

INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC MIGRATION COMMISSION

HEADQUARTERS: 11 RUE CORNAVIN, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

In Italy:

GIUNTA CATTOLICA ITALIANA PER L'EMIGRAZIONE

VIA OVIDIO, 10 - ROME



THIRD INTERNATIONAL CATHOLIC MIGRATION CONGRESS

ASSISI, SEPTEMBER 22 - 28, 1957

WORKING GROUP: ~~VI~~ II

TITLE OF REPORT: ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF CATHOLIC
ORGANIZATIONS IN THE INTEGRATION
OF IMMIGRANTS

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"ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN THE INTEGRATION OF IMMIGRANTS"

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I

The role in integration of immigrants

The term integration has been used so frequently, has been defined to denote so many varied aspects, it has become difficult to determine its true application.

Recently at a meeting on Immigration, a priest objected strenuously to a proposed paper to ^{be} given dealing with this subject. He contended that we over-emphasize the immediate assimilation of the way of life, customs and culture of the country of his adoption, expecting him to relinquish all ties with the country of this birth and accept our standards, which in some instances are completely alien to him. If this is our interpretation of integration.....The Reverend Father's objections were justified .

What then is the meaning that we should attach to this word when used in reference to newcomers? First, we must remember that our viewpoint is that of Catholic organizations in the field of immigration. With this in mind, our understanding of integration is based on the sharing of our faith with the Catholic immigrant and the interpretation of our work for him in the light of our faith.

The dictionary definition of integration is "the act of integrating, the bringing together of parts into a whole." This applied to immigration would mean the act of bringing together native born peoples with peoples of other tongues and nationalities in a community where all would live and work as one in a healthy and wholesome atmosphere (creating one unit) of a united society. Integration in this sense is applied to all regardless of race and creed, but, more important, without any connotation of Faith. In the dictionary a neurological definition of the word states that it means, "the combination of different nervous processes or reflexes so that they cooperate in a longer activity and thus unify the bodily functions!"

As Catholics, we should be ever mindful of our sharing with our fellow man a membership in the Mystical Body of Christ.

Since St. Paul thought a comparison of the function of the Mystical Body to the activity of the human body an apt one, in understanding integration, as Catholic, we should tend to accept this last meaning of the word. Integration in this light means the combination of people of different countries or tongues so that all cooperate in a larger activity which is the living by Faith and sharing and cooperating in this one Faith and thereby unifying the Mystical Body functions of loving and assisting one another out of love for Christ, who is the King and Head of the Whole Body.

Integration, as we understand it, therefore, is assisting Catholic immigrants to become first and foremost healthy active members of the Mystical Body in our parish, our diocese, our country; and having accomplished this task we will be successful

in carrying out the secondary objective of promoting good citizenship and worthy members of our communities, for if the spiritual needs come first, the material aspects will naturally follow.

OUR TASKS IN INTEGRATION

We have Catholic organizations in the field of immigration because there are definite tasks dictated by Faith that demand our presence and which we alone can perform. There are other duties that become part of our work because if we did not perform them, or left them to others not of our faith, the result could mean defection from the faith on the part of the Immigrant.

We have obligations before God and under the direction of Our Holy Father and Bishops to labour for the salvation of souls. There is, most frequently, not a contradiction but rather a definite difference of opinion held by the Catholic organizations and the immigrant to whom we extend our assistance.

We must always bear in mind that all our work in immigration has a spiritual objective while, on the other hand, the immigrant's first considerations are, as a rule, wholly material. A newcomer not only transplants his home life and means of livelihood to a new and strange country but the medium and incentive for the practise of his faith must also be transferred for him.

It is of prime concern to us that immigrant upon reaching his new destination continues in the practise of his faith.

Our most important tasks are, therefore, centred about this concern. There are certain material means of assistance required by the immigrant and these too can and must be listed as part

of our responsibilities.

It is these demands that must be supplied by Catholic organizations because this is the approach used by non-Catholic organizations in their efforts to win the immigrant away from his faith. We must not be too hasty in condemning the new arrival for it is natural to be grateful to those who fill urgent material needs which are naturally uppermost in the immigrant's list of necessities. To provide shelter, clothing, employment, etc., for him is the fulfilling of basic needs and ones he will remember always with, again, a natural sense of gratitude won even if not verbally expressed. It is well for us to be aware that for the majority of immigrants only after material demands are met and disposed of will there be time for spiritual needs.

