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The Integration of Migrant Families;

What Can Be Done by Catholic Organizations?

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1. The problem

The emigrant is a human being who, in leaving a certain territory also renounces a familiar society with its own norms, its own traditions and its own patterns of behaviour, in order to establish himself in a foreign country among an unknown population. He has to habituate to new surroundings, where he finds a different climate, a strange scenery, unknown kinds of plants and animals.

However, this is not what determines the human situation as such. The human being finds his natural environment in a society of men with whom he enters into affective and rational relationships, through which his life obtains a human significance, and through which his individuality can unfold itself in its rich possibilities.

The purpose of the migration has not been attained when the migrant finds the possibilities to maintain physical existence in new geographic surroundings; as a human being, as a person

with thoughts and feelings, character and specific qualities he must find his own place within a human environment through which his sociability finds expression in lasting structures and variable forms.

It is therefore clear that the problem of integration of migrants in the new society is included in the fundamental problems of the migration phenomenon. For integration refers to the process through which the individual human being or group is taken up in a larger whole, a human society, without the human being getting totally lost therein, but in such a way that he maintains his own personality, the structure of values on which this is founded and the forms of utterance in which he manifests himself.

It is not our task to submit the concept of integration to a deeper analysis and to draw up a new definition thereof. Be it sufficient to state that we expressly refer to positive integration, which is considered to be a two-sided process whereby a person or a group not only experiences the formative influence of his surroundings, but whereby he himself also actively imparts his own ideals, forms of behavior and acquisitions to his surroundings. Through this a fundamental difference is made between the integration process and the process of assimilation, in which the direction is more one-sided, for the flow of communication moves in one direction only.

The integration of the migrant in the society which takes him up can be studied from many aspects. The economic situation of the migrant and his family immediately call the attention to a series of problems the solution of which is of vital importance to the migrant. He must try to find his own position within a production process, in which he will have to use his own capacities in an efficient way in order to be able to obtain the benefits thereof. In many cases he will, however, find that the structure and the working of the economic process is not transparent or is less easily accessible to him in certain aspects, so that he will have to acquire new skills and new working methods in order to be able to be successfully included in this chain of money and goods.

The economic integration of the migrant therefore requires careful attention. There even exists for certain groups of the population a danger that the economic interest, the aspiration for a maximum level of prosperity in a minimum period of time, may occupy the thoughts and govern the behavior to such an extent that these persons thereby lose sight of the importance of other human values, which will have the disastrous result of preventing integration in other fields.

Apart from the need for material goods the human being also has a desire for cultural activity and development.

When the struggle for life is no longer at the center of the plan of living, the human being feels the need to perfect body and spirit through participation in a cultural good adapted to his natural inclinations and receptivity. Also in this field the migrant will experience the fact that the new society in which he has been planted cannot offer him immediately and as a matter of course the cultural values and forms of expression which through his education, his former surroundings and method of living had become familiar to him in his earlier life.

If the culture ideal itself does not seem strange to him, then the manifestations, the forms of expression thereof with the autochthonic population will still show unknown and unexpected nuances. The migrant can then close the door for the strange things in order to preserve unspoilt in the memories of own past or in the small circle of his countrymen the traditional conception of culture and the forms thereof. This rigid adherence to his own culture with the exclusion of every preparedness to re-orientate will in the long run have to lead to the re-scaling of the original values and non-adaptation in respect of the cultural riches of the new community.

The cultural integration of the migrant is therefore in the long run not less necessary than the economic integration which already makes itself felt in the short run.

Different from the two foregoing aspects of the integration process, but none the less closely connected therewith, is the problem of social integration. Just as the migrant can try to build up his new existence in a situation of economic independence and to guard his original cultural values in a sphere of cultural isolation from the foreign surroundings, the migrant can also limit his social contacts to the circle of his own family and countrymen and withdraw consciously from the autochthonic populations in whose midst he has established himself.

But also this maintenance of his own concepts with exclusion of all others will in the long run be harmful when his own group is not so large that varied contacts are possible therein. Even when the national group is sufficiently extensive to offer free scope to the individual human being for personal encounters and mutual co-operation, the separation from the receiving populations still contains a danger of continuous conflicts. No population can in the long run tolerate a strange element in its midst that isolates itself completely from the general interests.

