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Minahasa Local Wisdom *Mapalus*: A Contextual Interpretation of Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*

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ABSTRACT:
This study examines the dialogue between Mapalus, a Minahasan tradition of mutual cooperation, and Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation Dilexi Te to develop a contextual understanding of Christian love and its pastoral implications for the Diocese of Manado. It employs qualitative library research through a critical interpretive review and contextual hermeneutics, encompassing conceptual mapping of Mapalus literature, textual analysis of Dilexi Te, and reflexive synthesis of cultural and theological perspectives. The analysis identifies convergences in solidarity, equality, justice, respect for human dignity, and shared responsibility. Mapalus provides a cultural framework for expressing the Church's preferential option for the poor through communal cooperation, while Dilexi Te deepens the theological interpretation of these practices as participation in God's saving love. However, strict reciprocity and financial obligations in contemporary adaptations of Mapalus may burden economically disadvantaged households and risk their exclusion. The study concludes that critically engaging Mapalus in the light of Dilexi Te enriches contextual theology and offers a culturally rooted resource for pastoral renewal, directing the Diocese of Manado toward inclusive communal responsibility and concrete solidarity with the poor and marginalized.

ABSTRAK:
Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji dialog antara Mapalus, tradisi gotong royong masyarakat Minahasa, dan Ekshortasi Apostolik Dilexi Te dari Paus Leo XIV untuk mengembangkan pemahaman kontekstual tentang kasih Kristiani serta implikasi pastoralnya bagi Keuskupan Manado. Penelitian ini menggunakan studi kepustakaan kualitatif dengan metode tinjauan interpretatif kritis dan hermeneutika kontekstual, yang meliputi pemetaan konseptual literatur Mapalus, analisis tekstual Dilexi Te, serta sintesis refleksif atas perspektif budaya dan teologi. Hasil analisis mengidentifikasi keselarasan nilai solidaritas, kesetaraan, keadilan, penghormatan terhadap martabat manusia, dan tanggung jawab bersama. Mapalus menyediakan kerangka budaya untuk mewujudkan keberpihakan Gereja kepada kaum miskin melalui kerja sama komunal, sedangkan Dilexi Te memperdalam pemaknaan teologis praktik tersebut sebagai partisipasi dalam kasih Allah yang menyelamatkan. Namun, tuntutan timbal balik yang ketat dan kewajiban finansial dalam bentuk Mapalus kontemporer dapat membebani keluarga kurang mampu serta berisiko mengecualikan mereka dari partisipasi. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengkajian kritis Mapalus dalam terang Dilexi Te memperkaya teologi kontekstual dan menyediakan sumber pembaruan pastoral yang berakar pada budaya lokal, sekaligus mengarahkan Keuskupan Manado pada tanggung jawab bersama yang inklusif serta solidaritas konkret dengan kaum miskin dan terpinggirkan.

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INTRODUCTION

This article examines the theological dialogue between the Minahasan local wisdom of *Mapalus* and the Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (DT)[1], promulgated in October 2025. It argues that *Mapalus,* an indigenous tradition of cooperation and communal solidarity, provides a culturally grounded hermeneutical framework for interpreting the Church's preferential option for the poor may be interpreted and embodied within the Diocese of Manado. This study demonstrates that the values embodied in *Mapalus* offers significant pastoral resources for fostering a spirituality of communion, fraternity, and diakonia that resonates with Pope Leo XIV's call for the Church that manifest God's love through concrete solidarity with the poor and the marginalized (DT 5-6,8-12,17-18).

Minahasa, located in the northern peninsula of Sulawesi, is home to several sub-ethnic communities, including Tontemboan/Tongkimbut (Tombasian, Tompakewa), Tombulu, Tondanouw/Tolour, and Tonsea/Tontewoh, Tonsawang-Tombatu, Ponosakan, Bantik, Siauw.[2] Among its most enduring cultural tradition is *Mapalus,* a system of reciprocal cooperation originally rooted in collective agricultural labor. Etymologically, the term derives from *ma* signifying an active process ("doing something"), and *palus,* denoting "collaborative activities executed in rotation".[3] Overtime, *Mapalus* evolved into a broader socio-cultural institution that embodies mutual responsibility, communal participation, and social solidarity. Beyond its practical function, it represents a moral and spiritual ethos that affirms interdependence and resists the individual characteristic of modern society.[4]

The values embodied in *Mapalus* exhibit affinities with Catholic Social Teaching, particularly its emphasis on solidarity, participation, subsidiarity, fraternity, and self-giving love.[5] Likewise, *Dilexi Te* presents Christian love not merely as an individual virtue

[1] Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi Te* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2025).

[2] Jessy Wenas, *Sejarah & Kebudayaan Minahasa*, 1st ed. (Institut Seni Budaya Sulawesi Utara, 2007); Cynthia EV Wuisang and David Jones, "The Value of Ethnoecological Knowledge of the Minahasans: Repositioning Traditional Biocultural Knowledge in Indonesian Environmental Planning," *International Sustainable Development Research Society*, 2015, 1–11.