If the faith of the immigrant is weak and if the struggle for material settlement becomes too great, his spiritual values and faith may never reassert themselves in his new country.

It is for this reason that in stating our tasks as a Catholic organization working in this field that we remember always---- it is to assist the immigrant in saving his soul with which we are primarily concerned, but it is frequently through supplying material needs that we accomplish the all important one.

At the same time, we must place the proper emphasis on the building of a spiritual program of integration, the making of a spiritual whole, and develop a strong practical plan of action to carry out these objectives. There is a danger that we may, although our intentions are pure, allow the material integration to over shadow the spiritual.

A gratitude or remembrance that it was a Catholic organization

that assisted the immigrant in finding employment, or living accommodations or whatever the material assistance was, will not necessarily mean a continuance of the practise of his religion unless we plan a follow up after settlement to insure a spiritual integration, a unity with his fellow Catholics in the country of his adoption.

WHERE AND HOW IS INTEGRATION PREPARED

The initial stages of integration in a new country must actually begin prior to the immigrant's departure from his native land. There are certain basic differences that must be recognized and accepted by the immigrant from the very beginning of his existence in a new land.

Integration implies making into a whole or unit and this is made either impossible or most difficult if the immigrant is unprepared to face the realities of living in the land of his choice. Experience has proved that a great sense of dissatisfaction can and does exist with many of the newcomers when these things are not faced in the very formative stages.

This is often responsible for persons failing to integrate for a period of many years and in some instances, not at all.

The decision to migrate to a new country should be made only after a knowledge of the difficulties to be encountered and an insight into the prospects of the future are imparted.

There should be some indication of difficulties that may arise because of language differences between the sending and receiving countries. If possible there should be some basic

preparations to overcome these difficulties. The cultures of the two nations involved should be studied even if there is only a very sketchy type of information on this point. The immigrant should be informed of the standard of living in the country of his choice. This information must be accurate. The wage that he can expect in his own avocation or trade, the possible substitute employment ^{he} may have to accept and the wage for such employment are of utmost importance.

I stress this point because, in dealing with immigrants in a receiving country, we have found this to be a great stumbling block integration. The immigrant has often been informed that he can expect a much higher wage than the going rate and that he should not accept substitute employment. It is necessary that accurate information on this point be given prior to the immigrant's departure from his own country.

Knowledge of the standard of living of the anticipated place of residence is important. If the immigrant is moving with his family to a new country he should know what percentage of his salary he can safely allot for housing, food, ^{clothing}, etc.,

Even the climate of the country or region that is proposed for new settlement would be extremely helpful information to the immigrant. We have had cases of immigrants settling in Northern Canada for instance, who had no knowledge of the extreme cold of the North. This has necessitated resettlement in other areas and in some instances has resulted in a complete breakdown of integration. There have been other cases where the immigrant's own health was ^{of} such a nature that he could not tolerate our climate.

In answer to the query of where integration should be prepared, I hope I have made it evident that it must begin in the immigrant's own country prior to his departure, because forehand knowledge is responsible for a preparedness to face any difficulties which may present themselves.

As to how integration could be prepared along these lines, we are faced with a real problem. In discussing this with those in the field in the receiving countries, it has been expressed that this perhaps is a role for voluntary organizations in the sending countries. Some plan of pre-education could and we believe must be established. I would like to go on record as having urged that serious consideration be given to this point and, if possible, action to taken to make the suggestion a reality. Only when we, in receiving countries, have immigrants come to us so prepared will we be able to say that we are capable assuring complete integration of our newcomers in our lands.

HOW AND BY WHOM IS INTEGRATION FOLLOWED UP?

When speaking of the follow-up of integration we must remember that we are now thinking of a certain determined stage of the immigrant's settlement in his new country.

We should consider reception facilities which are most important in this work. It is essential that there be a "faith contact" with the newly landed immigrant as soon as possible.

Great efforts are being made to establish like contact by those not of our faith in the early "hours" of arrival and

during the period of travel from the port of debarkation to his destination. I am thinking of the need for reception at ports of entry and contacts made on trains by Catholic workers.

