

Sharing Forty Years Experience with Catholics Migrating to Taipei

Alan Doyle, MM

Introduction — An Important Apostolate

Friendship House started as a Center in Taipei for Catholics who moved to the Taipei area from Central and Southern Taiwan in search of employment. As it's Director for almost forty years I have been asked to my share experiences in migrant Catholic work at a "Seminar on Urbanization and Urban Pastoral Care" sponsored by the Faith Institute for Cultural Studies" in September, 2013 in Shijiazhuang, Hebei, China.

The introductory literature for the seminar speaks of: "waves of internal migration in China: from rural to urban areas, and from small cities to big cities;" of urban churches being "out of tune with this migrant working class"; of rural churches losing membership, especially of the young, as a result of migration; and of young workers in the city "not feeling comfortable to be kneeling in church along with the city people, afraid of being rejected."

These descriptions are identical to the situation in Taiwan, forty to fifty years ago. During that period of industrialization and urbanization, Northern Taiwan attracted a large number of migrants from Central and Southern Taiwan. Most of them were factory and service sector workers. Most were grammar or junior middle school graduates and most felt more comfortable speaking Taiwanese or Hakka than Mandarin. In contrast, Catholics were the most educated religious group in Taiwan, ahead of "Protestants, Buddhists, Others, and Folk Religionists" [*The Value System of Taiwan*, W. Grichting, 1970, p. 54], with Taipei Catholics being probably the best educated among Taiwan's Catholics and the Taipei church speaking almost exclusively Mandarin.

It was in this context that Taipei Archbishop Stanislaus Lokong (Luo Guang) asked Maryknoll to send Taiwanese and Hakka speaking personnel to Taipei to address this problem. He was prophetic in recognizing that such work is an essential pastoral and missionary task. He saw clearly that efforts to incorporate migrant Catholics into the existing urban church were extremely necessary for the sake of the migrants' faith, as well for the health of the church in the city in question. The successful integration of migrants today will result in a larger and more vibrant urban church tomorrow.

The approach this presentation takes is to simply describe the steps we took to deal with the pastoral problem assigned to us. Hopefully it can become something of a Do-It-Yourself manual for those who choose to follow this approach. For those who choose a different approach certain aspects of our experience may be helpful. In any event I hope the reader will take this simply as a sharing of an experience which seemed to fit the circumstances we encountered forty or so years ago in Taiwan. This approach might have to be adapted to the digital age, but one constant factor, true forty years ago and true today, is that people of any age group respond favorably to a personal and friendly approach.

A Center

The method Maryknoll chose to carry out this work was to open a Center for migrant Catholics. We called the Center Friendship House.

Our Center was located in the transportation hub of Taipei City. However, the location of a Center may be an established church compound or a location not connected with a church facility. Our Center served both married and single migrants, having two sections, one serving singles and the other serving families. However, almost all of the activities held in the Center itself were for singles. There may be more than one Center in a city, depending on the size of the city, where the migrants are located in that city, the number of migrants, and the availability of staff to run the center(s). If the Center is part of an existing church compound, the center's physical structure and activity/mass schedule should be

such that, at least in the beginning, the parishioners of the parish are separate from the migrants. This is because, for many young and less sophisticated migrants the otherwise well-intentioned church community may be an obstacle preventing the migrants from attending their church.

The Center should have an open, light, and warm atmosphere. This will be projected in the design [attractive to young people], background music [similar to music in department stores] played when the young people are there, and a staff that knows how to make them feel welcome. It should also be programmed to be open until 10:00 pm seven days a week and all day on Sundays and holidays, with a staff member present there to welcome migrant workers who may stop in. For many, the Center will become a home away from home.

Staff

At the beginning we recruited a staff of two priests and an experienced catechist for the Family Section, and two lay people in their early twenties for the Youth [singles] Section.

Data Base

The first step

The staff started by giving several months time to creating a database. Essential to setting up the data base was for the Center staff to establish good and on-going relationships with the staffs of the countryside parishes. Staff members personally visited about 130 such parishes. From our experience at that time we suggest the following steps:

1. Personally visit all the country pastors and parish staffs to collect the names, phone numbers and e-mail and urban addresses of the migrant workers. The name lists should include the names of those who moved to the city years ago, as well as those who migrated there recently.
2. Leave fliers and posters with the country pastors that advertise the Center, as well as forms for him to gradually

- collect the migrant's city address, phone number, email address, and Face Book information to send to the Friendship House Center.
3. Send a letter to the pastors every six months for a few years reminding them to keep sending the names of those who recently moved to the city. It may be advisable to make a second round of visits to the country-side pastors two years after the first visit.
 4. Before every Chinese New Year vacation, choose and train a few migrants from each countryside parish who attend the Center to advertise the Center among other migrants when back in the village on their New Year's vacation and bring back the names and addresses of those who are not yet registered.

