



## Christ's Love as The Foundation for Christian Religious Education for Children with Special Needs Based on Colossians 3:12

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### *Abstract*

Every human being is created uniquely with strengths and limitations that demonstrate God's greatness. However, children with special needs (ABK) often face discrimination and a lack of adequate educational opportunities. In this context, Christian Religious Education (PAK) plays a crucial role in instilling the value of Christ's love as the foundation for character and spiritual development in children. This study uses a qualitative approach through literature review to explore the application of Christ's love in inclusive education. Based on Colossians 3:12, which form the foundation of Christian educators' ministry: compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These values encourage teachers to create a friendly, accepting, and respectful learning environment. Teachers also act as facilitators, motivators, mediators, and advocates of inclusivity in supporting the development of children with special needs. SIR, which is based on Christ's love, affirms that every child is precious before God and has the same right to develop according to His given potential. Thus, the application of Christ's love in education is a concrete manifestation of faith that works through love and forms the basis for the creation of a just, inclusive, and compassionate learning environment.

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## INTRODUCTION

Every human being is created uniquely with characteristics in physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. This diversity shows how great and creative the Creator is in shaping life. However, the reality in society often shows that there are differences in treatment between those who are considered normal and those who have certain limitations.<sup>1</sup> Children with Special Needs (SEN) are a group that often faces stigma, prejudice, and discriminatory treatment, which causes them to be marginalized from social interactions and access to appropriate education.<sup>2</sup>

SEN is facing challenges, both internal and external. Internal challenges encompass limitations in communication, verbal or nonverbal, low self-confidence, cognitive developmental barriers, and emotions that impact children's ability to recognize and express emotions and build social interactions. Meanwhile, external challenges come from environmental, social, and educational factors, for example, the lack of public understanding about inclusive education, the lack of facilities and infrastructure in schools, and policies that are not yet completely responsive to the needs of SEN.<sup>3</sup> These obstacles not only hinder academic development but also create a sense of social alienation<sup>4</sup>

In the context of education, children with special needs often experience disparities in opportunities compared to other children. This is influenced by limited access, a lack of understanding among educators, and an education system that is not yet fully inclusive. They are often considered a burden or treated with compassion alone, not as individuals who have potential and rights equal to those of development. In fact, every child is a valuable creation of God and has a special purpose in life. This view has the potential to strengthen injustice in the world of education if not taken seriously. If this mistake is not addressed immediately, it will widen the gap of injustice in the world of education and its social development.<sup>5</sup>

This is where Christian Religious Education has an important role. CRE not only conveys knowledge of faith, but also functions to shape character, moral values, and spirituality that are

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<sup>1</sup>Sri Mulyani, Sutrisno, Tania Luciana Dewi, "Membangun Kepercayaan Diri Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus (ABK) dengan Kegiatan Lomba Menyanyi" *Jurnal Peradaban Masyarakat* vol.12, no.6 November (2022): 38–43.

<sup>2</sup>Yuel Sumarno, Hasiati Sinaga, and Indri Yulianti, "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Membina Anak Di Era Postmodern" 12, no. November (2021): 146–56.

<sup>3</sup>Nani Yanti and Rahmah Trisilvia, "Hambatan Perkembangan Emosi Dan Sosial Pada Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus," *EDU RESEARCH* 6, no. 2 (2025): 545–48, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47827/jer.v6i2.842>.

<sup>4</sup>Febina Maharani, "Stigma and Discrimination Against Children with Special Needs: 'A Literature Review of Challenges and Efforts to Overcome Them,'" *JIIIC: Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia* 2, no. 3 (2025): 5557–64.