This could not be regarded as a follow-up of integration in the receiving country.

A positive plan of approach to the immigrant must be formulated and carried out if integration is to be successful.

Whether the immigrant settles in a rural or urban area, he resides within the confines of some parish. We must, therefore, be organized on a parish level.

To accomplish this, we suggest a visitation program be outlined and necessary instructions be given to carry it out. The visitors must be able to supply the immediate information required by immigrants settling in his parish, viz; name of the parish and its location, name of Pastor, assistants and telephone number, the hours of Masses on Sunday and week-days, hours of Confession, location of parochial school, etc. We have found through experience that where the visitor accompanies the parent and children to the school for the purpose of assisting with enrollment, takes the new family to Mass on Sunday, the results are most efficacious.

There is a need for the immigrant to be made to feel at home in his faith and this is accomplished by bringing him to meetings of the parish societies; inviting him to Church socials at which a warm welcome is extended, and the general atmosphere is such that he feels he has been accepted in the parish.

In many cases these simple procedures are sufficient but

there are times when additional assistance is required and we must be organized to provide it. I refer to occasions when the immigrant may be unemployed, when he requires living accomodation when he lacks sufficient clothing, furniture, or even food for his existence. Under Catholic auspices further services should be rendered to the immigrant since assimilation is very difficult or sometimes impossible proportionate to the needs present.

We may have to look after the material requirements first, but the spiritual adjustment must always be uppermost in our minds, for all things are done for Christ and received by the immigrant because of Him.

In considering by whom this work of assisting the immigrant to integrate is to be accomplished, it is necessary to state the limits of area serviced. In other words, the greatest portion of this work is carried on within the confines of a parish and diocese. It is necessary first to have proper direction and sources of information continuously fed to the workers and this can only be effective when there is a diocesan immigration office with a director qualified to see that the programs, etc., are implemented.

It is strongly recommended that in areas where there are several priests whose work brings them in daily contact with newcomers, and who because of this contact are cognizant of needs, meetings should be held frequently by a priests' committee to effect an interchange of ideas for the purpose of planning the most effective means of meeting the various problems relative to integration.

The greatest portion of this work must necessarily be carried out by volunteer members of the laity. Existing parish organizations should supply the members for the implementation of this program.

has always been gratifying. We have never had an occasion to write to Overseas organizations where we did not receive a prompt and courteous response. I would like to express my personal thanks to all organizations with whom we have corresponded in the past.

If there is any comment and, it is only made constructively, there has been discussion in receiving countries as to the possibility of social agencies in sending countries being the instruments of educating prospective emigrants previous to their departure for the country of adoption. As mentioned previously, this may not be a feasible function of overseas social organizations and, again, is made with only a knowledge of immigration within a receiving country.

A further question in regard to cooperation of the two organizations has often been raised in the past. Is it possible for Catholic Organizations in migrating countries to prepare list and supply information on proposed immigrants which could be forwarded to the proper agency in the receiving country to assist in their reception and assimilation upon their arrival and later when residence has been established.

Our work is made more difficult because we do not know the composition or numbers of groups destined to settle within our dioceses. We must depend upon the diligence of our volunteers at the ports to obtain the names of the newcomers and addresses of their final destination.

Open placement cases are of particular concern because we have no way of contacting these immigrants and consequently they are lost to us and may be lost to the faith. Preliminary

interviews by social agencies in the sending countries may assist us to follow up these cases after their arrival. The numbers over the period of a year into even one diocese of a receiving country can be very high, and as a result, we are deeply concerned about this and would like to see better communications between social organizations in sending and receiving countries assisting in ^{the} integration of the immigrant.

INTEGRATION IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

In dealing with integration in urban areas, we must include the city-dwellers and those who live in the suburbs and are employed in the immediate neighbourhood or the industrial section of the area.

Rural settlement, ^{who} of immigrants refers to those settling on farms and those also become residents of small towns and villages where there is a decided lack of industry.

First, we will deal with the newcomer's integration into rural life of a community and then consider his counterpart in urban districts. In a more scattered area, the volume by numbers is smaller and more concentration is possible to assist his assimilation.

The rural dweller as a rule, is one who because of the slower pace of living devotes more time to interesting himself in the well-being of his fellow man. Economic adjustment in this setting in most instances, is more easily obtained due to a lower cost

of living. The pressure of highly competitive existence one finds in the city is rarely a factor in rural areas.

