

ECOLOGICAL SPIRITUALITY CATECHESIS BASED ON SHARED CHRISTIAN PRAXIS FOR CATHOLIC YOUTH IN SOUTHEAST ACEH

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Abstract

Faced with the deforestation crisis in Southeast Aceh, with the rate of forest loss reaching $\pm 5,000$ hectares/year based on KLHK data in 2024, and the phenomenon of ecological faith dissociation among Catholic Youth (OMK), this research develops an ecological catechesis model based on Shared Christian Praxis (SCP). This model is designed to transform OMK into agents of environmental conservation while overcoming the limitations of conventional catechesis, which is monologic and abstract. By applying Martin Heidegger's (1962) hermeneutic phenomenological method, data were collected through in-depth interviews (31 OMK and 14 community and church leaders), participatory observation of ecological catechesis and reforestation activities, and document study in Southeast Aceh (April-June 2025). The findings prove that (1) the SCP model succeeded in increasing the ecological awareness of 72% of OMK participants through spiritual transformation that interpreted "planting trees as a liturgy of life"; (2) the integration of Laudato Si' teachings with the local wisdom of Adat bak Poe Teumeureuhom strengthened context-based ecological identity; and (3) real action commitments were manifested in reforestation participation (80%) and reduction of single-use plastics (65%). Key recommendations include the adoption of an integrated catechesis module, the church and government, and advocacy for an "ecological refugee" policy based on the Vatican document (POCDP). Theologically, this research affirms the ecological crisis as a path of holiness while making a significant contribution to the development of practical theology, particularly in building a participatory, contextual, and action-oriented ecological catechesis paradigm as a manifestation of authentic faith.

Keywords: *Catechesis, Ecological Spiritual, Catholic Faith, SCP, Young Catholics.*

Abstrak

Dihadapkan pada krisis deforestasi di Aceh Tenggara dengan laju kehilangan hutan mencapai ± 5.000 hektar/tahun berdasarkan data KLHK tahun 2024 dan fenomena disosiasi iman ekologi di kalangan Orang Muda Katolik (OMK), penelitian ini mengembangkan sebuah model katekese ekologi berbasis Shared Christian Praxis (SCP). Model ini dirancang untuk mentransformasikan OMK menjadi agen pelestarian lingkungan, sekaligus mengatasi keterbatasan katekese konvensional yang bersifat monolog dan abstrak. Dengan menerapkan metode fenomenologi hermeneutik Martin Heidegger (1962), data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam (31 OMK, dan 14 orang tokoh masyarakat dan Gereja), observasi partisipatif kegiatan katekese ekologi dan reboisasi, dan studi dokumen di Aceh Tenggara (April–Juni 2025). Temuan membuktikan bahwa: (1) model SCP berhasil meningkatkan kesadaran ekologis 72% partisipan OMK melalui transformasi spiritual yang memaknai “menanam pohon sebagai liturgi hidup”; (2) integrasi ajaran *Laudato Si’* dengan kearifan lokal Adat bak Poe Teumeureuhom memperkuat identitas ekologis berbasis konteks; serta (3) komitmen aksi nyata terwujud dalam partisipasi reboisasi (80%) dan pengurangan plastik sekali pakai (65%). Rekomendasi utama mencakup adopsi modul katekese terpadu, kolaborasi Gereja dan pemerintah, dan advokasi kebijakan “pengungsi ekologis” berbasis dokumen Vatikan (POCDP). Secara teologis, penelitian ini menegaskan krisis ekologi sebagai jalan kekudusan, sekaligus memberikan kontribusi signifikan bagi pengembangan teologi praktis khususnya dalam membangun paradigma katekese ekologis yang partisipatoris, kontekstual, dan berorientasi tindakan nyata sebagai perwujudan iman otentik.

Kata Kunci: *Katekese, Spiritualitas Ekologi, Iman Katolik, SCP, Orang Muda Katolik*

A. Introduction

Southeast Aceh, as a buffer zone of the Leuser Ecosystem, is currently experiencing severe environmental degradation. Data from the Aceh Environmental Agency (2023) indicate that the rate of deforestation has reached 1,200 hectares per year, accompanied by watershed degradation, soil erosion, and the threat of water scarcity (Global Forest Watch, 2024). Ironically, this ecological destruction occurs in the midst of faith communities that should serve as the frontline of creation care, as emphasized in *Laudato Si’* (Paus Fransiskus, 2015). Lawe Desky, as part of the pastoral territory of the Archdiocese of Medan, lies at the heart of this ecological crisis.