<sup>5</sup>Diana et al..

rooted in the love of Christ. Through sincere love, CRE can be a space that accepts, supports, and empowers all children, including those with special needs. Christ's love teaches that no one should be looked down upon, for every person is a precious part of the body of Christ,' may mean all people, including non-christians.<sup>6</sup> From a Christian perspective, every child is seen as a precious creation of God and has great dignity. Christ's own love is a major example in ministry. Jesus always showed an open attitude towards people who were often marginalized by society, including children. He treated them with reverence and confirmed that they had the kingdom of God. Jesus' statement in John 13:14–15, “For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.” emphasizes that Jesus places humble service as the primary example for His followers, so that in the context of education, teachers who serve Children with Special Needs are called to emulate Christ by prioritizing an attitude of service, sensitivity to the needs of students, and a willingness to sacrifice for the growth and dignity of each child.

Colossians 3:12 emphasizes the values of compassion, mercy, humility, meekness, and patience as attitudes that should be manifested in the lives of believers.<sup>7</sup> These values are relevant in CRE practice, especially in serving crew members in inclusive education environments. However, the application of Christian values in CRE learning for SEN has not been fully implemented optimally. There are still challenges in integrating theological approaches with inclusive pedagogical practices oriented towards the needs of the crew. This condition shows the need for a more in-depth study of the role of CRE in supporting inclusive education for SEN.

Although various studies have discussed inclusive education for Children with Special Needs (SEN) as well as the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) in forming students' character and spirituality, most of these studies still focus on pedagogical, psychological approaches, or general education policy. Studies that specifically integrate Biblical theological foundations, especially Colossians 3:12, as the basis for the values and practices of Christian Religious Education in the context of inclusive education for the crew are still limited. Furthermore, there is a noticeable lack of empirical and conceptual research that positions Christ's love not only as a normative theological concept but also as a pedagogical framework shaping the attitudes, roles, and responsibilities of Christian educators in serving learners holistically.

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<sup>6</sup>Desi Sriyanti Tonis, “Peran Guru PAK Dalam Menerapkan Pembelajaran Inklusif Berbasis Kasih ” 4 (2025).

<sup>7</sup> Serepina Yoshika Hasibuan, “Penerimaan Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus Dalam Komunitas Iman,” n.d.

Based on this description, this study aims to examine the role of Christian Religious Education in supporting inclusive education for Children with Special Needs, especially in shaping attitudes of acceptance, love, and appreciation for diversity. This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of inclusive CRE learning grounded in Christian values and responsive to the needs of crew members.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative approach based on a literature review. This approach was chosen because it places more emphasis on understanding meaning and processes, rather than on numbers or statistical data. The main goal is to explore how the love of Christ can be the basis for forming the character and spirituality of children who need special attention in the context of Christian Religious Education.<sup>8</sup> Data collection is carried out through various library sources, such as journals, books, proceedings, and academic articles. The data obtained is then analyzed descriptively, namely by reviewing, comparing, and recasting important ideas relating to the development of children's faith and character, as well as the role of the family, school, and church in supporting them. In this way, research is expected to provide a clear picture of the application of Christ's love in CRE, which is inclusive and in accordance with God's word.<sup>9</sup>

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Theological Foundations: Colossians 3:12**

Paul explains the church as a group chosen by God, who has been sanctified and loved by Him. In this way, it emphasizes that the identity of Christ's followers is based on God's love and grace, not on personal efforts or achievements. A person who has been purified, every follower of Christ is called to live by reflecting the attributes of Christ. In the context of Christian Religious Education, it forms an important basis for teachers and pupils to adopt new values that describe God's love, including compassion, generosity, humility, meekness, and patience.<sup>10</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>8</sup>Novela Veni Indriani, "Model Pembelajaran Kelompok Anak Berbasis Spiritual Thinking : Kajian Terhadap Perkembangan Spiritual Peserta Didik Di Sekolah Dasar" 2, no. 22 (2025): 62–71.

<sup>9</sup> Aprilia Maharani and Eka Muliati, "Tinjauan Pustaka : Pengaruh Model Pembelajaran Inquiri Terhadap Peningkatan Sikap Ilmiah Dalam Pembelajaran Sains ( 2020-2025 )" 03, no. 2 (2025): 49–53.

<sup>10</sup>David Ming, "Paulus Sang Pendidik," *Jurnal Kadasi* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1–22, <https://doi.org/10.54765/ejurnalkadasi.v4i1.11>.