In urban areas the assimilation of the newcomer is determined by four factors with which I would like to deal at the moment.

The availability of housing in the thickly populated areas is, as a rule, more plentiful and of varied types, therefore providing that which fits his financial status. Greater opportunities of advancement in his field of employment are more prevalent in the industrial areas. In times of need the city has established agencies that are equipped to give him assistance and counselling. Because of the numbers of newcomers who establish residence in the urban areas, the immigrant has greater opportunities for social contact with those of his racial origin.

The basic approach to the newcomer is the same for both areas.

In other words, the visitation program carried out by volunteers under a Catholic organization will apply to all regions within a diocese. The degree of acceptance and assimilation will vary in different communities, and this will affect the intensity and speed with which the newcomer attains successful integration.

There is also another most important element, the human element. The capacity of the individual to assimilate is a strong determining factor regardless of where he settles.

Having viewed the physical aspects of rural and urban integration, it is still of paramount importance to the immigrant that his new life be a transplanting process, not a revolutionary

one. A person emigrating from an industrial type of employment and urban dwelling will best attain integration in similar surroundings found in the new country. Similarly, an individual whose experience in life has been restricted to rural communities will only find a happy settlement in that to which he has been accustomed.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Integration into the social and economic life of a community is the fundamental aim of immigrants who land on the shores of a receiving country. This may never find expression on the lips of the newcomer but it is the driving force of all his actions in his new home and the one factor that must be considered in dealing with immigrants in our communities. Again, there are exceptions to every rule. The exception may be stated as the case of an immigrant whose faith is deep and strong and who, because of this, finds contentment in the freedom to exercise his faith in his new home, or whose faith is the prime concern in his life.

Among our immigrants, we must admit that these are exceptions and are not encountered in every day experience. As Catholic, we must be anxious to establish social contacts with fellow Catholics for the immigrant. This can best be accomplished on the parish level as the basic unit of Catholic society. We must provide a medium for social mingling and acceptance and recognize this as of prime importance for the immigrant.

Programing is of invaluable help for this phase of integration.

To accomplish this the Catholic Organization must incorporate into its immigration program such aids as Mothers' classes, English, classes, cooking classes, social parish nights for the newcomer, etc.

Experience testifies that newcomers respond gratefully when given the opportunity to participate in parish activities, school gatherings and community functions. Catholic social integration of the immigrant is something that must be started as soon as possible following the settlement in a parish.

In the question of social integration there is no other consideration that must not be overlooked. Many immigrants have left a homeland that is predominantly Catholic, and they have never lived in a community where one finds all religions represented and where frequently there is little or no religion. They do not know how to live side by side with their non-Catholic neighbours, how to mingle at work and recreation with those not of the faith. There is a danger to the faith of such immigrants, for social integration may mean to him the imitation of the life of his new fellowmen. He is exposed, for the first time perhaps, to religious indifference, paganism and to diversified religious belief. We must do all in our power to interpret to our immigrants a set of social ethics for Catholic living in our communities.

For the newcomer, a Catholic minority is often a "foreign" thing. It is in his social integration that an adjustment is necessary to insure continued practice of his faith. He must, if he is in this category, be made aware of the dangers to his faith in the social atmosphere in his new environment. This can only be counteracted effectively by what has already been mentioned in regard to giving the immigrant a Catholic social medium to

assist in his integration.

The question of social acceptance of the immigrant in his community is a complex problem because it will depend on his own efforts toward social integration as well as on the community that receives him.

In the residents of an area are prone to accept immigrants into their midst, social integration will not be difficult.

In heavily populated communities receiving a greater influx of immigration, social integration is made more difficult due to the presence, often, of an antagonistic attitude making the immigrant feel like an outsider, an unwanted person. Social integration under such circumstances is slower and more laboured, requiring a greater length of time in terms of residence in the community. We can do much to help to educate our own people to formulate a Christian attitude toward their new neighbours.

The economic adjustment required by the immigrant may be viewed as a problem of integration. There are economic values that are different from country to country. There is usually a difference in the standard of living of the two countries.

There is, living in a materialistic world where the slide-rule of success in the amassing of worldly possessions, the danger that the immigrant will judge integration on this basic.