The problems of social integration are particularly complicated. Although it is natural that the migrant spontaneously seek contact with persons and groups in whose midst he can again find something of his own concepts on his arrival, and although this way of behaving seems necessary sometimes, in order to tide

over the first difficulties in a strange world, gradually the social contacts must be made broader and more extensive. A mutual attitude of sympathy and receptivity will further the growth of new social relations.

Only when the migrant or group of migrants is interwoven with the original population to such an extent that a new harmonious community life can develop itself, has social integration become a fact. It need not cause surprise that this process may sometimes take a number of generations; the main thing is that fundamental errors which might well erect a barrier between the different groups be prevented.

After thus having orientated ourselves in the many-sided aspects of the integration process, we can more easily identify the scope of our problem. The object of our investigation is the integration of migrant families in the new society of the receiving country. As such this subject therefore ranks more directly under social integration, although it is closely connected with aspects of the economic and cultural development process.

It concerns expressly migrant families. We shall therefore have to omit many interesting problems in order to concentrate on the status, the functions and the patterns of behavior of the migrant family.

In our following notes we therefore pay no attention at all to those migrants who, leaving their families behind, establish themselves in another country in order to find possibilities of existence there and to provide for the need of their families from far-away.

The many dangers and problems of life which arise through this situation are too pressing for a cursory treatment.

Neither do we include in dealing with our subject the position of the single person, who as such will again have to go through the integration process in a completely different way. Our attention is directly concentrated on the family structure in the way this develops itself in the country of arrival.

Necessity of Integration

Apart from the more general reasons on which the necessity of integration for the migrant as a member of a new community is founded, there are also a number of special grounds which make the proper integration of the family in the social structure of the new society an essential element which also determines the success of the migration. This is connected with the essential functions which the family has in building up human life.

The central element of the family relation is that the members of the family are directed towards each other in a community of loving care. The openness, trust, spontaneous sympathy that members of the family have for each other have rightly been

called a feature of the family structure. It is true that there are families in which this intimate relation of affection is practically absent.

This is sometimes called the boarding house family, in which the home is only used for lodging and sometimes for meals, but it is clear that in this case we are faced with a phenomenon of degeneration.

In order to maintain the attitude of confidence and mutual openness in the differently structured society of the migration country in which different systems of values apply, it will be necessary that the family be built in the new society as a reserve unit.

The family must maintain a certain amount of reserve, it should not surrender its intimacy in order to be taken up entirely in relations with the outside world. But neither should it be closed off hermetically from influences which the society exercises on the members of the family. It is important in this connection that the development take place at a gradual pace for all members of the family.

There exists, especially for the woman and the growing girl who find their activities within the domestic sphere, a danger of isolation, especially in agricultural areas. The man, through

his contacts in working surroundings, will acquaint himself more naturally with the ideas and customs. The children make themselves familiar with the forms of living and the customs of the country at school and whilst playing. It is possible that through this process the confidence and natural openness for one another suffers; through this the family circle might no longer be the place where the more integrated members of the family feel naturally "at home".

Another important function within the family community is the transfer of culture from the parents to the children. The value of family education lies especially in the fact that the children obtain a system of norms and a pattern of behavior within the family in the most natural way. This will enable them later on to enter the world as independent persons, the world of the grown ups.

It need not be stressed that this transfer of culture will not amount to much when the parents are not themselves harmoniously integrated in the new society. The children will then spontaneously experience a lack of support from their parents which they need to build up their lives in the society of men in a successful way. It is especially lack of knowledge of the language or latent fear with regard to various customs which deters the parents from consciously entering into the new society.

Through this circumstance the children, who easily learn the language and easily acquire strange concepts and customs, are often stronger evolved than their parents. The result is that the parents have to be taught by the children and when contacts with the surroundings are necessary the help of the children is called for.

It will not escape the parents, however, that they are thereby seriously frustrated in their educational function and that they cannot give the children that preparation for life which they need for their future.