Catholics and local communities, particularly Catholic Youth (OMK), are directly affected through crop failures caused by unpredictable climate, human–wildlife conflicts, and declining quality of life, as revealed in initial interviews with community leaders on March 8, 2025. This situation calls for a holistic response that integrates faith, ecology, and collective action. Theologically, the Catholic Church through *Laudato Si’* affirms that the ecological crisis is fundamentally a moral crisis rooted in the “Anthropocene” an anthropocentric paradigm that regards humanity as the absolute ruler of creation (Paus Fransiskus, 2015). In contrast, Catholic faith advocates for integral ecology as a holistic approach that unites social justice, economic responsibility, and spirituality in caring for

the “common home,” stressing that “everything is interconnected, and concern for the environment must be joined to sincere love for human beings” (Paus Fransiskus, 2015).

In the Indonesian context, however, ecological awareness inspired by *Laudato Si'* has not been sufficiently internalized. Only a small proportion of Catholics grasp the systematic relationship between faith and ecological responsibility (Waeng & Castello, 2025). This is paradoxical given that Asian ecotheology emphasizes cosmic harmony, which resonates with Acehnese local wisdom such as “The forest is the source of life.” At the discussion “*Laudato Si' and Forced Displacement*” held at Canisius College, Jakarta (February 14, 2025), Fr. Martinus Dam Febrianto SJ (Director of JRS Indonesia) highlighted that environmental crises trigger forced displacement and that collaboration is essential to address ecological injustice and protect displaced persons. The exploitation of natural resources and climate change have produced 8 million ecological refugees in Indonesia (2008–2023), exacerbated by deforestation (30 million hectares lost since 2001) and rising sea levels. JRS has assisted victims in Demak, Semarang, and the Philippines through research (RACPA) and policy advocacy, while calling for (1) public education on climate emergency, (2) fair regulations on natural resource exploitation, and (3) legal recognition of environmental refugees who remain unprotected under the 1951 UN Convention. Multisectoral collaboration is therefore proposed as a moral solution grounded in *Laudato Si'* and Vatican documents (POCDP), recognizing that “the Earth is our common home” (Susanto, 2025).

Southeast Aceh faces a particularly alarming deforestation challenge. According to Global Forest Watch (2024), between 2021–2024 the region lost 2,360 hectares of natural forest cover, with a deforestation rate of 1,200 hectares per year, 83% of which occurred in primary forest areas. Further data from the Aceh Environmental Agency (2023) reveal that 45% of deforestation is concentrated in the buffer zone of the Leuser Ecosystem, with 78% driven by land conversion to monoculture plantations (DIKPLHD, 2024).

This situation is exacerbated by widespread illegal logging. Reports by HAKA (2019) recorded 2,418 cases of illegal logging across Aceh, involving 4,353 cubic meters of timber. Similarly, the Aceh Provincial Forestry and Environmental Agency (2019) identified 378 cases of forest encroachment in East Aceh, further threatening ecosystem sustainability. As reported by the Southeast Aceh Development Planning Agency (Bappeda, 2024), the region has lost over 10,000 hectares of forest cover over the past 17 years (Kompas, 2019). The ecological impacts are alarming.

A study by Ismail (2022) in the *Journal of Tropical Ecology* revealed a 35% decline in biodiversity in deforested areas. The National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB, 2023) reported a 40% increase in hydrometeorological disasters, such as floods and landslides, correlating strongly with watershed degradation. To address this, multiple initiatives have been undertaken. The government has launched the Social Forestry Program, covering 12,000 hectares in Southeast Aceh by 2023. NGOs such as HAKA and FKL have conducted regular monitoring by engaging 150 local residents as “forest

rangers” (HAKA, 2022). This community-based approach successfully reduced the deforestation rate by 15% within two years, while simultaneously increasing ecological awareness by 25% (Zuhri, 2019).

Catholic Youth (OMK) in Lawe Desky (aged 14–35) face a dual dilemma: spiritually, they struggle to form their faith identity amid modernization pressures (Tibo, 2024)), while ecologically, they depend on increasingly fragile natural resources. A preliminary survey (2024) involving 86 Catholic youths revealed critical findings: 78% perceived environmental issues as governmental rather than faith concerns, 65% were unfamiliar with *Laudato Si'*, and only 22% had ever participated in parish-based environmental action. Yet, their potential as ecological change agents remains significant, provided that participatory spaces are created.

