Social Engagement and Spirituality of the Laity

In this chapter we describe a great variety of organisations and associations where lay people play a major role and where they express their Catholic faith. More individual manifestations of this belief will be discussed in the next chapter. Although we concentrate on activities of the Catholic community where lay people play a major role, we will find again and again that the clergy always has a function. This is part of the hierarchical character of the Catholic Church, especially also in Indonesia, where the animosity against the pyramid of power is not as widespread as in some Western countries.

During the last decades of the colonial period, there was a strong tendency among committed European and Eurasian Catholics to be member of several denominational organisations in the major towns of the colony. The process started in 1909 with a Bond van Katholieken (Union of Catholics) in Surabaya as an instrument to put Catholics on the list for municipal elections. It opened branches in other towns, a national central body and sections for women. Catholic trade unions were erected, starting with teachers, followed by Catholic boy scouts, and finally a national political party for Catholics. In this period it proved to be impossible to keep the (Indo-)European and the Javanese Catholics within one network of organisations. The latter started organisations of their own. As in the Netherlands, also in the Dutch East Indies a segmentation of society had started where Catholics (besides Protestants, Liberals and Socialists) had their own political party, trade union, newspaper, scouting, sport clubs, reading societies and evenings to watch movies.

After independence the organisations for Europeans and Eurasians quickly disappeared. Many societies for the ‘white population’ did not even experience a restart after the troublesome period of the Japanese administration. In a modest way the Javanese now took the lead. In December 1945 a Catholic Indonesian political party was established in Yogyakarta, although it did not yet have a nationwide membership. In the 1950s a renewed effort was made to erect proper Catholic organisations for political and social expressions of the Catholic community. This was a Javanese and urban style of modern Catholicism, but also in some bigger cities of the outer islands and in some minor towns the effect could be seen. The clergy supported this effort and had a great concern to keep their flock together and prevent conflicts and local initiatives that could lead to splits and a fragmented style of organisation.

The most important organisations were the following: politics, youth, women, students in higher education, high school students, teachers, trade unions, intellectuals. In late 1963 the Jakarta coordination of the seven major organisations issued an urgent call for unity and asked for a national and local *Musjawarah Katolik* or Catholic Council to guarantee this unity. It proved, however, not so easy to inspire a unitary movement active in all parts of the vast and diverse country of Indonesia. In the major existing example, the small and much more homogeneous country of the Netherland, this could be done under strict supervision of the bishops and clergy, but not so in their former colony. In fact this unity was threatened in Indonesia in two ways. Firstly, there were great differences and poor (and expensive) communications between the islands that made contact and unity quite difficult. Secondly, the Indonesian state under Sukarno did not foster ethnic or religious mass organisations (*organisasi masa*), as these activities were labelled. In order to promote the strongest sort of these organisations, the Communist ones, even a membership of 1 million was requested after 1964. Later, the Soeharto regime did not allow political parties and trade unions formed on the basis of religions, and banned the most powerful and important Catholic (and many other) organisations after 1973. The Catholic organisations for women, students and intellectuals could continue as religious activities, but never flourished really after 1970. Still, we will write a concise history of these organisations in this chapter. For the period after 1970 we see national Indonesian networks of new international spiritual movements like the Charismatic Renewal, Marriage Encounter.

For the annual meeting of the Catholic bishops, November 1996, Y.B. Mangunwijaya was invited to present a keynote speech, which was entitled: *Gereja Diaspora, Gereja Berkualitas* (A Diaspora Church can be a Quality Church). In his opinion there was too much of religion in Indonesia in general and especially within the Roman Catholic Church: too many committees, organisations such as the charismatic movement, Legio Mariae, choirs, recollections, picnics and hiking, organised by parishes. In his opinion, the Indonesian church is overactive, organises so much that this church is in danger of becoming a sect, concentrating religious life on the parish and its organisations. He extolled the Jewish sabbath-ceremonies in the family and noted that the busy activities in the parish threatened not only the family as the nucleus for religious education and practice, but also the spread of personal faith in the everyday life of society. We have discussed this idea...