirit to guide the parish in creative fidelity to the Gospel.[83] From a phenomenological-theological perspective, this integrated approach creates the conditions where the givenness of God's call can be received and where young people can

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[79] Wallenfang, *Dialectical Anatomy of the Eucharist: An Étude in Phenomenology*, 12–15.

[80] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 31. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

[81] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 34–37.

[82] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*, no. 46.

[83] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 206.

respond freely. As a result, the parish experiences continual renewal from within.

The findings as a whole suggest that empowering youth as protagonists is not achieved through a single program or event. Rather, it requires a pastoral ecology in which trust, accompaniment, formation, digital presence, and institutional support converge. This broader pattern also corresponds to international discussions of youth and young adult ministry, which increasingly stress the need for relational, formative, and institutionally supported approaches rather than isolated programs.[84] This ecology points to the renewal of youth ministry not merely as a programmatic task, but as a process of ecclesial conversion in which the whole parish grows together with its young people. In this way, Kelapa Gading Parish can become what Pope Francis describes as a "Church that grows young,"[85] where the energy and creativity of youth are received as a gift for the whole Body of Christ. Within such an ecology, young people are more likely to become not only active participants but also ecclesial subjects who help shape the Church's present and future.

Conclusion

This study examined how companions in Kelapa Gading Parish empower young people to become pastoral protagonists in the post-pandemic Church. The phenomenological findings reveal that youth ministry flourishes when four key elements are present: trust, responsibility, relational accompaniment, and faith formation. Young people became most engaged when they were entrusted with meaningful leadership, which strengthened their confidence and sense of belonging. Companions emphasized accompaniment as walking with youth, listening attentively, and guiding without controlling. Catechesis and spiritual formation proved essential to help youth move beyond social participation toward mature discipleship. Communal gatherings and collaboration with parish leadership created spaces where youth felt welcomed and supported to serve. These findings affirm the Church's call to recognize youth as "the now of God" and to support them as co-builders

[84] Charlotte McCorquodale, "New Directions in Youth and Young Adult Ministry Leadership: Where Have We Been and More Importantly Where Are We Headed?" *Religions* 12, no. 3 (2021): 146, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12030146.

[85] Francis, *Christus Vivit*, no. 34–37.

of the Church's mission. As a result, parish life remains vibrant and is renewed through their energy and creativity.

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