Christian Religious Education not only acts as a means to teach knowledge of faith, but also as a character development process that fosters Christ's love in relationships with other people, including children with special needs. In line with this, Paul in Colossians 3:12 emphasizes the importance of the five essential characters that every believer must possess as a real manifestation of faith as they live daily. Here are:

First, the term mercy in Greek, expressed as *σπλάγχνα οίκτιρμοῦ* (*splanchna oiktirmou*), describes feelings that originate from the deepest soul, not just temporary sympathy. In the context of Christian Religious Education, this illustrates that a teacher is expected to teach wholeheartedly to all students, especially children with special needs. Compassion is not limited to pity, but is also manifested through attention, assistance, and patience during the educational process. For Christian Religious Education teachers, this means showing the love of Christ in concrete action to each student, regardless of them, especially to those with special needs, so that they can feel acceptance and appreciation. With this kind of treatment, students will realize that they have great value before God.<sup>11</sup>

This attitude of compassion is also seen in Jesus. In Matthew 9:36, it is stated, "When Jesus saw the crowd, His heart was filled with mercy because they were weary and directionless, like sheep without a shepherd." Likewise, in Luke 7:13, Jesus shows compassion for a woman who mourns the loss of her child. These two verses underline that true compassion arises from a heart that is driven to be present, accompanying, and giving hope. Therefore, it is crucial for Christian educators who serve children with special needs to delve deeper into the true purpose of their ministry. As teachers, it is hoped to honor, empower, and support students, as Jesus points out in these verses.<sup>12</sup>

Second, the term mercy in Greek is referred to as *χρηστότης* (*chrēstotēs*), which describes the gentle and kind nature given without expecting rewards. In the context of Christian Religious Education, this teaches the importance of paying real attention, so that children, especially crew members, feel appreciated and accepted. This attitude of love and mercy is in line with Jesus' example, as in Matthew 19:14, when His disciples scolded those who brought children to Him, but Jesus emphasized that they were the ones who had the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus' actions are clear

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<sup>11</sup>Desi Sriyanti Tonis, "Peran Guru PAK Dalam Menerapkan Pembelajaran Inklusif Berbasis Kasih."

<sup>12</sup>Yusak Tanasyah, *Pendidikan Agama Kristen Untuk Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus* (Kota Tangerang: Moriah Press, 2022), 35

evidence of concern for children, as well as reminding people to imitate Him in service, so that every child, especially crew members, realizes that they are valuable in God's eyes.<sup>13</sup> Christ's love for children is reflected in the appreciation and respect they receive. Teachers are therefore expected to have the sensitivity to create a warm learning environment, where every child, including those with special needs, is valued as a valuable individual before God.

Third, humility in Greek, known as ταπεινοφροσύνη (*Tapeinophrosune*), which comes from the word ταπεινός (*tapeinos*), describes an understanding of one's limitations and an appreciation for others as God's precious creation. By adopting a humble attitude, everyone can create harmonious interactions and, at the same time, reflect Christ's attitude in dealing with others.<sup>14</sup> Jesus Christ is a prime example of humility (Phil. 2:1). In the text of Christian Religious Education, a humble attitude is an important element<sup>15</sup> when interacting with children, especially those who have special needs. A humble teacher tends to ignore the limitations or weaknesses that exist in children with special needs, because he understands that each individual has uniqueness and is valuable in the eyes of God. Thus, the teacher does not feel superior to his students, but is willing to learn together, accompany, and appreciate existing weaknesses.<sup>16</sup>

Fourth, Meekness in Greek is known as πραγτης (*prautēs*), which is often understood as a gentleness of heart or a humble attitude. This word comes from πραγς (*praus*), which describes a gentle attitude. In this view, gentleness does not mean weakness or lack of courage, but rather controlled strength. It is a great soul form that is not easily influenced by emotions, but is able to face conflict with calm, compassion, and peace. In the educational context, gentleness is an important trait for a teacher because it can create a safe and supportive environment for children with special needs.<sup>17</sup> In the educational context, gentleness is an important trait for a teacher because it can create a safe and supportive environment for children with special needs.