Summarizing, we therefore have to conclude that, both for the harmonious growth of the family as a society of intimacy and loving care, and for the important role of the parents as transmitters of the culture and of an adapted system of norms, a positive integration of the migrant family is an urgent necessity.

Conditions of Integration

If the economic circumstances are reasonable and the housing not unsatisfactory, then the possibilities for integration of not too large a family can be called fairly satisfactory. Parents and children can help each other to embolden the contact with the various groups of the population. The man is taken up in a working community and a circle of colleagues and friends,

the woman can make contact with other women in the neighborhood, the children find their way naturally to the nearby population group by visiting the school, clubs and places of recreation.

If the family offers the right atmosphere, in which everyone of its members will impart his own experiences to others, when the parents have sufficient tact and wisdom to guide and help their children in the proper intercourse with outsiders, then the synthesis of old ideas, norms and behavior and the new way of living finds its shape in the family itself in a natural way. The family as a whole then attains that spontaneous selection of new forms of living, which it can take over whilst maintaining previously acquired human values. This is characteristic for the positive integration.

The circumstances, therefore, are more favorable for the growing family in the migration country than for the single person, who, completely on his own and without the support of a familiar family circle, has to find his way in new surroundings.

The intimacy of the family offers the possibility to blow off pressures caused by conflicts of one's norms and behavior with foreign concepts and customs and to find the right equilibrium again and again. The conviction therefore generally prevails that a young family, which, in solid unity has sufficient courage

to undertake the adventure of migration, offers the best guarantee for a sound integration.

This, however, requires from all members of the family a positive preparedness to enter into contact with the new surroundings. If a person rigidly adheres to old ideals and handed down traditions, he barricades for himself and others the way which can lead to mutual exchange of ideas and a form of living. The inner attitude which is assumed towards the surroundings is in this connection of great importance.

When a person innerly rejects the behavior of a group, even the greatest preparedness to enter into outward contacts and engagements will not lead to a lively communication of personal ideas and values.

In all fields of social life the necessity presents itself for an inner openness and friendliness through which one is able to accept and respect the value of the different, the unusual things. This also applies to the structure of the family itself. In many European countries the closed family has up to our times been looked upon as an ideal of respectability. Through this a spontaneous aversion may arise of other norms of living in which a more open family unit is cultivated. And yet the children who grow up in the new society will get acquainted with such family structures and experience the attraction thereof.

The same applies to certain forms of religious life and to moral convictions.

The parents will be better able to accept the valuable things in the new surroundings and to reject the less favorable things, if they have to a certain extent become aware of the relativity of their own cultural ideal, their system of norms and their traditions.

Therefore a certain mental openness and breadth of mind, which do not exceed the limits of prudence, together with the serious wish to be receptive to new and different things belongs to the essential conditions for integration.

Catholic Organizations - what they can do.

After having shown that the integration of the migrant family is an absolute necessity, and having outlined the conditions under which integration can be achieved with good success, we have to go deeper into the task and possibilities which Catholic organizations have in this matter.

First of all we have to remark that institutions, however well organized they may be, can only give assistance, remove obstacles, stimulate a sound development, but that the actual realization of the integration process remains a personal task for the emigrant and his family.

It is therefore impossible to plan an extensive system of schemes that will infallibly lead to a happy integration of the migrant family. As far as human behavior, human contact, the building up of a human world are concerned there can be no pre-fabrication by an organization, for they are the personal work of the freely developing personality.

Therefore every institutional activity, whatever be the good intentions which inspire it, will have to be controlled, so that it will not exceed its own limits but will leave room for the development of private initiative.

In the same way as parents can guide and help their children but cannot take up their existence to bring that to a good end for them, the organizations offering help will have to leave sufficient room for the migrant to have his own experiences and to solve his own conflicts.

When we put the question of what field and by what means the technical migration organizations (in co-operation with charitable institutions) can promote the integration of migrant families, we can divide their activities in three categories:

1. help through information and preparation
2. help on arrival in the new country
3. help in difficulties in a later period.