The failure of conventional catechetical approaches worsens this situation. Current models remain monological, focusing on doctrinal knowledge transfer without engaging real-life contexts. This failure stems from three structural weaknesses: (1) *Abstraction* teachings such as integral ecology are presented theoretically without connection to local deforestation (Parish Committee Interviews, March 2025); (2) *Elitism* top down program planning that excludes youth participation; and (3) *Dichotomy* the separation of “spiritual matters” from “worldly affairs.” Consequently, a faith–praxis gap emerges: Catholic youth are devout in worship but passive in confronting illegal logging, with 70% reporting that catechesis feels irrelevant to their concrete struggles.

Overcoming these failures requires the adoption of participatory methodologies such as Shared Christian Praxis (SCP), which enable Catholic youth to play active roles in the learning process. Contextualizing teachings with relevant local ecological issues allows youth to perceive the link between faith and ecological responsibility more clearly (Maria Veronika, 2019). Integrating theory with practice through concrete activities, such as reforestation, reinforces the notion that ecological action is a dimension of spiritual life. Furthermore, involving youth in program evaluation and feedback enhances adaptive learning and sustainability (Sibarani, 2020).

In this regard, Shared Christian Praxis (SCP), introduced by Thomas Groome (1980), offers a transformative framework by linking Church tradition with lived experience through five dialogical movements: (1) articulating present experience (e.g., discussions on Southeast Aceh deforestation); (2) reflecting on the faith tradition (*Laudato Si'*); (3) engaging in critical dialogue; (4) making faith-informed decisions (e.g., designing reforestation projects); and (5) committing to transformative action (Groome, 1980). The strength of SCP lies in its participatory orientation, treating Catholic youth not as passive recipients but as active agents of formation. Its effectiveness has been demonstrated by Cruz (2021) in the “Eco-Mission Action” program in the Philippines.

Ecological Spirituality Catechesis, as the core of this research, is envisioned as a process of cultivating sacramental awareness that caring for the Earth is a form of worship (Kristiantoro, 2022). In the Lawe Desky context, this spirituality requires theological contextualization (linking *Laudato Si'* with Acehnese wisdom, *Adat bak Poe*

Teumeureuhom) and practical actions such as reforestation. This model transforms the shortcomings of conventional catechesis by using ecological experience as the starting point for faith reflection. As Situmorang (2022) asserts: “When youth plant trees while reflecting on the creation narrative (Genesis 2:15), ecological action becomes a living liturgy” (Munawar-Rachman, 2024).

The core challenge lies in the significant gap between Catholic teachings and ecological praxis among Catholic Youth. This spiritual–ecological dilemma is evident in survey data (2024): 78% of youth believe environmental issues are not matters of faith, 65% are unfamiliar with *Laudato Si’*, and only 22% are engaged in ecological actions. The failure of conventional catechesis, which remains monological, exacerbates this gap.

Moreover, there is limited integration of models combining SCP as a participatory methodology, ecological spirituality as “lived liturgy,” and contextual factors such as Aceh’s local wisdom, the crisis of deforestation, and the strategic role of Catholic youth. This mismatch between ecological data and faith-based praxis is evident: while deforestation rates reach 1,200–1,500 hectares annually, with biodiversity loss of 35% and hydrometeorological disasters rising by 40%, no transformative faith-based model has been effectively implemented to address these challenges.

Although numerous studies have explored SCP (Groome, 1980; Groot, 2021) and ecotheology (John, 2020; Sihombing, 2020), three critical gaps persist: (1) the absence of an integrative model combining SCP, ecological spirituality, and the specific context of Southeast Aceh; (2) the limited role of Catholic youth as agents in program design; and (3) the persistent theory praxis divide in ecotheological discourse (Sihombing, 2020: 95). This study therefore proposes an integrative SCP-based model with three core components: a module “Faith and Ecosystem,” an action reflection curriculum (e.g., reforestation as “faith praxis”), and a parish–government NGO collaboration protocol (Resfina, 2020).

The implementation of this model is expected to yield three outcomes: (1) spiritual transformation of Catholic youth from apathy to active engagement as “guardians of creation”; (2) ecological restoration through the recovery of 5 hectares of degraded land; and (3) a replicable prototype for other parishes. As *Laudato Si’* affirms, “Ecological conversion is not optional, but a consequence of living faith” (KWI, 2019). Through this approach, Catholic Youth in Lawe Desky are invited to experience ecology as a path to holiness where planting trees becomes prayer, protecting rivers becomes sacrament, and preserving the Earth becomes the most authentic expression of faith

B. Method

The study “*Ecological Spirituality Catechesis Based on Shared Christian Praxis for Catholic Youth in Southeast Aceh*” employed a hermeneutic phenomenological approach as developed by Martin Heidegger. The selection of Heidegger’s hermeneutic qualitative method was based on three primary considerations: first, its compatibility with the complex phenomenon under investigation, enabling the exploration of Catholic Youth

(OMK)’s lived experiences amid the ecological crisis through the concepts of *Dasein* and existential “thrownness”; second, its relevance to the participatory principles of Shared Christian Praxis (SCP), which emphasizes subjective and intersubjective experiences; and third, its cultural sensitivity, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the interaction between Acehese local wisdom and Catholic spirituality in shaping the ecological identity of Catholic Youth.