[3] Erick Lobja et al., "The Reconstruction of Cultural Values and Local Wisdom of the Tombulu Sub-Ethnic of Minahasa Community in the Walian Village of Tomohon City," *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 383 (2019): 564–71, https://doi.org/10.2991/icss-19.2019.72.

[4] Yoseph Daniel Arie Santie et al., "Mapalus as a Socio-Cultural System in Minahasa Society," *Technium Education and Humanities* 9, no. 2 (2024): 7–12; Meily Meiny Wagiu et al., "The Cultural Value of Mapalus and its Relationship to Religious Moderation in North Minahasa Regency along with its Relevance to Christian Education," *Al-Qalam Jurnal Penelitian Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 29, no. 1 (2023): 151–62.

[5] "The Cultural Value of Mapalus and its Relationship to Religious Moderation in North Minahasa Regency along with its Relevance to Christian Education".

but as the foundation of ecclesial and social transformation. Pope Leo XIV emphasizes that God has a special concern for the poor (DT 17) and that authentic love for God is inseparable from concrete love for one's neighbor, especially the poor and marginalized (DT 5,6). Consequently, both *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te* converge in affirming solidarity as a transformative expression of love that restores human dignity and strengthens communal life.

Recent scholarship on *Mapalus* may be grouped into three major areas. First, socio-cultural studies demonstrates that although modernization has transformed traditional social structures, *Mapalus* continues top reserve communal solidarity and social cohesion.[6] Second, studies on religious moderation show that the cooperative ethos of *Mapalus* strengthens peaceful coexistence among Christian and Muslim communities in Manado and Kampung JaTon (Jawa-Tondano) by promoting openness, mutual assistance, and social harmony.[7] Third, theological and philosophical research argues that *Mapalus,* together with other Minahasan cultural principles such as *Si Tou Timou Tumou Tou,* provides an important foundation for contextual Christian ethics and interreligious harmony.[8]

Despite these valuable contributions, an important gap remains. Existing studies primarily examine *Mapalus* from socio-cultural, philosophical, or interreligious perspective, while its theological significance within Catholic theology has received little sustained

[6] Thelma Wawointana and Margareth Inof Riisyie Rantung, " Mapalus Local Wisdom in Overcoming Inter-Village Conflict " 473, no. Icss (2020): 157–61, https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.201014.035; Ronald Jolly Pongantung, Dian Ratu, and Ayu Uswatun, "Model Partisipasi Masyarakat melalui Mapalus sebagai Local Wisdom dalam Eksistensi Hukum dan Masyarakat di Minahasa Selatan Community Participation Model through Mapalus ss Local Wisdom in the Existence of Law and Society in South Minahasa Pembangunan Nas," *Jurnal USM Law Review* Vol. 7, no. 2 (2024): 1082; Abdul Rasyid Umaternate et al., "Memahami Kearifan Lokal Masyarakat Minahasa sebagai Upaya Membangun Harmonisasi Kehidupan Sosial Masyarakat," *JISIP (Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan)* 6, no. 1 (2022): 3502–7, https://doi.org/10.58258/jisip.v6i1.2876.

[7] Gerry Nelwan, "Mapalus dalam Konteks Hubungan Kristen-Muslim : Studi Perdamaian di Kota Manado," *Pute Waya : Sociology of Religion Journal* 3, no. 2 (2022): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.51667/pwjsa.v3i2.1220; Alon Mandimpu Nainggolan et al., "Etos Kerja Mapalus dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kampung Jawa Tondano," *Tatar Pasundan: Jurnal Diklat Keagamaan* 18, no. 1 (2024): 1–11, https://doi.org/10.38075/tp.v18i1.390.

[8] Regen Wantalangi, Martinus Duryadi, and Gideon Sutrisno, "Mendaratkan Etika Kerajaan Allah melalui Falsafah Sitou Timou Tumou Tou di Suku Minahasa," *CARAKA: Jurnal Teologi Biblika dan Praktika* 5, no. 2 (2024): 160–76, https://doi.org/10.46348/car.v5i2.297; Julio Eleazer Nendissa et al., "Teologi Minahasa dalam Perspektif Kontekstual: Integrasi Nilai Budaya Lokal dan Keimanan Kristen," *Jurnal Socius: Journal of Sociology Research and Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 52–63, https://doi.org/10.24036/scs.v12i1.776; Siti Fathimah, Awaluddin Hasrin, and Sangputri Sidik, "Adaptation of Minahasa Local Wisdom (Maleo-Leosan) as Sociology Teaching Material," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan* 15, no. 1 (2023): 85–94, https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v15i1.1723.

attention.[9] More specifically, no previous study has systematically placed *Mapalus* in dialogue with the contemporary social teaching of the Catholic Church, particularly Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te*. As a result, the potential of *Mapalus* to serve as a contextual hermeneutical framework for interpreting contemporary magisterial teaching remains largely unexplored.

