



Strengthening Fraternal Life in Religious Communities through Spirituality Coaching, Faith Communication, and Pastoral Assistance

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Corresponding Author: Sihol Situmorang	Fraternal life is a fundamental element in a religious community, but social change, individualism, the use of digital media, and reduced interpersonal communication can weaken the quality of relationships, joint prayer, solidarity, and service. This Community Service activity aims to strengthen fraternal spirituality, faith communication, reconciliation skills, and pastoral assistance in religious communities. The program uses a pastoral-participatory approach through needs identification, theological seminars, Scripture reflection, Focus Group Discussion, faith sharing, active listening exercises, conflict resolution simulations, and the preparation of community commitments. Evaluation is designed through pre-test and post-test, observation, simulation rubric, written reflection, and periodic monitoring. The results showed an increase in the average score from 53.2 to 84.8 in the aspects of fraternal spirituality, faith communication, reconciliation, solidarity, and ministry participation. Qualitative changes are seen in increased openness of participants, the ability to express opinions without blame, willingness to accept corrections, and a commitment to building a culture of dialogue. These findings show that coaching that integrates theological foundations, community experiences, communication exercises, and ongoing mentoring can strengthen communities as <i>communio</i>. The sustainability of the program is directed through regular reflection meetings, personal mentoring, community evaluation, and development of coaching modules. Keywords: fraternal life; religious communities; communication of faith; reconciliation; pastoral assistance.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious communities are called to be spaces of communion that present the love of Christ through prayer, service, dialogue, and life together. However, the renewal of service requires a continuous evaluation of relationship patterns, coaching structures, and how communities respond to changing times. The *New Wine in New Wineskins* document affirms that consecrated life needs to have the courage to renew forms of companionship in order to keep charisma alive and transformative (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 2017).

Changes in technology and communication culture bring opportunities as well as challenges. Digital relationships can expand communication, but they can also reduce the

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depth of encounters if community members are more connected to devices than to others. These problems need to be addressed through coaching that helps members recognize social dynamics, emotions, and decision-making in an adult manner (Synod of Bishops, 2017). Fraternal life is not just physical togetherness. Brotherhood demands the ability to listen, respect differences, manage tensions, forgive, and share responsibility. Pope Francis places nonviolence as a style of relations that overcomes domination, revenge, and coercion, so that conflicts can be directed towards reconciliation and peace (Francis, 2017).

The human dimension plays an important role because the community is made up of individuals with different experiences, characters, needs, and stages of development. Emotional maturity helps members manage frustration, criticism, and change without damaging relationships. The study of human development confirms that identity, social relationships, and emotion regulation continue to evolve throughout life and require a supportive environment (Santrock, 2018). The development of young people and members in the formation stage needs to place participants as the subjects to be listened to. The final document of the 2018 Synod emphasizes mentoring, discernment, participation, and integration of experience as essential elements in the growth of faith and vocation (Synod of Bishops, 2018). This principle is relevant for religious communities because coaching that only emphasizes external obedience risks not resulting in internalization.

Community spirituality is also related to holiness in daily life. *Gaudete et Exsultate* affirm that holiness is manifested through patience, gentleness, service, joy, and concrete actions in everyday situations (Francis, 2018). Thus, the quality of prayer life needs to be seen in the way members communicate and respond to the needs of others. The ability to make wise decisions is an important element in managing community conflicts. Wisdom is not only concerned with knowledge, but with the ability to consider different perspectives, acknowledge uncertainties, and seek the common good (Grossmann et al., 2017). Therefore, case study and reflection exercises are needed to expand the way participants read problems.

Pastoral assistance needs to be tailored to the participant's experience and context. Contextual theology connects faith traditions with experiences, cultures, social changes, and community needs so that coaching does not stop at abstract theory (Bevans, 2018). This approach is the basis for the use of sharing, FGD, and reflection on experiences in activities. Pope Francis emphasized that coaching should encourage the freedom, creativity, responsibility, and active involvement of participants. Companions do not take over a person's journey, but help participants to discern and make mature decisions (Francis, 2019). In religious communities, this principle reinforces the importance of dialogue between leaders, companions, and members.

The synodal process of the Church affirms that communion, participation, and mission are interconnected. Community grows when members learn to listen, speak with courage, and discern God's will together (General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, 2021a). The culture of synodal can therefore be applied in religious communities through dialogue meetings and shared responsibility. The *Vademecum Synod* places consultation, listening, prayer, and discernment as methodological elements of the common journey (General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, 2021b). The principle supports a pastoral-participatory approach in service activities because participants not only receive material, but are involved in interpreting experiences and formulating solutions.