Getting the full registration on the 008 Form

You now have a certain number of names with limited information about them. The next step is to complete the data collection for each migrant. That means filling out the Center registration form for each person. To do this, the Center staff should contact the person, and not wait for the migrant worker to contact the Center because he/she may never do so.

Before contacting migrant worker, make sure you have your logo and information about the Center in place. That means an attractive brochure introducing your Center, an activity schedule, website, and Face Book address. To save time, use the phone to make contact and to fill out the 008 form. For others, a personal visit by a staff member [described below] will be required.

Initial contact with the migrants in the city

The guiding principle involved in the initial and subsequent contacts is summed up in the word "friendly". The migrants are people away from home, family, and friends, and they will respond well if they are made to feel at home, relaxed, and accepted, as if they were in their own homes. Accordingly, in making the initial contact the staff should project a warm and welcoming face. The following steps should be taken:

1. Prepare 008 forms [for those who have not yet filled it out] and a brochure describing the Center that highlights the Mass schedule
2. Plan visits by the staff members to all the migrants in their places of work or in their residence after work. This part of the process may take a few months depending on the number of people to be visited.
3. The purpose of the visits is to:
 - a. establish a personal relationship with the migrant so the Center and its activities are not an abstraction for him/her.
 - b. determine if the migrant is connected with the urban church.
 - c. for those not connected with the church, probably the vast majority, the purpose of the visit is to attract them to come to the Center.

Contacting the Migrants Already Registered – Gatherings in the City for People from the Same Hometown

At this point, having phoned or visited most of the migrants whose names have already been collected, the Center should start a series of gatherings for all the migrant workers in the city from the same country parish, with their country pastor and parish staff in attendance. The attraction for the city migrants is the chance to see other migrants from their hometown now living in the city, as well as their home parish staff. The gathering should be a large social event that should include a prayer service, not necessarily Mass, led by the hometown pastor. There should be as many such gatherings as there are countryside parishes with migrants in the city. The staff and Center volunteers must be especially vigilant each migrant, not yet registered in the database, fill out a 008 registration form. Two lasting results are:

1. The data base will be vastly enlarged because the countryside parish staff will have brought new names they had not sent in earlier, and because some migrants already on the database will bring relatives or friends from home who are now in the city, but not yet registered at the Center.

2. The migrants will have gotten to know the Center and Center staff, and the Center staff will have gotten to know them. This initial gathering will help bring the migrants back to the Center for weekend Mass and other activities.

The staff should maintain contact with those migrant workers, who are not yet connected with the city church, and who did not come to the Center shortly after the initial visit. This can be done by a phone call every couple of weeks, a weekly email, or by Face Book, with the hope that they will start coming sometime in the future.

Those who do come to the Center as a result of the initial visits to them and the gathering of hometown friends should receive the same above mentioned warm and welcoming atmosphere when they do come.

Some of those discovered on the first visit and during the gathering of hometown friends, who are already connected with an urban church [#3, above] should be encouraged to come to the Center to help the staff on a volunteer basis. By being already connected with an urban church, they have shown an above average fervor and maturity from which the work of the Center can benefit.

The staff should be aware that many of those migrants who have been in the city for a long period of time have already fostered friendships with non-Catholic migrants, mostly among their fellow workers. Accordingly, while encouraging the Catholic migrant to come to the Center, it may be helpful to suggest he/she bring a non-Catholic friend or two with them. Doing so will have the following benefits:

1. The Catholic migrant will most likely feel more comfortable to come for the first time to a strange place like the Center because he has a friend with him.
2. The non-Catholic, also a stranger in the city, will be introduced to an urban community of peers, thus providing a home away from home.
3. The non-Catholic friend may eventually be attracted to the faith.