This article addresses that gap by proposing a contextual theological reading of *Mapalus* in conversation with *Dilexi Te*. Drawing upon qualitative library research and contextual hermeneutics, it pursues three interrelated objectives. First, it analyzes the socio-cultural and theological meanings of *Mapalus* within Minahasan society. Second, it interprets Pope Leo XIV's theology of preferential love for the poor within the cultural horizon of Minahasa. Third, it develops a contextual hermeneutics model that brings the values of *Mapalus* into dialogue with the Church's teaching on Christian charity and solidarity. Ultimately, this study argues that *Mapalus* is not merely an indigenous cultural tradition but also a valuable theological resource capable of inspiring a pastoral paradigm for the local Church of the Diocese of Manado, one rooted in communion, participation, solidarity, and shared responsibility.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design based on a critical interpretive review methodology.[10] Unlike standard systematic reviews that emphasize exhaustive empirical data coverage, this interpretive approach aims to generate novel conceptual understandings through critical, reflexive analysis of selected academic literature and primary magisterial documents. This methodological framework is exceptionally well-suited for addressing the paradigmatic and theological questions at the heart of this research, as it facilitates an in-dept, interpretive exploration of the intersection between indigenous Minahasan wisdom *Mapalus* and the contemporary social mission of the Church.

The research execution proceeds through three interconnected phases. Firstly, conceptual mapping and literature review. The researcher systematically identifies core literature concerning the Minahasa local wisdom *Mapalus,* drawing from anthropological, sociological, and cultural studies to establish its socio-cultural and spiritual foundations

[9] Wantalangi, Duryadi, and Sutrisno, "Mendaratkan Etika Kerajaan Allah melalui Falsafah Sitou Timou Tumou Tou di Suku Minahasa"; Siti Fathimah et al., *Minahasa Community Local Wisdom; Study of Social Construction of Inter-Religious Harmony*, vol. 1 (Atlantis Press SARL, 2023), https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-35-0_205.

[10] Katja Buntins. Olaf Zawacki-Richter, Michael Kerres, Svenja Bedenlier, Melisa Bond, ed., *Systematic Reviews in Educational Research Methodology, Perspectives and Application* (Wiesbaden, Germany: Springer VS, 2020).

while directly addressing the existing lacuna in theological scholarship. Primary literature sources include studies on Minahasan local wisdom, the socio-cultural contributions of *Mapalus* to social harmony and religious moderation in the region, and previous efforts in Catholic contextual theology. Secondly, textual analysis of magisterial teaching. A rigorous textual analysis is conducted on Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* (October 2025) to distill a precise theological framework regarding the spirituality of love and the Church's preferential option for the poor. Thirdly, reflexive synthesis and hermeneutical dialogue. The study engages in a continuous reflexive synthesis, evaluating how indigenous *Mapalus* values, such as solidarity, equality, and justice, are illuminated by the theological dimensions of *Dilexi Te.* Conversely, this phase examines how *Mapalus* proposes a vibrant pastoral model distinguished by participatory, communal engagement and a paradigm of mutual responsibility.

Through this analytical framework, the theological dimension is articulated in explicit alignment with the Church's magisterial teaching, while the pastoral dimension is synthesized to assess the coherence of local cultural praxis with the universal mission of the Gospel. This integrative approach ensures that the findings yield a contextualized and transformative understanding of faith in the specific landscape of the local Church of the Diocese of Manado.

DISCUSSION

Minahasa Local Wisdom Mapalus: Social and Spiritual Meaning

The local wisdom of Minahasa *Mapalus* has become an integral part of the culture of the Minahasa people, functioning metaphorically as a vital pulse that infuses life and vitality into the populace.[11] Etymologically, within the dialects of the principal Minahasan sub-ethnicities, the term *Mapalus* derives from two root components: *ma,* signifying collective action or mutuality ("together, with each other"), and *palus,* denoting an act of pouring, giving, or rendering aid. Consequently, its root semantic points to concerted, collaborative labor dedicated to the common good.[12] *Mapalus* emphasizes

[11] Santie et al., "Mapalus as a Socio-Cultural System in Minahasa Society"; Nova Olvie Mandolang and Mariam L M Pandean, "Revitatlisasi Mapalus sebagai Upaya Pemertahanan Budaya Minahasa di Manado Sulawesi Utara," *Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (PEKAMAS)* 3, no. 2 (2024): 99–104.

[12] Lobja et al., "The Reconstruction of Cultural Values and Local Wisdom of the Tombulu Sub-Ethnic of Minahasa Community in the Walian Village of Tomohon City"; Nelwan, "Mapalus dalam Konteks Hubungan Kristen-Muslim: Studi Perdamaian di Kota Manado"; Demsy Jura, Pantjar Simatupang, and Christar A. Rumbay, "Embracing the Emic of Minahasa Celebration Culture and Christian Religious Education," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): 1–7, https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9523.

collective devotion and social responsibility, prioritizing the active, reciprocal participation of every member in executing shared labor and advancing communal interests.