Fifth, etymologically, the term patience is derived from Greek and is composed of two elements, namely μάκρος (*makros*), meaning long or broad, and θυμός (*thymos*), which refers to

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<sup>13</sup> Sumarno, Sinaga, and Yulianti, "Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dalam Membina Anak Di Era Postmodern."

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ministryvoice.com/id/tapeinophrosune-in-greek/>

<sup>15</sup> Sri Mulyani et al., "The Effect of Restoring Your Heart ( RYH ) Ministry , Finding Roots of Bitterness , and Emotional Management , on Heart Healing : A Quantitative Study in Indonesia," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104, no. 3 (2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.104.323>.

<sup>16</sup> Ronal G. Sirait, *Digital Karakter Perspektif Agama Dan Pendidikan* (Malang: cv. Muldmedia Edukasi, 2022). 13

<sup>17</sup> Richard I. Arends, *Learning To Teach, 10th Ed.* (New York: Mcgraw-Hill, 2014). 57

spirit, inner drive, emotion, or anger. The combination of these two elements literally conveys the meaning of inner endurance or the capacity to restrain emotional impulses so as not to be easily provoked by anger. In the context of the New Testament, *macrothumia* refers to endurance, patience, prolonged persistence, or strong endurance.<sup>18</sup> In the context of Christian religious education, patience is a very crucial aspect, especially when dealing with children who have special needs. Their learning process often requires a longer time, different approaches, and regular repetition. Therefore, a Christian Religious Education teacher who has *macrothumia* is not only able to control emotions when facing the challenges that exist in students, but also shows concern in accompanying them with love and hope. Without patience, a teacher may experience despair or feel frustrated, even though children with special needs need extra space, time, and attention to grow and develop.<sup>19</sup>

### **Christ's Love as the Basis of Christian Religious Education**

This is in line with the teachings of love given by Jesus Christ, which is an important basis in Christian Religious Education, as will be explained in the next section. Christian Religious Education focuses on creating a learning environment that is open to all children, especially children with special needs, as well as instilling the values of love from Christ.<sup>20</sup> With this approach, all students get the opportunity to grow according to their potential regardless of background or existing boundaries. This concept is not just an idea, but also a real guide in creating a learning environment that values diversity.<sup>21</sup> In the context of inclusive education based on the love of Christ, more attention should be paid to children with special needs. These children are individuals who have special limitations or characteristics that include physical, mental-cognitive,

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<sup>18</sup> Medi L Sihombing, R.R.R. Angger Permadi, and Tiara Greey Yani, "Mengembangkan Karakter Kristus Berdasarkan Kolose 3: 12-17 Dalam Kehidupan Orang Kristen Pada Masa Kini," *Excelsis Deo: Jurnal Teologi, Misiologi, Dan Pendidikan* 7, no. 2 (2023): 12–17, <https://doi.org/10.51730/ed.v7i2.142>.

<sup>19</sup> Yunita Sumakul et al., "Strategi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Kristen Pada Anak ADHD Di Sekolah Luar Biasa A-Bartemeus," *Journal of Psychology Humanlight* 5, no. 2 (2024): 68–78.

<sup>20</sup> Hendrik Legi M, Th., *Kingdom Mindse, Manajemen Pendidikan Kristen Berbasis Nilai-Nilai Kerjaan Allah*. (Jakarta: IKAPI, 2025). 46

<sup>21</sup> Jannes Eduard Sirait, "Spiritualitas Inkarnatif Sebagai Fondasi Pendidikan Kristiani Yang Inklusif," *Kurios* 9, no. 1 (2023): 331–41, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v9i1.145>.

social, or emotional aspects, which have a major impact on their development when compared to normal people.<sup>22</sup>

According to Mega, children with special needs usually display several distinctive characteristics, including difficulty in communication, psychological obstacles when studying, physical differences when compared to other children, difficulty in understanding appropriate behavior, stronger emotional expression, and problems in reading and writing due to a lack of reading habits.<sup>23</sup>

