

A commitment to serve and empower migrant workers

THE MISSION FOR MIGRANT WORKER'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



*To serve our fellow migrant workers
and attend to their welfare
at all times*

*To create the space for them to know
about their rights and
the confidence to assert them*

*To use laws, conventions and every
opportunity to ensure
their best interest*

*To push for reforms, changes in
conditions that will advance
their cause*

*To cooperate with migrant
organizations, local groups and
supportive people in advocacy of
migrants' rights*

*To work for them and be with them
in their quest and struggle for a
country where forced migration will
be a thing of the past.*

This was the pledge of the Mission for Migrant Workers in its 30 years of service to serve and empower the migrant workers in Hong Kong. This was the pledge that guided the Mission throughout its three decades of work and would continue to inspire the Mission in the years to come.

It was a day to be remembered as migrant workers, members of the Board of the Mission, staff, volunteers and friends gathered together in a whole day of festivities to remember the past 30 years of the Mission, share stories and lessons, enjoy the fellowship of each other and witness the cultural presentations prepared and presented by migrant's organizations.

The day began with a Thanksgiving Mass led by Revd. Dwight dela Torre with the assistance of Fr. Winston Ching. Hundreds of people gathered to begin the celebration in prayer and reflection over the status of migrant workers in Hong Kong, giving thanks for their ability to be out on such a beautiful spring morning with intercessions that the rights of migrants might be continually given protection to protect workers and their families. Prayers were also offered to staff and volunteers of the Mission who already passed away.

Afterwards, a two-hour variety show ensued with migrant workers belting out popular songs to keep the festivities going while modern dance numbers were also rendered by groups such as the FilGuys, the Junior Association of Migrants and the A-Freight dancers. Games sprinkled the show with the audience's enthusiastic participation. The



*The Very Revd. Andrew Chan welcomed
all those present in the event*

United Pangasinan in Hong Kong also presented a Philippine folk dance that livened the day.

The Very Revd. Andrew Chan, Dean of the St. John's Cathedral and chairperson of the Mission Board, gave the welcome address where he highlighted the condition of migrant workers in Hong Kong that made it necessary to establish and continue the work of the Mission. He stressed that *"the MFMW is not just local NGO. The life and ministry of the MFMW is also an expression of the mission of the church because migration is not just an economic or political activity. Migration also has spiritual dimensions."*

Meanwhile, Revd. Peter Douglas Koon, Provincial Secretary General of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, delivered the inspirational message where he described the Mission as a *"unique migrant-serving institution, an ecumenical institution, assisting migrant workers, who are in distress"* with services that are *"migrant-centered and empowerment-oriented"*.

He also congratulated the Mission for its efforts to have the rights and wellbeing of migrant workers recognized by the larger community of Hong Kong. He quoted Mark 4:31-32 to encapsulate the Mission's work and the challenges it faces: *"It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."*

A highlight of the day was the giving of plaques of recognition to groups and individuals who have unceasingly supported the Mission and its work. Plaques were given to the Kowloon Union Church, St. John's Cathedral and the HK Sheng Kung Hui for the various forms of support they have given to the Mission and to the migrant workers. Also given plaques of recognition were the members of the Board while a special plaque was given to Mr. Melville Boase, also a Board member, who has given the Mission and its clients valuable legal services since the Mission's establishment in 1981. This was an extremely important part of the program, because without a dedicated Board and the support of churches, the Mission would not be able to provide such quality service to the migrant community.

Solidarity messages were given by representatives of the HK Confederation of Trade Unions, St. John's Cathedral HIV Education Centre, Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, International Migrants Alliance, Association of Indonesian



Revd. Peter Koon gave an inspirational message to the Mission



Members of the Board and guests enjoyed the day's program



Mr. Jun Tellez presented the history and basic principles of the Mission



Migrant workers and fellow service providers gave solidarity messages

Cultural presentations of migrants organizations



Migrant Workers (ATKI), Far East Overseas Nepalese Association (FEONA), Thai Regional Alliance (TRA) and the United Filipinos in Hong Kong.

Various cultural presentations were rendered by migrant's organizations such as the LIKHA Filipino Migrant's Cultural Organization with their opening dance number reflecting on the theme of migrant's rights and women's rights; traditional dances from the Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers (ATKI), Far East Overseas Nepalese Association (FEONA), Thai Regional Alliance (TRA) and the Abra Tingguian Ilocano Society (ATIS), and; a poem recited by Ms. Tess Aquino from the Filipino Women Migrants Association depicting the condition of Filipino migrants by commemorating the life and tragedy that befell Flor Contemplacion – a Filipino domestic worker who was hanged in Singapore in 1995.