Historically operating as an entrenched socio-economic labor system, *Mapalus* initially served to unite agrarian communities. In its formative stages, it was directly tied to cooperative agricultural clearing and cultivation with peer groups typically numbering between ten and twenty individuals who rotated labor to service the agricultural holdings of each member.[13] Overtime, however, the scope of *Mapalus* expanded organically into a comprehensive societal framework governing various spheres of community life. This evolution is evident in its application to communal gardening, residential construction, and milestone observances such as thanksgiving celebrations and funerary rites, ensuring that collective endeavors and crises are met with organized support. As an integrative social matrix, *Mapalus* binds the Minahasan people in a relationship of mutual obligation and entitlement. Individuals maintain the moral duty to assist those in need, coupled with the communal right to receive reciprocal aid.[14]

Crucially, *Mapalus* transcends mere structural utility as a regulator of social organization. It constitutes the outward manifestation of an intrinsic spirituality. Embedded within its social mechanisms such as the ethics of mutual aid, lie profound values of solidarity, wherein community members recognize their deep interdependence.[15] Thus, *Mapalus* is simultaneously a pragmatic social practice and the expression of a deeply rooted spiritual ethos. It serves as a concrete realization of the foundational Minahasan philosophy *si tou timou tumou tou* (human existence is fulfilled through humanizing others).[16] In contemporary discourse, this philosophy finds active expression in companion maxims such as *Torang samua basudara* (We are all brothers and sisters), *Torang samua ciptaan Tuhan* (We are all creations of God), endowing *Mapalus* with an unmistakably sacred and religious dimensions.[17]

In the light of *Dilexi Te,* the spirituality embedded within *Mapalus* unfolds across three significant theological dimensions. *Firstly,* it embodies the dimension of concrete love. The ethos cherished by the Minahasan people materializes in tangible, solidary,

[13] Nainggolan et al., "Etos Kerja Mapalus dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kampung Jawa Tondano."

[14] Jura, Simatupang, and Rumbay, "Embracing the Emic of Minahasa Celebration Culture and Christian Religious Education."

[15] Fathimah, Hasrin, and Sidik, "Adaptation of Minahasa Local Wisdom (Maleo-Leosan) as Sociology Teaching Material."

[16] Jura, Simatupang, and Rumbay, "Embracing the Emic of Minahasa Celebration Culture and Christian Religious Education."

[17] Nainggolan et al., "Etos Kerja Mapalus dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kampung Jawa Tondano"; Nelwan, "Mapalus dalam Konteks Hubungan Kristen-Muslim: Studi Perdamaian di Kota Manado."

and participatory acts of mutual aid. Within this framework, love transcendent abstraction to become a lived spirituality manifested in daily actions, uniting communities in collective movements and transforming human vulnerabilities such as the incapacity to cultivate land independently, into hope through collaborative labor. Here, *Mapalus* emerges as an authentic practice of diaconal love (DT 5-6).[18]

Secondly, solidarity within *Mapalus* is not characterized by passive compassion born from the perceived deficiencies of the recipient. Rather, it represents active participation rooted in an affirming anthropology of both the helper and the helped, recognizing the transformative power of solidarity. *Mapalus* serves as a social framework enacting the mandates of indigenous philosophy namely *maleos-leosan* (mutual benevolence), *masigi-sigian* (mutual respect), *masawang-sawangan* (mutual support), and *maupus-upusan* (mutual affection).[19] This dynamic reflects a profoundly positive vision of communal life, demonstrating that human or ecclesial community attains true meaning only when expressed through open solidarity and transformative love.

Thirdly, the interpersonal relationship fostered by *Mapalus* are inherently egalitarian and just. Social interactions propelled by the spirit of *Mapalus* rest upon a foundation of fundamental equality and justice.[20] This relational parity is historically supported by the absence of rigid social stratification within traditional Minahasan society, a culture historically devoid of monarchs and commoners, where gender hierarchy did not subordinate women to men.[21] Consequently, the principles of equality and justice within *Mapalus* preclude domination, oppression, or coercion, fostering instead a shared joy in communal existence.

As a transformative social system, spirituality, and praxis, *Mapalus* functions not merely as a socio-cultural mechanism, but as a concrete incarnation of Christian charity practiced in the everyday lives of the Minahasan people. It actively subverts egoism, hyper-individualism, technocratic and profit-driven mentalities, and narrow self-interest. As Nelwan documents, when the multi-ethnic city of Manado suffered a devastating flood in 2014, *Mapalus* materialized through grassroots solidarity campaigns operating under the banner "*Mapalus* For Manado", a spirit of mutual aid that resurfaced with equal vigor

[18] Nainggolan et al., "Etos Kerja Mapalus dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kampung Jawa Tondano."

[19] Nainggolan et al.

[20] Nainggolan et al.

[21] Djoys A Rantung, Universitas Kristen, and Djoys Rantung, "Gender Equality from the Perspective of Minahasa Ethnicity and Christian Religious Education," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 80, no. 1 (2024): 1–8.

during the COVID-19 pandemic.[22] By prioritizing solidarity, constructing relationships on equality, collaborating through justice, and enacting love for the common good, *Mapalus* exhibits profound resonance with the theological vision of love articulated by Pope Leo XIV in *Dilexi Te*, wherein love for God must find its necessary expression in active love for neighbor, particularly the poor and the marginalized (DT 5).