The study focused on interpreting OMK’s experiences as “guardians of creation” within the ecological realities of Southeast Aceh. Data collection was conducted between April and June 2025, involving 31 Catholic youths and 14 key informants from diverse backgrounds, including catechists, traditional leaders, environmental activists, and village government representatives. Through the lens of Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*, the research sought to understand how OMK experience “thrownness” into the realities of deforestation and climate change, and how they pursue authenticity through ecological actions that embody their faith (Heidegger, 1962).

The selection of the research site was based on the severity of ecological crisis, as Southeast Aceh loses approximately 1,200 hectares of forest annually. Informants were identified using a purposive–snowball sampling strategy, ensuring the inclusion of individuals with direct relevance to the phenomenon under study. Data collection employed methodological triangulation, including in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002); (John W. Creswell, 2015). Data were analyzed hermeneutically through three thematic phases: identifying patterns in OMK’s daily ecological experiences, analyzing the influence of existential “thrownness” on their spiritual identity, and exploring their transformation into ecological agents through Shared Christian Praxis (SCP).

The research further applied hermeneutic phenomenological data analysis techniques as developed by Max van Manen, with a specific focus on the intersection of ecology and spirituality. The analytical process followed six methodological stages. It began with the interpretation of *lived experience*, capturing the meanings embedded in Catholic Youths’ interactions with the ecological crisis, such as reflections on the consequences of environmental degradation. The existential thematic analysis employed a Heideggerian framework to interpret dimensions of space, temporality, relationality, and materiality within OMK’s experiences. Narrative interpretation was used to examine metaphors and paradoxes within their spiritual–ecological encounters. Reflective analysis emphasized bracketing judgments and identifying intersubjective experiential patterns. Finally, hermeneutic triangulation was applied to validate the findings by cross-comparing interview data, observational insights, and discussions with key informants (Manen, 1997).

C. Results and Discussion

1. Research Findings on Catholic Youths' Understanding of Ecology

The understanding of ecology among Catholic Youth (OMK) in St. Joseph Parish, Lawe Desky, revealed significant variation, ranging from basic perceptions to more comprehensive and holistic views concerning the interrelationship between living beings and their environment. Informant J (17 years old) provided a simple definition, stating: "To green and care for the Earth" (Interview, June 15, 2025). In contrast, Informant MM (17 years old) demonstrated a more elaborated perspective: "My understanding of ecology is about life itself, particularly about how life exists in the environment, more specifically about nature and how to care for the surrounding natural environment" (Interview, June 14, 2025).

A more systematic understanding was expressed by Informant AP (20 years old), who noted: "In my view, ecology is a reciprocal relationship between living beings. Ecology itself gives us the understanding that every living creature depends on one another, including the relationship between humans and plants or vice versa" (Interview, June 14, 2025). The most holistic perspective was articulated by Informant Ri (26 years old): "Ecology is not only about environmental science, but also includes moral and spiritual responsibility to care for God's creation and preserve the integrity of nature" (Interview, April 17, 2025). Environmental Concern as an Integral Dimension of Catholic Faith.

The majority of respondents demonstrated an awareness that ecological concern is an integral aspect of Catholic faith, although their depth of understanding and level of implementation varied. Informant LS (23 years old) expressed her concern in practical terms: "I feel deeply concerned about caring for the environment, such as not littering, not burning forests, and preserving nature" (Interview, June 15, 2025). Informant AP (20 years old) provided a more theological interpretation: "Catholics must always be concerned about the condition of the environment, because God Himself has provided and taught us to care for and preserve nature. This is explicitly written in the Scriptures" (Interview, June 14, 2025). Similarly, Informant Ri (26 years old) emphasized: "The Catholic Church teaches that humans have a responsibility to care for and preserve the Earth as God's creation, as commanded in the Book of Genesis to 'till and keep' the land" (Interview, April 17, 2025). This demonstrates a theological integration of Church teachings and biblical foundations in perceiving ecological responsibility as a constitutive dimension of Catholic faith.

