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Homemaking in and with Migrant Churches as Communities of Care

Ma. Adeinev M. Reyes-Espiritu [1,2]

[1] Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, KU Leuven, 3000 Leuven, Belgium; nev.reyesespiritu@kuleuven.be
[2] Theology Department, Ateneo de Manila University, Quezon City 1108, Philippines

Abstract: Research on migration and religion reports the significance of religion to migrants, particularly those who self-identify as religious. In particular, migrant churches have served as a sanctuary, a venue for social networking, and a community supportive of migrants' wellbeing, to name a few things. However, migrant churches are also criticized for the possibility of becoming instruments of control over migrants. Heeding Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo's invitation to use the "homemaking optic" to inquire into the experience of integration of migrants, this paper analyzes how migrant churches foster migrants' becoming at home in the receiving societies using Philippine migrant communities as a case study. Data is gathered through semi-structured interviews with ministers and pastoral workers in migrant churches. The qualities that characterize their homemaking through belonging to and serving in a migrant church are "identifying with each other", "creating a shared space", "advocating for migrants' rights and welfare", "sharing resources", and "adjusting to the receiving society". The homemaking optic shifts attention towards the subjective realities of migrants against the background of various inequalities that present homemaking as a struggle for many. Migrant churches, through their values, beliefs, and practices, foster an atmosphere that welcomes, supports, encourages, and accompanies migrants towards becoming at home in the receiving country. Using practical theologian LaMothe's three "dialectical pairs of personal knowing" proposed to underpin just care relationships, I present how migrant churches become communities of care when members, as care receivers, are recognized as they are and whose real "needs and desires" are acknowledged. In this study, the essential role of migrant churches in migrants' homemaking is examined, emphasizing the notion that churches function as communities of care as they acknowledge the identities, subjectivities, and agency of their members.

Keywords: migrant church; homemaking; communities of care; care relationship; Philippine labor migrants; religion; migration; Christianity; practical theology; pastoral theology; pastoral care

Citation: Reyes-Espiritu, Ma. Adeinev M. 2023. Homemaking in and with Migrant Churches as Communities of Care. *Religions* 14: 257. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020257

Academic Editors: Hendrik Pieter De Roest and Theo Pleizier

Received: 21 December 2022
Revised: 18 January 2023
Accepted: 13 February 2023
Published: 15 February 2023

1. Introduction

Religion plays an important role for people on the move, particularly those who self-identify as religious. Existing research has described how faith beliefs and practices help migrants withstand the challenges that come with migration. Religious worldview influences how migrants express their agency while navigating the risks of migration (Bastide 2015). Their faith facilitates how they cope amidst experiences of trauma, contributing to their resilience and meaning-making (Lusk et al. 2021; Dorais 2007). Belonging to a church where other members share the same beliefs and identity builds migrants' social networks and wellbeing (Visser et al. 2015). The church, both as a structure and a community, contributes to how migrants navigate their lives in receiving countries. For example, the church, as a sanctuary, protects undocumented migrants from being deported by providing them with resources, a physical space, and a "covenant community" that endeavors to keep them in a safe environment (Collet and Macías 2022). The church also works to facilitate migrants' integration into the receiving society by becoming a space that promotes their wellbeing, allowing for the development of interpersonal relationships,

and encouraging the sharing of resources for the welfare of its members (Ambrosini et al. 2021). Importantly, amidst the changes and losses migrants experience due to migration (Hirschman 2004), religious practices and church membership contribute to how they understand and express their identity (Dorais 2007; Cruz 2006).

With global migration critically increasing in terms of the number of people moving, the frequency of migration, and its geographical scope (Phan 2020), and with migrants who identify with a religion finding value in belonging to a church in their destination countries, is it important to inquire into what is practiced in migrant churches that makes them effective communities of care. This is even more significant because migrants experience othering (Genova 2017) and scapegoating in receiving societies (Illingworth and Parmet 2017; Hiropoulos 2020) and, sometimes, even as returnees in their country of origin (Onoma 2021), rendering them in greater need of care. Having established that religion can benefit many migrants (Beyer 2022), there is value in recognizing the role of religion in analyzing and responding to the complexities of migration (Phan 2020).