The Theology of Love and Solidarity in *Dilexi Te*

The Church has long embodied and practiced Christ's mandate to love God and neighbor, particularly the poor (Acts 4:32-37), as an essential realization of its fidelity to the Word of God (DT 24-34). Jesus identified himself with society's most vulnerable, loved to the absolute end, and affirmed the inherent dignity of the weak, the poor, and the suffering (DT 2). Building upon the magisterial trajectory of the Second Vatican Council and preceding pontificates, including Pope Francis' *Dilexit Nos* (DT 2-3), which examined the Church's life and mission in relation to the poor (DT 87-89), Pope Leo XIV reaffirms the vocation of the Church to walk in solidarity alongside the marginalized (DT 3). The titular declaration *Dilexi Te* ("I have loved you") affirms that Christ's love is neither an abstract concept nor an inert, barren spirituality, but rather a concrete enactment of divine love directed toward the poor, the oppressed, and the helpless. Because God's love is intimately bound to the poor, the Church is called to serve as a living sacrament of Christ's presence in the world, inserting herself directly into the daily struggles of the destitute (DT 3).

Moreover, poverty is not restricted solely to material deprivation such as the lack of adequate food, clothing, or shelter, or the inability to secure basic human necessities. According to *Dilexi Te,* poverty encompasses a multidimensional condition that is simultaneously spiritual, social, moral, and cultural. It designates the complex socio-structural reality of individuals being stripped of their fundamental rights, spatial dignity, housing, and freedom (DT 9), as well as vulnerable groups such as marginalized women enduring systemic violence without recourse to defense (DT 12). Given this expansive, multifaceted definition, a vast segment of humanity experiences some dimension of impoverishment. Consequently, the solidarity, charity, and active benevolence demanded by the Gospel must be intensified and expanded by the Church to penetrate every dimension of human life scarred by destitution (DT 10). Herein lies the Church's calling to act as the tangible hands of divine love extended to a wounded, marginalized, and oppressed world.

[22] Nelwan, "Mapalus dalam Konteks Hubungan Kristen-Muslim: Studi Perdamaian Di Kota Manado."

Chapter III of *Dilexi Te* comprehensively details how the Church has historically functioned as a community for the poor. This tradition spans from the communal life of the Early Church (DT 37-38) and the doctrinal witness of the Church Fathers (DT 39-48) to historical and contemporary healthcare ministries for the sick (DT 49-52) and the historical advocacy for the liberation of prisoners (DT 59-62). It further encompasses the emergence of the mendicant orders as a radical living witness to poverty (DT 63-67), pioneering educational initiatives for the destitute (DT 68-72), institutional and pastoral care for migrants (DT 73-75), the heroic ministry to social outcasts exemplified by St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta (DT 76-79), and contemporary grassroots popular movements dedicated to holistic human development (DT 80-81).

Furthermore, *Dilexi Te* insists that solidarity, love, and service toward the poor must be grounded in an epistemological and spiritual conversion. The poor must no longer be viewed merely as passive objects of philanthropic pity or as social inferiors, but rather as active subjects of God's love and living mirrors of the face of Christ. Authentic encounter and relationship with the impoverished constitute an authentic encounter with God in everyday existence, wherein the divine continues to address humanity (DT 5). Such encounters transcend horizontal social ethics, achieving a profound theological depth. They represent an encounter with the crucified and risen Christ, who "though he is rich, for your sake he became poor, that you might be rich because of his poverty" (2 Cor. 8:9). Thus, acts of solidarity and love directed toward the poor possess an inherently sacramental character, for within the suffering and marginalized, the Church encounters the living God who hears the cry of the poor, identifies with their plight, pronounces a preferential option for them, and acts as their ultimate deliverer (DT 16-23).

Mapalus as a Praxis of Christian Love and Solidarity

Synthesizing the foregoing analysis of *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te,* deep structural convergences emerge between indigenous Minahasan wisdom and papal teaching. Within *Mapalus*, the Minahasan community systematically dismantles egoism to construct robust solidarity, discarding individualism and injustice in favor of proactive social transformation. Empowered by *Mapalus,* individuals are cultivated as dignified subjects through loving relationality with their neighbors. As Nainggolan observes, a hallmark value of *Mapalus* is the solidarity that manifests across all spheres of community life, effectively breaching sectarian boundaries such as religion and socio-economic stratification.[23]

[23] Nainggolan et al., "Etos Kerja Mapalus dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kampung Jawa Tondano."

This ethos harmonizes directly with the foundational Christian mandate proclaimed in *Dilexi Te*, which is love of God and love of neighbor (Matt. 25:40; DT 5).

Both Nelwan[24] and Nainggolan[25] emphasize that *Mapalus* inspires the Minahasan populace to forge a shared existence rooted in active love. Acts of mutual assistance are divorced from utilitarian calculations of profit of advantage. They rather serve to cultivate relationship and cooperation that embody authentic love. This constitutes a reciprocal framework grounded in respect for human dignity, justice, and equilibrium between rights and obligations, directing all efforts toward the common good. Such praxis aligns seamlessly with Pope Leo XIV's exposition of selfless love, which heals wounds, restores human dignity, and reunites the estranged (DT 2).