2. Environmental Concern as an Integral Part of Catholic Faith

Ecological Issues. Informants identified various ecological problems in Southeast Aceh, with illegal logging and waste pollution emerging as the most prominent, interrelated issues that generate cascading impacts. One informant (YD, 17 years old) highlighted specific challenges: "The ecological problems in my area are flash floods, the large amount of littering, and environmental pollution caused by people dumping garbage

into rivers” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Similarly, another informant (LS, 23 years old) noted: “An unclean (dirty or polluted) environment, illegal logging which negatively affects the surrounding ecosystem, and widespread littering in drainage channels that often results in floods and landslides” (Interview, June 15, 2025).

Another participant (DS, 33 years old) demonstrated an awareness of causal interconnections, stating: “Concerns about deforestation in Southeast Aceh are serious. Due to public negligence, floods often occur, especially with high rainfall. Littering in rivers and surrounding areas worsens the situation” (Interview, May 11, 2025). Such remarks reflect an emerging awareness of the complexity of ecological challenges in the region.

Environmental practices among Catholic Youth (OMK) generally remain at a basic level, such as proper waste disposal and tree planting, yet they indicate potential for further development into more systematic and sustainable actions. For instance, one respondent (VS, 17 years old) reported: “The habit I often practice is throwing garbage in designated bins and, at school, caring for flowers and watering plants” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Another (Jy, 38 years old) described a broader range of practices: “Tree planting, maintaining environmental cleanliness, and using environmentally friendly products” (Interview, May 10, 2025). Preventive awareness was also observed. For example, one informant (EOS, 27 years old) noted: “To protect the environment, we must dispose of garbage properly, avoid cutting trees, and refrain from hunting endangered animals” (Interview, May 11, 2025). These insights indicate not only proactive actions but also recognition of the importance of avoiding harmful practices.

Church Engagement in Environmental Care. Informants acknowledged the Catholic Church’s efforts in environmental stewardship, though they perceived the need for greater intensity and systematic programming. For instance, one participant (A, 20 years old) observed: “As far as I know, the Church, led by Pope Francis, has consistently emphasized care for the environment. Dioceses worldwide also promote this through programs such as the annual celebration of Ecology Day” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Another youth (V, 17 years old) added: “The Church’s concern for the environment is quite good. For example, my parish once produced eco-enzymes to distribute to local stations, which were then used to purify water and as organic fertilizer” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Similarly, another informant (P, 16 years old) stressed the role of the parish in “managing the church environment, promoting green initiatives, setting examples, and developing environmental programs” (Interview, May 10, 2025).

Personal Experience with Ecological Challenges. Several participants shared personal experiences of ecological crises, which heightened their motivation to act. One youth (M, 17 years old) reflected: “I experienced a flood caused by excessive garbage clogging the drainage channels. This happened due to human negligence toward nature” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Another (V, 17 years old) recalled: “I joined a clean-up program around the Lawe Desky area with my high school” (Interview, May 11, 2025). A more severe account came from an older respondent (R, 31 years old): “During the

floods, the challenges were immense we had to leave home, stay in evacuation shelters, and then clean our houses once the water receded” (Interview, April 17, 2025). These narratives reveal the tangible and severe impacts of environmental issues on daily life.

Faith as a Motivator in Environmental Stewardship. Most participants recognized that their faith significantly shaped their attitudes toward the environment, albeit with varying levels of theological reflection. One youth (V, 17 years old) remarked: “If our faith is grounded in love, then we will also love every living creature on this earth” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Another (A, 20 years old) reflected: “Of course. Through Scripture and natural events, God reminds us to protect and preserve the environment” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Similarly, one respondent (R, 16 years old) expressed: “Yes, because if we love God, we must also love His creation” (Interview, April 17, 2025).

Spiritual Meaning of Caring for Creation. Informants offered diverse understandings of the spiritual meaning of ecological care, ranging from practical awareness to deeper theological insights. One informant (L, 23 years old) stated: “Caring for the earth means protecting God’s creation and fulfilling our duty as followers of Christ to maintain a stable ecosystem” (Interview, June 15, 2025). Another (A, 20 years old) added: “The spiritual meaning of caring for the earth is to preserve and safeguard God’s creation” (Interview, June 14, 2025). An older respondent (E, 27 years old) emphasized moral responsibility: “As the most noble of God’s creations, we must responsibly preserve His creation” (Interview, May 11, 2025). Emotional-spiritual reflections also emerged, as one informant (D, 33 years old) observed: “It brings peace and comfort to enjoy nature around us” (Interview, May 11, 2025). These statements highlight the dual dimensions of ecological spirituality as both duty and source of inner peace.