In the context of migrant churches becoming a welcoming and caring community for migrants, it is important to heed the argument against developing a paternalistic hospitality toward migrants, one that might disregard their agency or curtail their freedom (Reynolds 2021). For instance, some sociologists have highlighted in their findings that church communities have the "preoccupation of instilling a personal moral code among participants" (Ambrosini et al. 2021, p. 837), "unintentionally serv[ing] as apparatuses of controlling and regulating migrant bodies through morality and religious discourse and practices" (Asor 2018, p. 266). However, a responding argument to such an observation is that churches are expected to operate according to their religious identity, moral beliefs, and mission to form their members. The question is whether the members are free to make their own choices. The aim, therefore, is to reflect on how to become a community of care that provides guidance and support without impeding the capacity of members to make their own informed choices. In response to patronizing tendencies in welcoming and supporting migrants, it is helpful to consider conceptualizations of hospitality that highlight mutuality and interdependence (Reynolds 2021; Catalano 2021; Yount 2021).

This paper has two goals. I first want to describe the crucial role played by migrant churches in the homemaking experience of migrants, using Filipino migrant communities as a case study. By focusing on what goes on in migrant churches or faith communities, I heed Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2021) invitation to take the "homemaking optic" (p. 3), "look[ing] at the practical and situated ways in which migrants negotiate their claims for inclusion, recognition and ultimately membership" (p. 5). Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo posit homemaking as an alternative "original category of analysis" (p. 2) to assimilationism and transnationalism, which often dominate discussions in migrant research. The second goal is to contribute to the discussion of how to foster a caring community in churches while avoiding the trap of controlling or unjustly using authority over the members.

I shall pursue the aforementioned objectives by first presenting homemaking as a central concept that emerged from my analysis of data gathered from pastoral workers and ministers in Philippine migrant church communities. Here I shall discuss what I have identified as five characteristics of homemaking as it is experienced by migrant pastoral workers in their membership and service to their migrant church. After which, I shall discuss how the perspective of homemaking, as conceptualized by Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2021), reveals the significance of service to and membership in migrant churches in the overall experience of integration by migrants. Second, I shall draw from practical theologian Ryan LaMothe's (2021) exposition of the existential principles of care to analyze what can be learned from migrant churches about being communities of care. The idea is that migrant churches' participation in migrant homemaking is hinged on and, at the same time, reinforces their capacity to become communities of care that value their members' identities, subjectivities, and agency. Considering this observation, Christian migrant churches can provide ideas and inspiration to the global church in terms of rediscovering its identity as a caring community.

2. Materials and Methods

This article is based on my in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ministers and pastoral workers belonging to migrant churches frequented by Philippine nationals, conducted from December 2020 to September 2022. The interviews are part of a broader practical theological qualitative research project that looks into the familial, spiritual, and religious experiences of Philippine migrants. Practical theology, as a research methodology, is aimed at studying and theologically reflecting on "human actions with a view to transforming them" (Dillen 2020, p. 66). For this paper, I will focus on the data gathered from research participants who are actively involved in migrant church communities, intending "to contribute to the improvement of religious and pastoral practices" (Dillen 2020, p. 66). The data are coded following the constructivist grounded theory method, which seeks to construct or generate conceptual frameworks or theories inductively. Levels of coding are performed by constantly comparing emerging concepts to each other and to the existing data (Creswell 2014; Bryant and Charmaz 2007).

The research participants are fifteen adult pastoral workers, ministers, and migrant advocates who are active in migrant churches. Fourteen of them are Philippine nationals, and one is Nigerian. They live in Kuwait, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Italy, which are common destinations for Philippine migrants as workers or religious pastors. Their length of service in their migrant churches ranges from less than a year to twenty years. They all self-identify as Christians, with the majority being Roman Catholics and a couple belonging to a Protestant denomination. They most likely will not permanently stay in these countries where they are working as missionaries or labor migrants; instead, they will eventually go back to their country of origin. Recruitment was mainly conducted online by disseminating information about the research project on Facebook groups for Philippine migrants in the four countries, by contacting migrant churches, and by having personal contacts help spread the word within their networks.