The opening of the synodal process also emphasizes three key words, namely encounter, listening, and discernment. These three are the basis for the renewal of the way

the community builds relationships and makes decisions (Francis, 2021). Therefore, coaching programs need to provide a safe space for honest and respectful conversations. Social-emotional competencies, such as self-control, empathy, openness, cooperation, and resilience, are related to the quality of relationships and participation in educational and community environments (OECD, 2021). Strengthening communication of faith therefore needs to include concrete skills, not just moral explanations.

The Synod's continental stage document emphasizes the need to expand the space of encounter so that different voices can be accepted and considered in the community's journey (General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, 2022). Based on the needs of partners, this service activity aims to strengthen the understanding of fraternal life, shared spirituality, communication of faith, the ability to reconcile, solidarity, and service participation.

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

Location, Objectives, and Approaches

The activity is designed for members of the religious community with a target of around 40 participants according to the proposal planning. The program uses a pastoral, participatory, reflective, contextual, and transformative approach. Partners are involved in identifying needs, providing places, mobilizing participants, evaluating, and following up on coaching. The method of implementing the activity is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Method of Implementation of Activities

No.	Method	Description
1	Theological seminar	Deepening of fraternal life, communion, love, and service.
2	Reflections on Scripture	Processing of fraternal texts and reconciliation in a community context.
3	Focus Group Discussion	Identify problems of relationships, prayer, solidarity, and service.
4	Sharing iman	Sharing experiences, struggles, and good practices of living together.
5	Communication simulation	Active listening exercises, paraphrasing, and expressing assertive opinions.
6	Role play rekonsiliasi	Simulation of conflict resolution and agreement drafting.
7	Pastoral assistance	Preparation of commitments and monitoring of implementation.

Stages of Implementation

The stages of the activity are systematically arranged starting from the identification of needs to evaluation and follow-up. The implementation flow is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Implementation Flow of Brotherhood Life Strengthening Program

Figure 1 shows that coaching does not stop at seminars. The process integrates faith reflection, skills training, mentoring, evaluation, and follow-up commitment.

Evaluation Instruments

The components and instruments of the evaluation of activities are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation Components and Instruments

Aspects	Instruments	Indicator
Understanding of fraternal spirituality	Pre-test dan post-test	Increased comprehension value
Communication of faith	Observation and simulation rubrics	Listening and responding skills
Reconciliation	Rubrik role play	Ability to craft constructive solutions
Participation	Attendance and observation list	Active attendance and engagement
Participant reflection	Written reflection sheet	Awareness of strengths and need for improvement
Sustainability	Periodic monitoring	Implementation of community commitments

RESULTS OF ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSIONS

Implementation of Activities

The activity began with a mapping of needs and pre-tests. Participants then took part in a seminar on the meaning of community as *communio*, fraternal life, and the relationship between prayer and the quality of relationships. The Scripture reflection session leads

participants to assess the experience of living together in the light of love, service, and forgiveness.

The FGD identified problems in the form of closed communication, the tendency to avoid conflicts, the reduction of joint prayers, the unbalanced division of tasks, and the lack of sharing space. In the simulation, participants practiced listening without cutting, repeating the core of the message, conveying feelings without blame, and formulating needs clearly.

Reconciliation role play uses cases of misunderstandings, differences in service priorities, and division of responsibilities. Each group was asked to identify facts, perceptions, emotions, interests, and solutions that could be mutually acceptable. At the end of the activity, participants compiled personal and community commitments.

Quantitative Attainment

Changes in participants' understanding were measured through five indicators that best fit the program's objectives. The draft results of the evaluation are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Participant's Pre-test and Post-test results

Aspects	Pre-test	Post-test	Differences
Fraternal spirituality	56	86	+30
Communication of faith	52	84	+32
Conflict reconciliation	49	82	+33
Community solidarity	55	87	+32
Service participation	54	85	+31
Average	53,2	84,8	+31,6

The comparison of values on each indicator is visualized in Figure 2.