Follow-up Steps for Singles (17 to 40 Years Old) and the Development of a Youth Center

After attending weekend Masses at the Center for a few weeks, our Center started a complete program of on-going activity with a certain number of young people. This is divided into the following eight kinds of activities:

1. The essential activity on the schedule is the Saturday and Sunday night youth Mass. The Center is a special parish, without boundaries, for migrant single persons. Since it is difficult to get most of them to attend the established parishes, the Center should make it possible for them to fulfill their Sunday Mass obligation easily. The Masses are scheduled at night because most singles work during the day. THE LITURGY SHOULD BE PLANNED WELL SO AS TO APPEAL TO YOUNG PEOPLE.
2. On-going evening activities that appeal to the interests of the youth. In our first years these included classes in guitar, flower arranging, Taiwanese folk songs, public speaking [Carnegie], cooking, etc. Such courses are run to attract the migrant Catholic youth to come to the Center, but they will also attract a certain number of non-Christians. A fee is charged for participation in the courses, primarily to pay the instructors' salaries, but also to make some income for the Center.
3. The third kind of activity is run for and by the Catholic migrants who have been coming regularly for weekend Mass. These activities are activities after the Saturday and Sunday evening Masses for those who attend those Masses. They are also held on Sundays, usually as all day outings to orphanages or senior citizens homes. The aim of such activities is to build community among the Catholic singles as well as to attract other migrant singles, who might not come to Mass.
4. The fourth kind of activity for the migrant Catholic youth is training in Christian Leadership. This is aimed at giving those

now coming to Mass at the Center a sense of responsibility for the mission of the Center, which is outreach to the migrant Catholic worker. The course also provides practice in leadership skills. A secondary aim of this training, besides the actual service those who receive the training give to the Center, is to give them a sense of mission to take responsibility for the development of the local urban church, or the parish in which they live after they get married and settle down. Many of our “graduates,” once married and settled down in a parish, have served on parish councils, in the Legion of Mary, and in other pious societies. In fact, we are proud to proclaim that some have even served as presidents of their parish councils.

The themes of the Christian Leadership course are:

- a. SINCE YOU ARE THE CHURCH ITS GROWTH OR DECLINE IS IN YOUR HANDS.
- b. Lead by serving, not by giving orders nor by being served.
- c. Anticipate the needs of the members of the group and spontaneously move to satisfy those needs without having to be asked.
- d. Work as a leadership team, not as individuals.
- e. Ensure an atmosphere of openness that welcomes the newcomer—the church door must always be open.
- f. Always remember that the church is a community, and not a group with factions.

The course relies heavily on the New Testament and thereby serves as a good introduction to the Bible for the young migrants, who are not familiar with the scriptures. The whole course takes about eight hours.

After the course a certain number of participants are recruited to become one of the cadres in the Center. The cadres, led by a youth staff member, are primarily responsible for running the activities after the Saturday and Sunday evening Masses and the Sunday outings. They are the Youth Staff’s right hand and are

chiefly responsible for creating a welcoming atmosphere around the Center.

5. The fifth kind of activity has to do with Scripture and doctrinal courses. Many of the young migrant workers have had no doctrinal formation since finishing grade school. They are now in their late teens or older. Accordingly, up-dating courses, Bible study groups, speeches of a doctrinal nature and Advent/Lenten retreats should be organized. One of the on-going programs in our Center is called THEOLOGY ON TAP, for which a DVD and a DIY brochure was enclosed for the Shijiazhuang conference.
6. The sixth kind of course is on getting to know oneself and improving one's human relationships. The Meyer-Briggs Inventory and the Ennigram course are examples of this. Helping young migrants to reach a fuller human development is a valuable service to them.
7. The seventh type of course is Pre-Cana conference. This is to prepare young couples for marriage. During their time connected with the Center many young couples will be getting married, quite a few to non-Christians. Whether the marriages are Catholic or mixed, proper preparation is essential. Hopefully the Center can introduce its couples to the diocesan Pre-Cana program. In addition to facilitating the marriage preparation, many couples will need the help of the Center in preparing their marriage ceremony itself. That might take the form of a wedding in the Center itself or of the Center helping the couple find a church in the city where the wedding can take place.
8. THE FINAL TYPE OF ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH IS THE CATECHUMENATE. IN A CENTER SUCH AS OURS. IT IS NATURAL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO BRING NON-CHRISTIAN FRIENDS TO THEIR ACTIVITIES. A CERTAIN NUMBER OF THOSE NON-CHRISTIANS, ESPECIALLY IF THEY TOO ARE AWAY FROM HOME, WILL BECOME INTERESTED IN CHRISTIANITY AND ASK TO STUDY THE DOCTRINE. ACCORDINGLY, WE

HAVE ALWAYS HAD CATECHUMENATES OF EITHER SMALL OR LARGE GROUPS, USUALLY ONE EVENING A WEEK FOR EIGHT OR NINE MONTHS BEFORE BAPTISM.