Hermeneutically, *Mapalus* hermeneutically can be read as a paradigm of communal love wherein members of society and the Church bear one another's burdens, support mutual flourishing, and collaborate toward a future imbued with hope and joy. As noted by Nelwan[26] and Wawointana & Rantung,[27] *Mapalus* continuously adapts its forms to foster harmony, intergroup cooperation, and peace within contemporary pluralistic settings. In this sense, *Mapalus* functions as a lived theology of love, an animating force that translates human action into concrete daily praxis. Consequently, it possesses a profound transformative and liberative dimension that resonates deeply with *Dilexi Te*.[28] Within a globalized landscape marred by systemic inequality, poverty, and injustice, *Mapalus* endures as a socio-cultural matrix that preserves egalitarianism, fosters a hope-building spirituality, and enacts tangible structural renewal.

Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the values and practices of *Mapalus* have not remained immune to the changing dynamics of modern society. Originating within a traditional agrarian framework, *Mapalus* demanded collective social responsibility, requiring every community member to contribute actively to the welfare of others.[29] In an agrarian context where monetary calculations had not yet colonized social relations, and where household labor obligations could be flexibly absorbed by extended family of children, reciprocal responsibility did not constitute an undue burden. However, as labor has increasingly been commodified and family structures have transformed, this principle

[24] Nelwan, "Mapalus dalam Konteks Hubungan Kristen-Muslim: Studi Perdamaian di Kota Manado."

[25] Nainggolan et al., "Etos Kerja Mapalus dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Masyarakat Kampung Jawa Tondano."

[26] Nelwan, "Mapalus dalam Konteks Hubungan Kristen-Muslim: Studi Perdamaian di Kota Manado."

[27] Wawointana and Rantung, "Mapalus Local Wisdom in Overcoming Inter-Village Conflict."

[28] Wawointana and Rantung.

[29] Lobja et al., "The Reconstruction of Cultural Values and Local Wisdom of the Tombulu Sub-Ethnic of Minahasa Community in the Walian Village of Tomohon City."

has grown more demanding. Furthermore, *Mapalus* has evolved into contemporary iterations such as *Arisan* (rotating savings and credit associations) and *Rukun Keluarga* (extended family mutual-aid associations), in which financial contributions play an increasingly central role. Within these shifting socio-economic conditions, strict reciprocity can become burdensome for economically disadvantaged households. Consequently, families with limited financial resources often find themselves structurally precluded from full participation in these modern adaptations, risking exclusion from a cultural institution originally designed to cultivate universal communal solidarity and mutual support.

Contextual Theology: Dialogue between *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te*

The methodology of contextual theology and the application of contextual hermeneutics reveal a profound dialogue between Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation *Dilexi Te* and the local wisdom of Minahasa *Mapalus*. This intersection is manifested in shared values of solidarity, equality, justice, and love, coupled with a mutual commitment to socio-cultural transformation, human liberation, and the elevation of living conditions worldwide. As Stephen B. Bevans observes, authentic contextual theology takes culture seriously, engaging it deeply while maintaining a critical and discerning posture toward its limitations.[30]

In this methodological framework, *Mapalus* functions as *locus hermeneuticus* for *Dilexi Te*. The term *locus hermeneuticus* (or locus of hermeneutic)s is utilized by David W. Jardine to emphasize *Erfahrung* (living ventures) over mere *Erlebnisse* (lived experiences), noting that the *locus* of hermeneutics represents an ongoing conversation between the interpreter, their lived reality, and the "swirling cascades" of human, textual, poetic, scholastic, artistic, and historical conditions.[31] Consequently, doing contextual theology, according to Bevans, requires taking seriously both the deposit of past experience (recorded in Scripture and preserved and defended in tradition) and the immediate present experience of the living context, which encompasses individual and social realities, cultural frameworks, and structural social change.[32]

Accordingly, the values of *Mapalus* such as solidarity, togetherness, equality, justice, responsibility and cooperation, as lived and practiced in the contemporary social landscape of Minahasan People, constitute a living context demanding rigorous theological

[30] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2002).

[31] David W Jardine, "Locus and Soul: Uncoiling Hermeneutics from Phenomenology," *Journal of Applied Hermeneutics* 4 (2022): 1–6, https://doi.org/10.11575/jah.v2022i2022.75826.

[32] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

interpretation. This contextual reading assists the faithful in grasping the teachings of Pope Leo XIV with heightened existential relevance. Conversely, *Dilexi Te* imparts profound spiritual depth to *Mapalus,* illuminating its core principles through the lens of divine grace: solidarity, equality, and cooperation are revealed not merely as cultural habits, but as active participations in God's saving love. Thus, mutually illuminating and enriching dialogical relationship emerges between *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te*, wherein indigenous culture grounds and enriches faith practice, while Church teaching imbues cultural values with transcendent significance.[33]

From a pragmatic hermeneutic perspective, this engagement yields a valuable threefold contribution to dynamic theological dialogue. *Firstly,* a textual reading of the magisterial teaching. Critical examination of *Dilexi Te* demonstrates that the Church's doctrine on love and poverty is intrinsically intertwined, demanding that theological concepts translate directly into concrete social actions that shelter, care for, and prioritize the poor. The *preferential choice for the poor* serves as an enduring source of profound renewal for both ecclesial and civil society (DT 7:91-92).[34] *Secondly,* a contextual reading of the local wisdom. As an enduring socio-cultural text, *Mapalus* embodies a wealth of theological values, including collective responsibility, human dignity, and hope catalyzed by cooperation. This reading illustrates how Minahasan local wisdom serves as a privileged context for witnessing the manifestation of divine love within human social experience.[35] *Thirdly,* a synthesized dialogical reading. Bringing *Dilexi Te* with *Mapalus* into direct conversation generates fresh theological understandings and pastoral practices vital for the local Church. In this context, local cultural paradigms can powerfully enrich the global ecclesial horizon (DT 16).