This condition shows that inclusive education must be based on Christian values such as love, understanding, and collaboration. Love, which is the essence of Christ's teachings, leads us to respecting each person as a precious creature created by God. In 1 John 4:19, it is written, "We love because God first loved us." Applying these principles in inclusive education means building an atmosphere where all students, including those with special needs, feel acceptance and appreciation. In the educational context, a form of love can be seen through daily relationships between teachers and students.<sup>24</sup>

The principle of love taught by Christ emphasizes how important it is to support each other and appreciate differences, so that an inclusive and rewarding atmosphere can be formed. A community centered on love ensures that every student, whether they have special needs or not, gets equal opportunities to grow and develop. Christian Religious Education emphasizes that everyone has high values as God's creation, all individuals therefore have the right to reach their best potential in a supportive and loving environment.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Yohana Penina Zefanya Ribka et al., "Peran Pendidik Kristen Dalam Pendidikan Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)," *Indonesia Journal of Religious* 4, no. 2 (2021): 23–32, <https://doi.org/10.46362/ijr.v4i2.3>.

<sup>23</sup> Mega Mega and Yonatan Alex Arifianto, "Strategi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Kristen Pada Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus Di Sekolah Dasar Inklusi," *THEOLOGIA INSANI (Jurnal Theologia, Pendidikan, Dan Misiologia Integratif)* 1, no. 2 (2022): 163–80, <https://doi.org/10.58700/theologiainsani.v1i2.16>

<sup>24</sup> Dwi Rizka Agustina, Retna Tri Hastuti, and Deni Candra Saputra, "Pendidikan Inklusif Dalam Perspektif Teologi Kristen: Peluang Dan Tantangan," *Sabar: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen Dan Katolik* 1, no. 2 (2024): 27–33.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Pesah Purwonugroho, "Model Pendidikan Kristen Berbasis Kasih Allah Dalam Meningkatkan Kesadaran Pertobatan," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 7, no. 1 (2025).

### **Teacher's Role in Educating Children with Special Needs**

Teachers not only function as conveyors of information, but also as important figures in creating an inclusive learning atmosphere that reflects the love of Christ, especially in the context of education for Children with Special Needs (SEN). The following covers five important aspects:

#### **Inclusive Learning Facilitator**

Teachers are responsible for creating a warm and inclusive classroom atmosphere so that all students, including those with special needs, feel accepted and can fully access learning. To achieve this goal, teachers must adapt differentiation strategies through materials, methods, and approaches that suit each individual's needs, such as for children with ADHD, dyslexia, or those who need more time in learning. In addition, creating a learning environment that supports inclusive education is an important element in developing positive learning experiences for all children. The success of inclusive education is greatly influenced by the penetration of physical space, as well as the social interaction within it, which guarantees every student a sense of comfort, appreciation, and fair learning opportunities.<sup>26</sup>

#### **Communicator and Relationship Builder**

Interaction between children and children with special needs must be created through empathetic, clear, and responsive communication methods. In this case, the role of teachers is very singular, not only in conveying material in language that is easy to understand, but also through nonverbal support that can strengthen understanding. This responsibility goes beyond mere transfers knowledge, because teachers also build strong emotional relationships that can motivate students, especially children with special needs.<sup>27</sup>

Based on the view of social constructivism, children with special needs can learn more effectively if they get support from the people around them in the nearest developmental zone. One solution to overcome cognitive limitations in receiving stimulation is to use interactive multimedia, such as cartoons, to introduce Christian religious values. This approach, aims to create

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<sup>26</sup> Enik Susilowati et al., "Desain Lingkungan Belajar Yang Mendukung Pendidikan Inklusif Di Pendidikan Anak Usia Dini" 6, no. 2 (2025): 126–35.Susilowati et al.