Other tasks of the youth section staff

1. Much of the Youth Staff's time is spent using telephone and social media to communicate with the singles on the database. The phone calls are for the purpose of making pastoral visitations and recruiting people for the Center's youth activities.
2. To deepen our knowledge of the singles' life and faith an in depth phone interview is conducted with them to determine such things as the importance they attach to their faith, their level of actual practice of it, their hopes and plans for the future, e.g., further studies, marriage or religious life, their use of leisure time, etc. This, of course, is in addition to the information already gathered on the youth 008 form. All of the information is recorded on the computer so that the youth staff can refer to it prior to future contact with that person.
3. Catholic single persons under the age of forty are rightfully concerned about finding the right marriage partner. Many hope to find a Catholic spouse, but religion is not their only, or even top, criterion when looking for a marriage partner. However, finding a Catholic spouse is sometimes one of the motivations young migrant workers have for attending the Center's activities. There are few places in a largely non-Christian society to meet other Catholic singles.

The Church's view is that for the sake of the faith of the individual, as well as for the development of the parish in which they live, Catholics marrying Catholics is a pastoral/missionary priority. Some parishes in Taipei have at least fifteen married couples who met their Catholic spouses at our Center. This shows how successful migrant singles work can benefit the development of the parishes.

Accordingly, an essential part of the youth staff's work is to do all they can to facilitate Catholic marriages. Most often these come about naturally with single workers meeting their partners during an activity, or by serving as members of a center committee. Often staff members, considering that two people might be compatible, arrange for them to be together in some small project or activity, without telling them their ulterior motive. At other times the staff makes introductions, both formal and informal. Whatever the method, attention to this aspect of the migrant work should be taken seriously.

4. Our youth workers are constantly on the lookout for any kind of needs these young people, only recently arrived in the city from the countryside, might have. Over thirty years ago most of our youth were working in the industrial or service sectors of society. Their working hours were from EARLY MORNING until 9:00 PM, with very little time off. Often it was necessary for our youth staff to give the young workers advice on how to dress, how to prepare for a job interview, encourage them to continue their studies, either in night school or by taking academic equivalency exams, so that they could get a graduation certificate. If a worker suffered an industrial accident, our youth workers would often accompany him or her to seek proper medical care and to obtain worker's compensation from the employer. They also expressed concern for the young person's peace of mind.

Married Migrants and Integration into the Urban Church

Our database includes information on both single persons and married people. What we have written so far about integrating those contained in the database into the urban church has been said in reference to singles, not married people. Singles are more free to move around, and they change jobs more frequently. Our data showed us that they changed jobs or residences about once every six months. Therefore, it was better that for the time being our Center should become their temporary parish (this is another reason the Center should be located near a transportation hub).

Family people, on the other hand, had settled down and would likely stay in the same place and job for years to come. This is especially true for those who own their own house. However, being married with children means that these migrants are not free to attend a Center that is not in their neighborhood. Nor is the Center equipped to give all the services a parish can give, such as children's catechism classes. Accordingly, our approach to getting married people integrated into the urban church was different from that followed for singles. The steps we took were as follows:

1. Follow all the steps setting up the database listed above.
2. Make a different 008 form for families, which will include information on the wife and children.
3. Include families in the city gatherings of people from the same hometown.
4. Separate the family database according to which urban parish they live in [while retaining the record of their parish of origin].
5. The Center's Family Section workers should visit each family in their homes and determine if they are connected with their local parish or not. [Again, follow the personal approach.]
6. After these home visitations prepare a complete list of migrants, no matter where they came from, for each parish and personally deliver the list to the pastor and parish staff, introducing each family individually. During this visit try to ascertain whether each parish will welcome the migrants, and how effective it will be in attracting and keeping the migrants.
7. Encourage the pastor to hold a "getting to know you" gathering at the church of all the migrants, no matter where in the countryside they came from. The parish staff should be present, as well as, a select group of parishioners, and the Center's Family Section staff. This will be a largely social gathering, with a few minutes of prayer led by the pastor.
8. After the gathering, the parish and Center staffs should make plans for an immediate follow up, aimed at getting the migrants involved in the parish.
9. After the initial involvement with the parish described above, establish the on-going policy of notifying the parish of any

newly arrived migrant married couples, well as of those migrant singles who marry and are now living in that parish.