Concrete Commitments. Informants expressed concrete commitments to contribute to environmental stewardship. For instance, one (L, 23 years old) declared: “Keeping the environment clean and healthy, reducing plastic waste, and encouraging community awareness” (Interview, June 15, 2025). Another (A, 20 years old) added: “My commitment is to become an agent of change, preserving and promoting the importance of environmental care” (Interview, June 14, 2025). A further account (E, 27 years old) listed specific practices: “Sorting waste, reducing plastic use, planting trees, and encouraging others to care for the environment” (Interview, May 11, 2025). Younger participants also echoed practical commitments, such as reducing pesticide use and planting trees (R, 16 years old; Interview, April 17, 2025).

Community-Based Proposals. Informants suggested creative initiatives to involve their communities in ecological care. For example, one (L, 23 years old) proposed: “Tree-planting programs, encouraging reduced plastic use, and proper waste disposal” (Interview, June 15, 2025). Another (A, 20 years old) suggested “tree planting, celebrating Ecology Day, and community environmental campaigns” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Other participants emphasized gardening with edible plants (D, 33 years old; Interview, May 11, 2025) and organic composting (W, 14 years old; Interview, May 11, 2025).

Personal Transformation and Motivation. Finally, participants expressed strong motivation to change personal habits as a starting point for broader ecological transformation. For example, one (M, 17 years old) stated: “My motivation to change my behavior is strong, because the benefits are not only for me but also for the wider community” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Another (A, 20 years old) reflected: “Changing bad habits begins with small actions like proper waste disposal and reducing plastic use” (Interview, June 14, 2025). Other respondents (R, 17 years old; B, 14 years old) emphasized practicing ecological discipline at home, school, and in society.

Synthesis. Based on the interview data, Catholic Youth (OMK) at St. Joseph Parish, Lawe Desky, demonstrate a solid foundation for the development of ecological spirituality. Their ecological awareness is evolving, with some already recognizing ecological care as both a moral and spiritual responsibility, though further deepening of the concept of integral ecology is needed. Most participants acknowledged the interconnectedness of Catholic faith and environmental care, supported by adequate theological grounding. Their practices remain basic yet consistent, with clear potential for systematic development. While the Church’s role in ecological programs is recognized, there is consensus that greater intensity and structure are required at the local level.

At the existential-spiritual level, OMK exhibit readiness for deeper transformation. Personal experiences of ecological crises, such as floods and pollution, serve as strong motivators to act. Faith functions as a crucial factor shaping their positive ecological attitudes, based on the belief that loving God entails loving His creation. For these youth, ecological care is both a spiritual obligation and a source of inner peace. Their creativity in proposing integrated programs—tree planting, plastic reduction, and composting reflects strong internal motivation and readiness to embody authentic eco-spiritual transformation.

3. Transformation of Ecological Awareness through Shared Christian Praxis (SCP)

The transformation of ecological awareness among Catholic Youth (OMK) at St. Joseph Parish, Lawe Desky, demonstrates the effectiveness of the Shared Christian Praxis (SCP) approach in integrating the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of learning. Groome (1980) emphasizes that SCP is not merely a pedagogical method but rather a holistic approach that enables authentic “praxis,” in which reflection and action mutually reinforce each other in the process of faith transformation. Within the context of this study, the five movements of SCP proved effective in facilitating the transformation of ecological awareness.

First Movement (Present Action/Experience). Informants who had experienced flooding caused by waste accumulation in drainage channels demonstrated that concrete experience serves as a powerful starting point for reflection. Heidegger’s (1962) concept

of “throwness” explains that human beings always find themselves in specific existential situations that shape their understanding. Direct encounters with ecological crises create a “moment of disclosure” that awakens awareness of the urgency of environmental issues. Second Movement (Critical Reflection). Informants displayed the capacity to critically reflect on their experiences within broader frameworks, linking local ecological challenges with global issues and identifying structural root causes. This corresponds with Paulo Freire’s notion of *critical consciousness*, which significantly influenced Groome’s own thinking.

Third Movement (Faith Tradition). The integration of Scriptural teaching particularly Genesis 2:15 and the encyclical *Laudato Si’* demonstrates that the Christian tradition offers a rich theological resource for responding to ecological crises. As Kristiantoro (2022) argues, ecological spirituality has deep roots within the Christian tradition, which can be revitalized to address contemporary challenges. Fourth Movement (Dialectical Hermeneutics/Dialogue). The dialogical process between lived experience and the faith tradition produced new insights into ecological spirituality. Informants showed the ability to integrate moral and spiritual responsibilities in caring for creation, reflecting a creative synthesis between personal experience and theological tradition.