Ultimately, these interpretive layers demonstrate that contextual theology and hermeneutics are rigorously academic disciplines capable of forging vital pastoral bridges between the Word of God and the concrete cultural realities of society. As Bevans notes, contextual theology functions precisely as the medium through which religion renders meaningful service within a specific culture.[36] In this regard, *Mapalus* offers an exemplary model of Christian pastoral praxis not only for the Diocese of Manado but also for the wider Church in Indonesia, by incarnating solidarity, mutual responsibility, egalitarian respect for human dignity, and hope-filled cooperation, perfectly mirroring

[33] Wagiu et al., "The Cultural Value of Mapalus and its Relationship to Religious Moderation in North Minahasa Regency along with its Relevance to Christian Education."

[34] Mark W Elliott, "What It has Meant and might Mean to Be 'The Church of the Poor' after the Early Chapters of Acts," *Theological Interpretation of Scripture as Spiritual Formation*, 2023, 100–119.

[35] Santie et al., "Mapalus as a Socio-Cultural System in Minahasa Society."

[36] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*.

the Gospel imperative to love God and neighbor through tangible acts of mercy toward "one of the least of my brothers" (Matt. 25:31-46).

Theological and Pastoral Implications for the Church in the Diocese of Manado

The local wisdom *Mapalus* pulsates deeply within the heart of Minahasan populace, its values saturating the daily life of this "land of the smiling people". From antiquity to the present, *Mapalus* has remained an integral component of Minahasan culture, serving concurrently as a worldview, a spiritual compass, and a daily praxis.[37] However, the critical encounter between *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te* yields profound theological implications for the Indonesian Catholic Church today, particularly in its endeavor to incarnate the teachings of Pope Leo XIV within the national landscape. *Dilexi Te* challenges the Indonesian Church to recognize that Christian love transcends personal and spiritual piety, bearing an inherently pragmatic and social dimension. As Pope Leo XIV succinctly affirms, the poor can never be left behind (DT 15).

The core values of *Mapalus* such as solidarity and equality, justice and respect for human dignity, and moral equilibrium of rights and obligations in cooperation, demonstrates that authentic love, as articulated by the pontiff, finds its true realization exclusively within a relational framework of mutualism and shared ecclesial responsibility. The cries of the impoverished, as Pope Leo XIV notes, continuously interrogate our personal lives, societal structures, and our political, economic, and ecclesiastical systems (DT 9). Within this context, love operates simultaneously as a profound spiritual encounter and a concrete social praxis, wherein divine love is proclaimed through solidarity, communion, and shared actions among the faithful. Thus, Christian doctrine is elevated into a theology of togetherness, a theology of encounter with God mediated through social solidarity, the defense of human dignity, and responsible communal action.

Within the sphere of pastoral ministry, *Mapalus* serves as both an inspiration and a viable contextual model. The values embedded within this indigenous tradition align seamlessly with the church's mission to construct a community founded on charity and diaconal service, particularly toward the marginalized. *Mapalus* functions as a vital cultural marker, an adhesive for communal cohabitation, a shaper of ethical mindsets, and a catalyst for inclusive, emancipatory unity.[38] Drawing a pastoral model from *Mapalus* empowers the Church with a vibrant spirituality and an effective methodology for contextualizing *Dilexi Te* within communities that urgently require a sincere outpouring

[37] Wawointana and Rantung, "Mapalus Local Wisdom in Overcoming Inter-Village Conflict ."

[38] Jekson Berdame and Charles A. Ray Lombogia, "Merajut Tradisi di Tengah Transisi: Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup Berbasis Kearifan dalam Budaya Mapalus Suku Minahasa," *Tumou Tou* 7, no. 5 (2010): 128–42.

of pastoral care, transforming the local community into a genuine "Church of the poor for the poor" (DT 103). Consequently, *Mapalus* deeply enriches ecclesial spirituality and expands pastoral ministries in a world marked by pervasive destitution.

In the socio-economic sphere, *Mapalus* offers a concrete and relevant paradigm for addressing systemic poverty through solidarity, equity, justice, mutual respect, and collaborative labor.[39] It illuminates pathways for empowerment and grassroots solidarity rooted in the rights and responsibilities of dignified human persons. Through this lens, the Church teaches that love is not merely abstract moral discourse, but a social movement capable of bringing about structural transformation and a hopeful future.