<sup>27</sup> Sari Mustika, "Peran Guru Kelas Dalam Pelaksanaan Bimbingan Dan Konseling Dalam Pembentukan Karakter Pada Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus," *MODELING: Jurnal Program Studi PGMI* 10, no. 3 (2023): 481–92.Mustika.

innovations in learning relevant to the development of the digital age, focusing on the development of cartoon material that combines sound and sign language as two ways of learning in each scene.<sup>28</sup>

### **Motivators and Character Formers of Discipline**

Children with special needs often encounter obstacles related to motivation and discipline. In this case, educators have a crucial role as motivators who not only direct but also offer constructive and consistent emotional support. This task is very influential so that children feel cared for, empowered, and motivated to continue trying even though they face various challenges. This effort is implemented through habits in daily activities, such as sitting well, preparing books and stationery, and wearing or opening shoes in the right way. This simple exercise is a concrete step to help students develop disciplinary character.<sup>29</sup> Christian Religious Education teachers can act as motivators and form disciplinary characters for Children with Special Needs (SEN). Via a real example of love, teachers can strengthen the faith of crew members, foster a spirit of learning, and guide them to develop discipline, perseverance, and responsibility according to the abilities and needs of each child.<sup>30</sup>

### **Effective Mediators and Liaisons**

Teachers serve as a link between educational institutions, students, and parents. They inform parents of their child's development and needs, while ensuring that customized material is well-received by students who require special attention. In this way, collaboration is established between the learning process at school and support at home. Education will be more successful if there is strong cooperation between all parties, which is implemented through guidelines to build effective communication and form mutually supportive relationships between teachers and parents.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Desak Putu Saridewi, *Materi Esensial Anak Berkebutuhan Khusus* (Jakarta Tengah: CV. Seketa Media, 2025). 6

<sup>29</sup> Ella Salsabila and Ahmad Syarqawi, "Peran Guru BK Dalam Meningkatkan Kedisiplinan ABK Di SLBN Autis Sumatera Utara," *G-Couns: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling* 9, no. 2 (2024): 752–67, <https://doi.org/10.31316/g-couns.v9i2.6986>.

<sup>30</sup> Nelci Oktavianti, Sutrisno Sutrisno, and Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, "Kolaborasi Sistem Among Dengan Kompetensi Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen," *SIKIP: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 3, no. 2 (2022): 75–76, <https://doi.org/10.52220/sikip.v3i2.147>.

<sup>31</sup> Dr. Sabar Budi Raharjo, *Pendidikan Inklusif: Panduan Praktis Untuk Guru Dan Orang Tua - Jejak Pustaka* (Yogyakarta: Jejak Pustaka, 2025). 7

### **Advocate for Inclusivity and Collaborative Partnership**

Teachers have a responsibility to fight for the needs and rights of children with special needs, including access to a variety of resources, facilities, and equitable support. They also serve as facilitators in collaboration between teachers, parents, and educational institutions in designing individualized educational plans, as well as increasing public understanding of diversity among students.<sup>32</sup> It is therefore hoped that the implementation of education in support of children will be a solution to ensure that every individual has the right to a proper education. In this way, compulsory education can be applied more effectively and is an important step towards the creation of a just and equal society in the educational environment.<sup>33</sup>

### **CONCLUSION**

The love of Christ is the main foundation in Christian Religious Education to serve Children with Special Needs in an inclusive and dignified manner. Based on Colossians 3:12, the values of compassion, mercy, humility, gentleness, and patience are important guidelines for PAK teachers in shaping the character and spirituality of ABK. Teachers not only act as transmitters of knowledge of faith, but also as spiritual role models, motivators, and disciplinary character formers who accompany crew members according to their needs and potential. Thus, a PAK based on the love of Christ is not just a pedagogical approach, but a concrete manifestation of faith that works through love and provides a just, inclusive, and humane education for every child.

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<sup>32</sup>Sulaiman, *Buku Ajar Pendidikan Inklusi* (Kota Jambi: Aggota IKAPI, 2024). 60

<sup>33</sup> Randy Fadillah Gustaman, Agus Gandi, and Nani Ratnaningsih, "Implementasi Pendidikan Inklusif Dalam Mewujudkan Sekolah Ramah Anak," *Jurnal Education and Development* 13, no. 1 (2025): 660–66.

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