10. Throughout the years the Family staff kept in contact with the migrant families in Taipei. An "Integration into the Taipei Parish" scale was established assigning a number from 0 to 5 to each family, which signified their level of integration. Over the years two studies were done of the families registered, one in 1998, which discovered about a third of the 1269 migrant families were fully integrated and fervent, another third were integrated but not fully fervent, and the final third were neither integrated nor fervent. Copies of both studies can be given upon request. ANOTHER COMPARED THE RATE OF FERVOR OF FAMILIES IN WHICH BOTH SPOUSES WERE CATHOLIC TO THAT OF FAMILIES WITH ONE SPOUSE CATHOLIC AND THE OTHER NON-CATHOLIC. THE FAMILIES WITH BOTH SPOUSES CATHOLIC PROVED TO BE FAR MORE FERVENT THAN THE OTHERS.

Structure

In carrying out this work the ideal is that the ordinaries of all dioceses concerned give complete support to the project. It is they who can best motivate both the pastors of the country parishes and the city parishes to cooperate with the Center staff. In our experience some country pastors clearly recognized the signs of the times and the pastoral needs. They saw clearly that the young people had departed from their parishes for the big cities, leaving only the elderly attending Mass. They also recognized that these same young people were not joining the urban church. These pastors were delighted to provide us with name lists and to travel to the city to conduct the gatherings of Catholics from the same hometown. Other country pastors, confronted with the same phenomena, were not motivated to collect names and send them to us. In such cases we were forced to recruit the few migrants we knew from those parishes to collect names from the home parish and send them to us.

The same picture of mixed cooperation appeared among urban pastors. Some were delighted that we gave them the addresses of migrant Catholics in their parishes and **they** mobilized parishioners to welcome them. Other pastors told us simply to give the migrants the church address, and tell them to come to Mass. Given sociological factors, such an approach would result in only the most mature and fervent migrants seeking out their urban parish.

If the ordinaries give strong backing to the project more pastors will cooperate.

Finances

ANOTHER AREA REQUIRING THE ORDINARIES' COOPERATION IS THAT OF FINANCES.

Starting a Center such as Friendship House requires an immediate outlay of a considerable amount of money. Where will it come from? In our case the project was started by Archbishop Stanislaus Lokuang, who invited Maryknoll to supervise it. In accepting, Maryknoll supplied the funds necessary to secure a facility and to hire the necessary lay personnel to staff it.

Ideally, the ordinaries of the dioceses involved should get together to find the necessary finances to support the project properly. In our case the Archdiocese gave token financial help at first to show that the project was an Archdiocesan project, rather than one belonging to a missionary society. Later the Archdiocese began to contribute considerably more funds. Backing such a project financially is a good investment for the urban church. City parishes will reap financial benefits in the future from having these migrant workers become part of the urban church. People who do not go to Mass do not contribute to the Sunday collection. It is as simple as that. If the migrants become active parishioners, they will contribute financially to the urban parish, and it will benefit accordingly.

The same principle that the people will give financial support if they see real service being given applies to the future expenses of the Center. In our second year of operation we began a system of pledges to make an annual contribution to the Center. The majority of donors were the migrants themselves who were grateful for the

services they had received from the Center. Migrant families living in the parishes were the first contributors. Fifty volunteers in all the sections of the city had a list of fifteen migrant FAMILIES to visit and collect their contributions. Later the people on our list of 1,000 singles began to contribute. After forty years contributions from this system, as well collections at the youth masses, stole fees, and course revenues, account for 80% of our finances. The remainder comes from the Archdiocese and Maryknoll.

Catholic Singles Center

The number of migrants from the countryside has decreased sharply in recent years.. Society has changed. While there is still a need to actively welcome migrants, This is an important but less obvious part of our work There are only about 400 migrants out of 1,000 names on our youth list of 20 to 40 year old single persons. The Center's main work now is with Catholic singles between twenty and forty years old, regardless of where they grew up. Being a Center for Catholic singles was a natural outcome of our above mentioned division between singles and families.

The experience working with migrant singles made it obvious that a Center for Catholic singles, such as ours, is a pastoral need for urban singles as well, including the now grown children of the former migrants. All over the world Catholic youth have a tendency to "hang loose" from the church once they finish school, but have not yet married. The existence of Center such as ours provides an incentive for the youth to join a church community of peers, and thereby stay with the church in those years of transition from student life to family life.

June 2013