Mr. Jun Tellez, program coordinator and a pioneer of the Mission, gave a speech about the Mission's work, from its origins to its current services to migrants. All staff, interns, and volunteers of the Mission were then called to the stage to together pledge and commit to continued service to migrants through counseling, advocacy and more. A fitting end to this part of the program was the singing of the popular song "Lean On Me" that reflected the Mission's message of service.

The next part of the program was titled VOGE, or Voices of Gender Equality which was a cultural festival that featured the theme of sex discrimination and the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. This special program was co-sponsored by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC).

Cynthia Abdon-Tellez, manager of the Mission, explained the objectives of the event in the context of the discrimination that women migrant workers experience. Meanwhile, Ms. Devi Novianti from the EOC spoke about the Sex Discrimination Ordinance as well as the importance of applying it to migrant workers in Hong Kong. Ms. Philippa Smales from the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law, and Development (APWLD) also gave a message of support to the event and to the Mission. She further expounded on the plight of migrant workers as women and the APWLD's support for migrants rights as an integral part of women's rights.

Traditional and colorful dances were presented by the Association of Sri Lankans (ASL), PILAR (an Indonesian organization), Isabela Federation and the Overseas Nepalese Workers Union (ONWU). Meanwhile, members of the Cordillera Alliance further added on to the festival spirit with the community dance *Pattong*.

LIKHA performed a poetry-in-motion titled "To be a Woman" which expressed the subjugated status of women in their families as well as the public sector. Ms. Spencer Cantrell, intern of the Mission, presented a monologue titled *True* by Carol Michele Kaplan about the importance of everyone taking action when they see an injustice.

The residents of the Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge presented a series titled "If I were a Boy" which was initially inspired by Beyonce's song of the same name. The residents expressed how their lives would be different if they were men instead of women,

Voices of Gender Equality



"To Be a Woman" by the LIKHA Migrants Cultural Organization



Mission Director Cynthia Abdon-Tellez expounded on the issue of discrimination



Ms. Devi Novianti of the EOC explained the SDO and its relation to migrants



Traditional dance number from the Association of Sri Lankans (ASL-HK)

which also served as an interpretation of the SDO. The Philippine Independent Church congregation at St. John's Cathedral performed a short play where the women expressed their experiences as female domestic workers, how they have experienced sex discrimination, and how the SDO could benefit them in the future as they learn about the protection of their rights as workers in Hong Kong. These presentations were mounted with the help of some supporters of migrant workers - Alex Campion, Becky Proudfoot and Kyle Lipinski.

The cultural festival ended with a dance interpretation of the song "Babae Ka" (You are a Woman) by the members of the Association of Concerned Filipinos and the Filipino Migrants Association.

The icing on the cake at the end of a full day was the live band. Music transcended generations as people tapped their feet, some jumping up to dance in celebration for all that the Mission has done for the migrants of Hong Kong.

For the whole day, various kinds of booths were operated by different groups. The Mission and BHMWR manned a mobile counseling booth while the group KOMADRONA operated a blood pressure-taking booth. Information and education booth on SDO was also set up while fellow service providers such as the APMM, the JIL Shelter, El Shaddai Shelter and the International Social Service – Hong Kong also manned their respective booths and gave information on their work to the public. The Asian Migrants Coordinating Body (AMCB) also set up an information booth on the various concerns of migrant workers in Hong Kong.

The day's program was hosted by volunteers of the Mission: Lenlen Tomas, Preenie Villar, Spencer Cantrell, Franki Cheng, Joanna Wu and Aaron Ceradoy

The whole-day festivities in Chater Road on March 20 were a great homage to the work of the Mission and all it has accomplished for the migrant community. The Mission For Migrant Workers will continue to serve as long as there are migrant workers who are abused, exploited and oppressed.

For as long they are here, we remain – committed and with them.



Cultural presentations filled the whole-day celebration. Meanwhile, informational and educational booths served the public by increasing their awareness in various concerns. A live band composed of migrant workers themselves capped the day with lively songs for the migrants and friends present.



The Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW) thanks all those who came and joined us in our celebration. We especially thank all the migrants organizations and volunteers of the Mission who made the day a very successful one.

We shall not tire of our service for we know the crisis situation of migrants remain and we also know that you will all be with us every step of the way.

Thank you very much!