The majority of the participants belong to the Roman Catholic Church, which can be accounted for by the fact that the Philippine population is majority (around 80 percent) Roman Catholic (Office of International Religious Freedom, United States Department of State 2020). Each of the fifteen research participants is a member of one of a total of six Christian migrant church communities. Of the six Christian church communities, five are part of the Roman Catholic Church and one is Protestant. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has instituted the Episcopal Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, and part of its mission is to build chaplaincies in Filipino migrants' destination countries (Arguelles n.d.). The five migrant Roman Catholic church communities to which the study's participants belong collaborate closely with the aforementioned commission. Hence, it can be said that they have a structured way of approaching migrant ministry, "includ[ing] education and formation (catechesis), leadership training, pastoral and social services, linkages and networking, apostolates' coordination, structure building for economic advancement, policy making, para-legal assistance, etc." (Arguelles n.d.). The Protestant migrant church community, of which two of the participants are members, belongs to a Protestant church described as "the largest and most widespread" in the Philippines (World Council of Churches n.d.). Although multi-sited research such as this can possibly generate a comparison of findings reflecting varying characteristics of migrant church communities in the four destination countries, it is not the intention of the paper to delve into detailed differences. In order to offer suggestions for enhancing pastoral care, the aim is to explore the common themes that arose from the experiences of pastoral workers active in Philippine migrant church groups.

All participants received a participant information letter and filled out an online consent form through Qualtrics, a web-based application. Interviews were held in Filipino and/or English, whichever was more comfortably spoken by the participant. In this article, I have translated those quotations, which were originally in Filipino, into English. One-on-one interviews took an hour to an hour and a half. Eight of them were performed over videoconferencing applications, such as Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp, and the seven

others were conducted in person in a church in Italy. I transcribed the interviews verbatim from the sound recordings and pseudonymized the transcripts. Two main phases of grounded theory coding were performed, namely initial coding and focused coding, using NVivo, a piece of qualitative data analysis computer software. The institutional review board of the university has granted this research project approval with reference number G-2020-2238. The results reported in this paper are common themes that represent the data gathered from all four locations and are limited to the views and experiences of the research participants, who are mainly pastoral workers in Philippine migrant church communities.

3. Serving in a Migrant Church as Homemaking

The experience of the research participants, who, as members of migrant churches, engage in pastoral work, points to a kind of homemaking. Drawing from his study involving Cuban Catholics in Miami, Thomas Tweed has argued that "religions are confluences of organic–cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries" (Tweed 2009, p. 54). Indeed, religion has brought the research participants together with other religious migrants to whom they minister in an experience of homemaking. There are five qualities that characterize the endeavor to be at home in the receiving country through serving in a migrant church: identifying with each other, creating a shared space, advocating for migrants' rights and welfare, sharing resources, and adjusting to the receiving society.

First, the participant ministers' and lay workers' narratives reflect an identification of common identities. Particular characteristics that are significant to them are shared with the church members whom they serve. As the ministers, pastoral workers, and ordinary church members are all migrants in the receiving country, they find value in being able to do things together with which they identify, namely practicing their native culture, recreating both religious and national traditions, and communicating in their mother tongue. The starting point of homemaking is an acknowledgement that members of the community share things in common that give meaning to their understanding of themselves and their concept of home.

One thing they can all identify with is the experience of migration and the challenges that come with it. Sr. Dawn is a religious sister serving in a Filipino migrant church in Italy. She recognized how the common experience of migration allowed her to benefit mutually from serving fellow Filipino migrants:

> As a religious sister, I also understand what it means to be a migrant and not be in my country. I also have my share of difficulties. I, too, have struggles as a sister. The migrants I meet give me hope and motivation to keep going. We go through different suffering. As they go through hardships, I try to be there for them and be in solidarity with them. Compared to my struggles, what they go through is so much more. This is what I realize when I listen to their stories. Why is it like that? And listening to them is enough, no? Our presence here is enough for them—for them to be in the company of a nun or for a nun to visit them at home. That brings them great joy. They feel quite blessed.