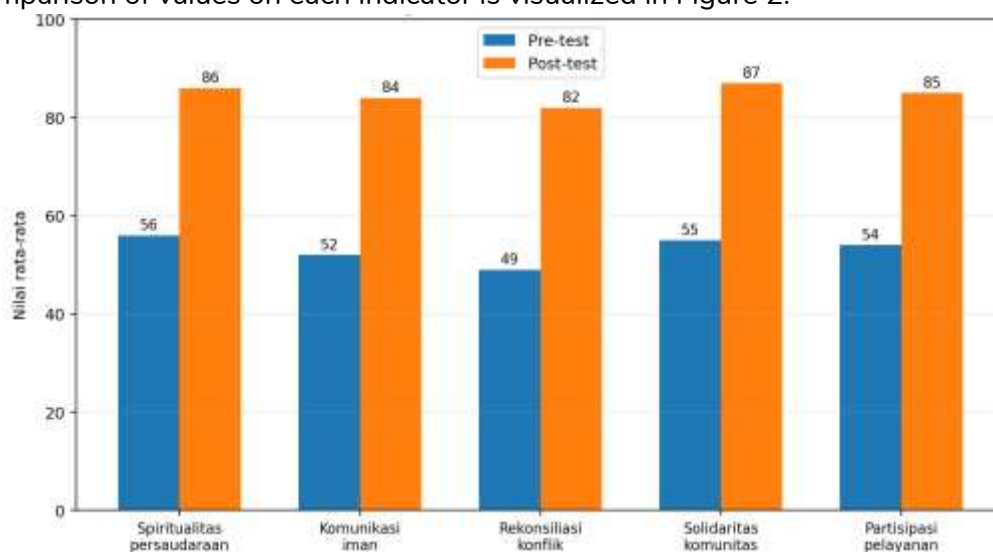


Figure 2. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Participants

Figure 2 shows an increase in all indicators. The highest increase was in the aspect of conflict reconciliation by 33 points, while the overall average increased by 31.6 points.

Qualitative and External Achievements

The outputs and qualitative achievements of the activities are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Output and Activity Outcomes

Exterior	Reach	Meaning
Understanding communio	Participants were able to explain the community as a fellowship of faith and service.	Shared living orientation strengthened

Exterior	Reach	Meaning
Open communication	Participants practiced active listening and assertive responses.	More dialogical relationships
Reconciliation skills	Participants identify the root of the conflict and draw up an agreement.	Conflicts are handled pastorally
Spiritual habits	The community prepares a joint prayer and reflection agenda.	Spiritual life is more orderly
Service commitment	Participants agreed on the division of tasks and solidarity actions.	Increased participation
Construction modules	Materials, case studies, and reflection sheets can be reused.	Sustainability supported

Discussion

The findings suggest that fraternal coaching needs to touch identity, spirituality, and relational skills together. The renewal of consecrated life is not enough to be carried out through rules, but requires an evaluation of relationship patterns and mentoring methods (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 2017).

Improved faith communication is related to the use of participatory methods. When participants are given space to share, listen, and process experiences, theological material becomes more contextual. This approach is in line with the idea of contextual theology that brings together faith traditions and actual experiences (Bevans, 2018). Improving reconciliation skills shows the importance of concrete exercises. Wisdom in conflict requires the ability to consider other perspectives and acknowledge the limitations of one's own judgment (Grossmann et al., 2017). Role play helps participants practice the attitude before applying it in real life.

The spiritual dimension remains at the center of the program. Daily holiness is manifested through patience, gentleness, service, and faithfulness in small tasks (Francis, 2018). Therefore, joint prayer needs to be linked to the way members communicate and serve. Mentoring that respects the freedom of participants helps to form internal responsibility. Christus Vivit emphasizes that companions need to listen and help someone discern, not replace the participant's decision (Francis, 2019).

The FGD process and the preparation of commitments reflect the spirit of the synod. Communion, participation, and mission require a culture of listening and shared responsibility (General Secretariat of the Synod of Bishops, 2021a). Social-emotional competence is an element that supports community life. Empathy, self-control, openness, and cooperation help individuals build relationships and participate in a healthy way (OECD, 2021).

CONCLUSION

Programs to strengthen fraternal life are designed to address the problems of weak communication, reduced common prayer, individualism, and limited reconciliation in religious communities. A pastoral-participatory approach that combines seminars, Scripture reflection, FGD, faith sharing, communication simulation, role play, and mentoring helps participants connect theological understanding with shared life experiences.

The evaluation draft showed an increase in average scores from 53.2 to 84.8. Qualitative achievements are seen in open communication, listening skills, more constructive conflict resolution, reflection habits, and service commitment. The program needs to be

continued through periodic mentoring and implementation evaluation. All quantitative data must be verified using actual activity data before the article is published.

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