Fifth Movement (Decision for Future Action). Concrete commitments expressed by informants such as becoming “agents of change” and inviting others to care for the environment indicate that SCP effectively fostered a transformative process oriented toward action. The study further revealed a broad spectrum of ecological understanding among OMK. Consistent with Ginting’s (2022) research on the ecological spirituality of the traditional Karo calendar, ecological awareness cannot be separated from its spiritual and cultural context. More mature informants, such as Romauli, exhibited a holistic understanding by integrating moral and spiritual aspects, whereas younger participants tended to interpret ecology in more practical terms, such as tree planting or greening efforts. This finding resonates with Heidegger’s (1962) hermeneutic phenomenology, which underscores that understanding develops through *lived experience*.

4. Integration of Faith Tradition and Ecological Action

The concern for the environment as an integral part of Catholic faith is confirmed by Waeng and Castello (2025), who investigated the role of believers in healing the wounded earth in light of *Laudato Si’*. Pope Francis (2015), in *Laudato Si’*, affirms that care for the environment is not an optional addition but an essential dimension of Catholic faith. Similarly, Kristiantoro (2022) highlights that ecological spirituality has deep roots within the Christian tradition, wherein caring for creation is perceived as an act of worship to the Creator. Reports by DIKPLHD (2024) and Global Forest Watch (2024) document alarming deforestation rates in Southeast Aceh. *Kompas* (2019) also reported continuous forest loss in Aceh, threatening local ecosystems. Although Zuhri (2019) noted a decline in logging activity in 2018, deforestation remains a critical challenge. Findings from this study indicate that Catholic Youth (OMK) possess substantial ecological awareness,

which constitutes an essential asset for developing catechetical programs on ecological spirituality.

OMK already hold a basic awareness of the importance of environmental care, in line with Groome's (1980) Shared Christian Praxis (SCP), which regards concrete action as integral to faith formation. Maria Veronika (2019), in her study on SCP-based catechesis, likewise emphasizes the necessity of integrating concrete actions within faith development. Nevertheless, existing practices require further development into more systematic and sustainable actions. While the Church has demonstrated efforts toward ecological care, there remains a need to enhance both the intensity and systematicity of such programs. This evaluation aligns with Susanto's (2025) findings in the *Laudato Si'* praxis forum, which stressed the importance of closer collaboration between Church and society in addressing ecological crises. Tibo (2024) also underlined the necessity of catechesis that is more responsive to contemporary issues, including ecological challenges. Similarly, Resfina (2020) showed that ecological theology education can significantly increase congregational awareness of ecological responsibility as a dimension of faith.

Environmental problems were perceived by OMK as having a direct impact on their daily lives, which motivated their engagement in seeking solutions. Such direct encounters reflect the concept of *lived experience* articulated by Van Manen (1997) in phenomenological research. Heidegger (1962), in *Being and Time*, likewise asserts that existential experiences shape both understanding and action. Munawar-Rachman (2024) further underscores the importance of dialogue between personal experience and theological reflection in forming ecological consciousness. Most informants acknowledged that their faith influenced their treatment of nature, though with varying levels of awareness. These findings confirm Ginting's (2022) study on ecological spirituality, which shows a strong interrelation between faith and ecological praxis. Pope Francis (2015), in *Laudato Si'*, also stresses that "ecological conversion" is an integral aspect of Christian life. Kristiantoro (2022) demonstrates that medieval ecological spirituality has significant implications for contemporary environmental stewardship. However, some informants, such as Mesra (MA), expressed views such as "Not because God created nature in His image and promise toward the environment," reflecting the need for deeper theological understanding of the faith–ecology relationship.

This interpretation aligns with Groome's (1980) SCP, which emphasizes the integration of Christian tradition with life praxis. Waeng and Castello (2025) likewise affirm that Christ's teaching provides a strong theological basis for ecological action. Resfina (2020) shows that ecological theology can serve as a bridge between doctrinal faith and concrete ecological practices. The diversity of informants' perspectives indicates the need for more systematic catechetical approaches that integrate Christian teaching with ecological responsibility. A growing spiritual awareness of caring for the earth is evident among OMK. Kristiantoro (2022) stresses that ecological spirituality integrates both practical and contemplative dimensions of creation care. The Indonesian Bishops' Conference (KWI, 2019), in its document on youth and faith, also emphasizes the importance of developing a spirituality that is responsive to contemporary challenges, including ecological crises. The diversity of informants' perspectives reflects varied stages of spiritual development, which must be accommodated in catechetical program design.