The dialogue between *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te* generates two vital pastoral takeaways. Firstly, a shift toward participatory and communitarian pastoral praxis. Both the local wisdom of Minahasa and the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Leo XIV urge the local Church of Manado to transition from a pastoral model centered primarily on sacramental administration toward a participatory, communitarian ecclesial life. This orientation leverages the values of solidarity, reciprocity, and shared responsibility inherent in *Mapalus*[40] as invaluable socio-cultural resources for implementing Catholic Social Teaching. By revitalizing existing communal traditions in the light of the Gospel, local culture becomes an effective vehicle for pastoral renewal.[41] Furthermore, this approach encourages the Diocese of Manado to conceptualize evangelization not merely as the transmission of doctrine, but as the active accompaniment of communities within their concrete cultural and social realities.[42] Inspired by *Dilexi Te,* pastoral programs are oriented toward walking alongside the poor, strengthening communal participation, and cultivating a spirituality of mutual care that mirrors Christ's compassionate love (DT 2). Here, *Mapalus* transcends mere cultural preservation, becoming a dynamic pastoral resource.

Secondly, a synodal pastoral paradigm of communion and participation. The dialogue proposes a pastoral paradigm established on communion, participation, and solidarity. Parishes are reimagined not merely as institutional service providers, but as communities of shared responsibility where every baptized person contributes actively to the common good. The communal ethos of *Mapalus* provides a tangible cultural

[39] Jekson Berdame and Charles A. Ray Lombogia.

[40] Santie et al., "Mapalus as a Socio-Cultural System in Minahasa Society."

[41] Justine John Dyikuk, "A Glance at Traditional Modes of Communication through the Lens of Liturgical Inculturation: Perspectives from Kanu's Igwebuike and Shikrot Traditions," *Tolle Lege: An Augustinian Journal of Philosophy and Theology* 2, no. 5 (2020): 1–20, https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21113.49762.

[42] Vivencio O Ballano, "Why is Inculturation in Catholic Theology Difficult to Operationalize?" *Missiology* 52, no. 3 (2024): 279–91.

expression of the ecclesiology of communion championed by Vatican II and reaffirmed in contemporary Catholic Social Teaching.[43] This paradigm renders pastoral ministry relational rather than purely programmatic. The Church accompanies the faithful through liturgical celebrations, shared tasks, economic solidarity, and a compassionate presence among vulnerable populations, including those suffering from ecological degradation. Such actions reflect the central message of *Dilexi Te*: authentic love is expressed through participation in the struggle of the marginalized (DT 3, 16, 87-89). By doing so, the Diocese of Manado embodies a truly synodal Church that draws from its own cultural heritage, understanding local traditions not merely as objects of preservation, but as theological partners in the ongoing inculturation of the Gospel.

CONCLUSION

The descriptive presentation, textual analysis, and synthetic study between *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te* demonstrate that local wisdom *Mapalus* embodies spiritual, moral, and practical values that align profoundly with the Catholic Church's preferential option for the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized, as articulated by Pope Leo XIV in *Dilexi Te*. *Mapalus* champions solidarity, equality, cooperation, justice, and profound respect for human dignity, values animated by love and realized through communal togetherness and concrete labor. Concurrently, *Dilexi Te* underscores that authentic love must be anchored in a liberating solidarity that takes the side of the vulnerable. United by a shared spirit of unifying solidarity, human dignity, and love made manifest through liberating action, *Mapalus* serves as an effective cultural instrument for actualizing the theological mandates of *Dilexi Te*.

Within the framework of contextual theology, the dialogue between *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te* establishes a robust model for engagement between the Church's Magisterial teaching and local culture. *Mapalus* functions simultaneously as a rich cultural heritage and as a privileged *locus* for witnessing the manifestation of divine love within the social experience of the Minahasan people. Gospel values find concrete social expression within *Mapalus,* where divine love is lived out through solidarity and cooperation for the common good. Conversely, *Dilexi Te* imparts profound spiritual depth and theological orientation to *Mapalus,* affirming that human love and solidarity constitute a genuine participation in the saving love of God, who became human, dwells among the poor, identifies with their plight (DT 90, 99), and brings redemption on the destitute, the sick, the marginalized, the victims of injustice, and those bound by sin (DT, 16-34, 111).

[43] Grégoire Catta, "Towards a Politics of Communion: Catholic Social Teaching in Dark Times," *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* 20, no. 1 (2023): 213–14.

Examining *Mapalus* alongside *Dilexi Te* reiterates that Christian love, while deeply personal dan spiritual, must inevitably translate into transformative praxis within human society, particularly on behalf of the poor.

Ultimately, this dialogue between *Mapalus* and *Dilexi Te* offers a vital inspiration for the local Church of the Diocese of Manado to continually engage with the rich cultural matrix of Minahasa. As evidenced throughout this study, such intercultural dialogue enriches the praxis of the Catholic faith, keeping it dynamic, relevant, and responsive to the daily struggles of the community. The convergence of faith and culture yields a renewed pastoral model that transcends mere sacramental administration, fostering a participatory, communitarian ecclesial life built upon mutual responsibility. This pastoral paradigm empowers the local Church of the Diocese of Manado to journey as pilgrims of hope amid contemporary challenges.

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