Information and Preparation

In the first phase of making plans, the help of the migration organizations will consist especially in providing comprehensive information. The prospective migrant should be informed as fully as possible of the possibilities which the migration country offers in the economic, social and cultural fields. He should know what expectations he may have with respect to standard of living and the possibilities of existence, but it is equally important that from the very beginning he have no illusions on the riches and the success which are waiting for him. Therefore the migration organization should also clearly and concretely point out the difficulties and disadvantages connected with migration. For the ultimate aim is not to attract as large a number of countrymen as possible for migration, but only those who appear to possess the necessary suitabilities and consequently have a reasonable chance to be able to complete the migration successfully.

In discussing the new situation which awaits the family in the new society, the official of the organization will draw attention to the different norms and forms of behavior, different mentality and ideals in politics, with which the migrant will come into contact and to which he will have to adapt himself in the long run without surrendering completely his own attributes.

He will draw attention to the different family structure, to strange habits, to different human relations which will affect the family itself and especially the education and training of the children.

In this connection he will explain that the family structure as it is known in his own country, and which has sometimes a more closed character, need not necessarily represent the only prevailing and only right form of family life, but that there also exist more open family structures, in which whilst maintaining the intimacy and familiarity there is more room for contacts with the outside world.

It is advisable that the parents' attention be called to the fact that children who are not educated in the forms and traditions of the mother country are already, in their youth, directed to another cultural ideal, in which their spontaneous concepts and attitudes may differ from those of the parents. They must therefore show understanding and flexibility and sufficient confidence in their children to give them room and freedom through which they can develop in the new society to become independent and properly adapted persons.

When the parents are confronted with this complex of problems from the very beginning, then the chance is greater that they will find the method to prepare themselves for this difficult

task so that they will be spared great disappointments later on.

When selecting candidates for migration, technical and economic qualities should not be decisive, but the family relation should be just as much a deciding factor in the ultimate choice. Norms with which the family unit has to comply in order to develop in the new society are difficult to give a priori because they are so much determined by concrete circumstances.

Even when migration promises enough from an economic perspective it will have to be discouraged for families which are not physically or morally sufficiently equipped to establish themselves in a territory where the religious care and moral education run a serious risk of neglect.

On the other hand the implanting of devout and harmonious family groups in an indifferent society can be considered a beautiful apostolate, the radiation of which will become noticeable in a larger area.

This is only possible when sufficient guarantees exist that the religious and moral life can freely develop.

The problem of mixed marriages should in this connection also be considered. Parents are mostly not aware of the difficulties which await them when they establish themselves in a

territory where a different religious conviction strongly predominates, so that it becomes almost impossible for the growing children to make contacts with Catholic children of the same age.

It is sad when parents, after a long stay in the new country, have to admit that they left everything that was dear to them in order to build a beautiful future for their children, but that their children in the new society have become estranged from God and from the Church and through this also from the parents.

Help on Arrival

When the decision to migrate has been taken, the day for departure fixed, the journey planned, then the migration organizations have to do everything for the smooth functioning of the direct preparation. The psychic tension of the migrant, especially of the woman, who has to take care of everything, is rather great in that period and it is therefore desirable not to delay the departure needlessly.

Most experts in this field are of the opinion that it is to be preferred by far that the members of the family together experience the departure, the journey and the arrival in the new home country, because especially in this exciting period the

family unit offers a great inner support, and common experiences strengthen the family ties and the wish to meet jointly the new situation.

In special cases, especially when the employment or the housing cannot be arranged in advance it will be necessary for the man to make the trip earlier in order to make the necessary preparations. Also in that case it will be advisable to send for the remaining members of the family as soon as possible, if needless tension and conflicts with the members of the family and a certain estrangement which arise through a completely different world of experiences are to be avoided.

On arrival at the place of destination as soon as possible those measures will have to be taken through which the family can feel "at home" in the new surroundings.

We need not go into the great importance of their finding good housing and suitable employment through which the first contact with the new population will be made spontaneously and through which the migrant may have an opportunity to use his capacities.

The migration organizations will do every possible thing to help the migrant and his family get acquainted with their new surroundings. It is therefore advisable that before his departure the migrant already be in possession of a number of address-

es which he may need of institutions and organizations which he can contact to obtain further information.