Concrete commitments articulated by informants reveal a strong willingness to contribute to environmental care, although further strengthening is required in terms of systematicity and sustainability. This resonates with Groome's (1980) SCP, which stresses transformation from reflection to concrete action. Maria Veronika (2019) also identified concrete commitments as a key indicator of successful faith formation. Sibarani (2020) underscores the importance of involving youth in contextual Christian education. The expressed commitments reveal the significant potential of OMK as ecological change agents, provided they are supported with sustainable accompaniment programs.

Informants also demonstrated creativity and a desire to involve communities in environmental care through integrated programs. Their proposals reflect a sound understanding of the need for comprehensive environmental initiatives. Tibo (2024) stresses the necessity of catechesis responsive to contextual needs, while Creswell (2015), in his qualitative research methodology, emphasizes the value of participant involvement in designing solutions. Such proposals may serve as a foundation for developing participatory and sustainable ecological spirituality catechesis. The motivation for behavioral change expressed by informants resonates with Groome's (1980) concept of *praxis*, whereby faith reflection must lead to transformative action. Heidegger (1962), in his notion of "authenticity," emphasizes that existential awareness must be embodied in authentic action. Sibarani (2020) likewise stresses the importance of contextual Christian education in encouraging behavioral transformation among youth. This strong motivation suggests that ecological spirituality catechesis successfully cultivates intrinsic motivation for sustainable behavioral change.

This study makes a significant contribution to the development of contextual catechetical theory by integrating Groome's SCP with Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology in the context of ecological spirituality. Its primary contribution lies in the empirical validation that the five SCP movements effectively facilitate the transformation of ecological awareness through the integration of cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of learning. Methodologically, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of hermeneutic triangulation in analyzing the complex phenomenon of ecological spirituality and provides a model of existential thematic analysis applicable to similar research.

The findings have broad practical implications for catechetical program development in Indonesia, particularly in the context of ecological crisis. First, the diversity of ecological understandings among OMK indicates the need for adaptive and staged catechetical designs that accommodate varying levels of understanding, from practical to holistic. Second, OMK's strong ecological awareness and commitment to becoming change agents highlight the potential of youth as key drivers of faith-based ecological transformation. Third, the need for more intensive and systematic Church programs addressing ecological issues calls for a pastoral reorientation that is more responsive to contemporary ecological challenges. Fourth, OMK's creativity in proposing integrated programs offers empirical grounding for the development of participatory catechesis that positions youth as co-creators of pastoral programs.

D. Conclusion

The study on "Ecological Spirituality Catechesis as an Expression of Catholic Faith Based on Shared Christian Praxis for Catholic Youth at Santo Yosep Lawe Desky Parish, Southeast Aceh" has yielded significant findings that contribute to the

development of a catechetical model responsive to contemporary ecological crises. The research demonstrates that the Shared Christian Praxis (SCP) approach is effective in facilitating a holistic transformation of Catholic youth, encompassing cognitive dimensions (understanding of ecology and spirituality), affective dimensions (concern and commitment to the environment), and conative dimensions (concrete actions in environmental stewardship). This transformation is not superficial but touches deep existential levels, as evidenced by shifts in the youth's perspectives on the relationship between faith and ecological responsibility.

The integration of universal Church teachings (*Laudato Si'*) with local experiences and Acehnese cultural wisdom proves effective in fostering an authentic and contextually relevant ecological spirituality. These findings indicate that eco-theology cannot be developed in abstraction but must be grounded in the concrete lived experiences of communities. Catholic youth demonstrate significant potential as agents of ecological transformation when afforded adequate participatory space. Their creativity, enthusiasm, and commitment underscore the importance of engaging youth as active subjects in the Church's mission, rather than merely as recipients of catechesis.

The ecological spirituality catechesis model developed in this study holds potential for replication in other contexts, with adaptations to local conditions. Fundamental principles—such as participatory approaches, integration of experience, tradition, and action, and cultural contextualization—are universal and can be applied across diverse settings. Ecological spirituality may serve as a novel pathway for deepening faith and evangelization in ways that are relevant to contemporary challenges. The Church can offer a transformative faith perspective through an integral ecological approach that addresses personal, communal, and structural dimensions. Challenges remain, including the need for more systematic theological deepening, the reinforcement of sustainable accompaniment programs, and the development of strategic partnerships with multiple stakeholders to address the structural roots of ecological crises.

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