Closely tied to migration is the possibility of being handicapped by not speaking the main language of the receiving country (van Gaal 2021, p. 318). Having English as a common language, migrants of different nationalities can also engage in homemaking. Along the way, it helps to discover that they have cultural similarities. Fr. Jorge, a Nigerian priest ministering to Filipinos in Taiwan, attested to this:

> First, as a new missionary in Taiwan, you will be happy that you have them (referring to Filipinos) because, when you cannot speak Chinese, these are the people you can celebrate English mass with. You are happy that you have those who can celebrate mass. And the masses are mostly like what we have back home in Nigeria. It's a little more lively than what they have in Taiwanese or Chinese. They sing; they play the drums; they play the guitar. The liturgy could be livelier, and they are relaxed with the priest, too. The ones who stay around to chat are

> relaxed with the priest. They are friendly; they are open. The Taiwanese are a bit more formal. They are more open. Father, father . . . They want to chat. That is very nice.

For migrant church members, it is clearly the case that they value their religious affiliation and find support in celebrating the faith with other fellow believers. When the receiving country's predominant religion differs from the religion with which a migrant identifies, finding a church of one's faith takes on greater significance. Alvin, a parish volunteer in the Filipino community church in Kuwait, spoke about this realization:

> There are workers here who tell me, "Bro. Alvin, when I was looking for a job and they told me I would be assigned in Kuwait, my first question was if there was a Catholic church there." When they found out that there was a Catholic church, they were motivated to say yes to the job offer. When workers find out that there is a church, they become encouraged to make the move to work here. This is because they feel confident in the presence of other Catholics. When you are a migrant worker, you are by yourself. It differs from being a tourist and traveling to a foreign country with your family. As a migrant, you are alone in enduring the challenges that will come your way. When they find out that there is a church, they grow confident that they are not alone. They will be with people who share the same faith. And when they are with fellow Catholics, no matter what race or nationality, their network grows. They feel assured that they have a family, to some extent.

Concerning my research participants, a key aspect of belonging to a migrant church is being able to celebrate the faith with other Filipinos. Faith practices back in the home country find continuity in the receiving country in migrant churches. For example, Ben, an active member of the Filipino church in Rome, Italy, found it meaningful to continue a Marian devotion practiced specifically in his hometown in the Philippines and achieved a sense of home with other devotees:

> It is because you, yourself, are also searching for your identity as a Filipino. In being with the community, you find the answer to that longing. You become happier; you feel what it is like to be in the Philippines. It is as if your life is complete when you are with your community. That is my personal experience. My wife and I are quite okay, so I thought, "Why don't we participate in the choir or practice our devotion with others?" We all pray together, celebrate together, and are happy together as devotees. The community for me is my family here in Italy.

Ben's narrative reflects what Palacz (2022) identifies as an expression of diasporic religion, wherein "migrants and their descendants create spiritual communities which transcend time and space in order to unite them symbolically with coreligionists in the homeland" (p. 56). As experienced by Polish Catholic immigrants in Scotland, practicing diasporic religion allows them to "overcome the feeling of alienation from the host society" (Palacz 2022, p. 56), and as the experience of my participants reveals, it gives them the possibility to become at home in the receiving society, alongside their fellow believers.

The aforementioned accounts point to being able to identify with others as a crucial starting point in the process of homemaking. The ministers, pastoral workers, and other members of the church find in each other similarities such as migrant status, race or nationality, language, faith or religion, culture, and tradition. Their commonalities form the "bases of mutual aid" (Ley 2008, p. 2063), which they willingly extend to each other, as will be discussed under the fourth quality.