Through continuous exchange of information between migration organizations in the various countries it will be possible to guide the migrant and to advise him, to provide him at every possible opportunity with valuable information. The psychic feeling of safety should not be underestimated. It is a feeling which is created through the certainty that one can contact certain organizations at all times in order to obtain desired information.

Especially concerning the integration of the family the migrant should be accurately informed of the existing possibilities in the field of schooling, training, specific business training, recreation possibilities, youth organizations and similar contact groups. In the beginning the migrant has neither the rest nor the opportunity to orientate himself in this field, as he is too much taken up by the unusualness of the situation, the economic problems and the housing problems. Nonetheless it should be pointed out to him that he will have to pay attention to his immediate surroundings, because the attitude which he assumes from the beginning towards neighbors colleagues, fellow parishioners and officials is often decisive for the first impressions which he makes on the autochthon population and de-

termines to a great extent their spontaneous reaction.

In so far as it is possible Catholic migration organizations will have to see that the original population is prepared for the arrival of the migrants, so that they can receive them with a kind attitude and for the time being accept and respect their peculiarities, a result of different forms of culture.

It is a valuable help when older migrants who have been established for years in the same district and have already gone through the integration process, are found willing to assist the newcomers with advice and help.

Migration organizations will probably find it possible to organize this voluntary help and cooperation. In this connection also all voluntary help of neighborhood organizations or family groups can profitably be included.

Help in the Course of the Integration Process

What task remains for Catholic migration organizations when the first phase of migration has been concluded?

The continuous care of the specific migration organizations will gradually decrease in the degree to which the migrant finds his own way in the new society and gradually discovers the methods by which he can adapt himself whilst maintaining fundamental values

of life, to a new system of norms and pattern of behavior. Yet it is advisable that there remain some relation between these organizations and the migrant families, both to ensure that the organization remains informed of the experiences of those families and through this collects valuable data, and for the families themselves who can always contact these organizations for certain information. For it is not unusual that after some time has elapsed certain difficulties arise which were not foreseen earlier. These problems arise through illness, unemployment, non-existence of certain schools and training colleges and such problems as these often cannot be solved by the migrant alone.

If the migration organization itself cannot offer immediate help contact can be made through its intervention with other organizations. Also for psychic difficulties, family conflicts and social questions it will be necessary that the migrant know to which organizations he can have recourse in certain cases. If, for economic or other motives, the family should have to move to find living possibilities in another district, they will be glad to contact those organizations for advice and help which helped in the first settlement in the new country. There may also be matters to be settled with the country of origin for which these organizations will be contacted, especially when it concerns arrival of families or friends in the same district.

The migration organizations will also assist in the integration of the family in the ecclesiastical life of the new country. The contact with the priest and ecclesiastical institutions should be established as soon as possible. For the sake of the education of the children the parents will do their utmost to find their place in the ecclesiastical life of the district. This will be easier for them when they have already been informed, during the preparation of the migration, by priests or laymen, of the religious conceptions and practices in the new country. The provision of national priests or missionaries for immigrants in accordance with the directives of the Apostolic Constitution "Exsul Familia" is vital for proper spiritual care of immigrants.

We conclude our considerations with one last remark which concerns the whole extensive activity which is entrusted to Catholic migration with respect to the integration of migrant families in a new society and it is to draw attention to the role which the virtue of charity plays in this whole complex of activities.

Ultimately the human happiness of many families who depart from their home country to build up a new future in a strange land is involved. The happiness of married couples, of children and of future generations is involved. But also and more than

everything their supernatural well being is involved. If the virtue of charity, the love, which brings God to man and man to God, inspires the often difficult, much "patience-requiring" and often disappointing activities of the migration organizations, then they will find therein the power and the courage to help their fellow men in the human difficulties and conflicts of life.

The integration of the migrant family is and remains in the first place a life task which is laid upon the freedom of the migrant; the migration organization will thereby in a spirit of Christian and human concern for fellow-creatures exert itself to give the most efficient and most expert guidance.