Another factor in the economic picture, is that frequently the immigrant, especially one coming from poor circumstances or from under repression, sees for the first time an opportunity to purchase many things never before within his grasp. Those who come to a receiving country offering these things, are goaded by the contrast to great efforts, and their economic

integration can only be described as a burning fever to amass material things. They do not, as a rule, subscribe to the accepted standard of living of the adopted country until years have elapsed wherein they often amass comparative wealth. True, economic integration for these people is completed only after years in the country, or sometimes never.

On the other hand, there are some immigrants who, because they come into this country expecting an economic situation on a par almost immediately with the residents, become easily dissatisfied with their economic plight. The reason for such folly can be traced to several possible sources. Sometimes it is an immigration official overseas who is too enthusiastic in his presentation of the proposed country, sometimes it is the result of letters from relatives who have gone through the years of struggle in their new country and who are now economically well established. These letters are glowing reports of what they now possess, a home, a car, a T.V. set, etc., and offering the same to their relations, but forgetting to mention the years of struggle to acquire their present affluence.

All these factors determine the economic integration of the immigrant. Added to this is the actual employment in his new home and the wage he is capable of expecting and whether he actually obtains it. Economic adjustment plays such an important role in successful integration that if it fails, other phases of adjustment will also never be realized.

As Catholic organizations, we can do much in assisting the immigrant to obtain suitable employment, to get decent

housing etc., things that will effect economic integration and because as Catholics we have helped in this all important factor of integration we will be instrumental in preserving the faith of the immigrant in his new country.

CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS INTEGRATION

Perhaps one of the most heated points of discussion concerning integration is the question of the cultural development or changes expected of our immigrants. It is conceded that an immigrant should not lose his native culture. Culturally speaking, the immigrant should take only that which is good in the land of his adoption and retain what is good from the culture he already possesses.

The receiving countries are, as a rule, in terms of earthly existence and in comparison with the sending countries, only infants of civilization. The fast pace of development and expansion has not tended to assist in the development of a defined culture. Many times we are even accused of being devoid of culture which is really not true.

There are certain morals and tastes, etc., found in such countries that it would be better for the immigrant to ignore but on the other hand, the receiving country does possess a certain amount of culture and expression of it that is laudatory and of advantage to the immigrant to absorb. There has been a development of learning which offers avenues to culture. There are expressions of culture in art, music, morals, etc., that certainly lend a beginning of a definite culture that an immigrant would do well

to acquire as he develops cultural integration.

It is recognized that culturally the immigrant has much to offer to the receiving country. Integration must never mean that the newcomer in being assimilated into his new community should allow his own culture to be abandoned. We, as agencies working with and for the immigrant, must be aware of a duty to assist the immigrant in preserving and further developing his own culture.

A receiving country becomes a cosmopolitan civilization capable of accepting a mosaic of riches because of the cultures brought to its shores by the natives of lands steeped in centuries of culture. We should give the immigrant adequate opportunity of expressing in art, handicraft, etc., the inherent refinement of his civilization. This has been at least encouraged in the past in this manner.

We have had art exhibits featuring the paintings, sculpture, etc., of various ethnic groups. There have been special programs, with participants in native costumes, of their folk songs and dances and the music of their country. These have been some of the ways used to give expression to and illustrate the culture offered by the immigrants. At the same time we will give the native born population an avenue of education in what the immigrant has to offer to his new country.

In speaking, therefore, of cultural integration, we must understand that this is a blending process, not an upheaval or replacement program. Integration carried out among our immigrants on a cultural level in this way will produce a civilization, a

community, that will mean the true integration of culture. It will develop a people as a whole that will receive training, improvement and refinement of mind, morals and tastes.

We have already referred at length to the primary objective of Catholic organizations in the field of immigration. It is to assist the immigrant in his religious integration upon reaching the receiving country. The outline of programs and the use of volunteer workers in this great field of Catholic Action cannot be stressed too much. Many souls may be lost or saved depending upon the effectiveness of religious integration and the efforts extended by the Church and her representatives to assist in this field. We possess the greatest bond on earth of unity with the immigrant, we share the greatest treasure of earth with the immigrant, we have the greatest tool at our disposal for successful integration..... Our Faith.