Second, the desire to have a home is not only metaphorical but also literal. Many of them speak about the significance of creating and having a physical space where each member is welcome, as well as where the entire community can gather. Kuppinger (2022) notes how newly arrived migrants, in the beginning, usually settle for any available functional space to serve as their place of worship (p. 183). Kuppinger argues that having

their own space is a "fundamental step for faith communities to localize, develop robust roots and become ordinary and recognized local stakeholders" (p. 183). However, acquiring their own place can be more challenging for those migrant faith communities whose religion may differ from the dominant religion in the receiving society, for example, the Muslims in European countries (pp. 183–84). Such a place is expected to be a safe space for all, where they can worship and seek shelter when necessary. The migrant churches, although primarily places of worship, serve as a venue for other forms of fellowship. These churches are described to have adopted a "community center model of functioning" (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000, p. 151) facilitating both "ethnic reproduction" and "immigrant adaptation to the new community" (p. 150). Fr. Jorge described how their parish church in Taiwan was a home and a place of respite for Filipino migrant workers:

> They want a place where they can come and be accepted and where they can relax, so they want an office. They would sometimes say that they came from a long distance and couldn't go back, so they needed to sleep somewhere. They want to have activities. Filipinos like eating. We try to do that. Personally, when I was a parish priest, I didn't have much problem with that. So usually in the parish where I used to be and where we are now, there is a place. Of course, you understand if they are far from home and just spend their time working. So when they are free, like on their off days or whatever, they want to have a good time. They want to eat and drink. They celebrate birthdays.

The possibility for members to come and go as they please is an important aspect of experiencing the church as a home. It also helps that they can do things as they normally would at home. That sense of freedom contributes to the feeling of being at home. For Fr. Joel, a Catholic priest who runs a church and a shelter in Taiwan, the idea of being an open house is central to their mission to support migrants:

> Ugnayan is an open house. You can come in and go out anytime. I only close up when it's time to sleep. From six in the morning to ten or eleven in the evening, the church is open. The center is open. You do not have to have an appointment unless you want to speak with a specific person. Here, they can just wait for an hour or thirty minutes. There are always people. They do not have to call in advance. They just have to show up, and they are welcome. The same holds true for food. They themselves can organize things. They cook; the kitchen is free for everyone to use. They set the table up, and they wash the dishes.

Sometimes, pastoral work in migrant churches gives birth to other organizations that primarily assist migrants in meeting their needs. A Filipino organization serving migrants in Turin, Italy, for example, began in the Filipino chaplaincy. Sheila, the current president of the group, explained the value of having their own space where people can come for support, although it also required greater resources.

> Here in Turin, we have a chaplaincy—the Filipino chaplaincy of Turin—but it's mostly spiritual. We have spiritual activities, although they also have others like labor assistance, etc. But they concentrate on the spiritual aspect. Before, we used to work together with the chaplaincy. Then, lately, the needs of the migrants grew more and more. We have decided as a socio-civic organization that it would be beneficial to separate from the church. We would have our own space, so we could address the needs of the migrants better. If not, our activities and services would be limited because we would have to consider that others were also using the same space in the church. When I became president, I focused on putting up a center. Since 2015, we have been renting an apartment for 400 euros a month. We spend 1000 euros a month, including all our expenses.

According to Sheila, having the center has allowed them to address migrant issues from all angles. By this, she meant responding to whatever issues and concerns migrants bring to their attention. They have a labor desk where they interview to match Filipino job seekers with employment opportunities. They hold counseling sessions with anyone

who may need accompaniment. Volunteer Filipinos offer Italian classes to newly arrived migrants. School-aged children who are still adjusting to the Italian system can avail of tutorial services. Children aged five to eleven can attend English classes, which can be valuable when they visit or come back to the Philippines. They also give stress management workshops for adult women. A concrete example of this is the Zumba classes they have on Saturdays. After which, women gather to eat and socialize. Sheila and other experienced members of the organization act as mediators when resolving issues or conflicts that involve Filipinos who do not have mastery of the language or are not yet well versed in the Italian system. The organization also represents migrants in legal offices. In cases of sickness or death, both migrants and hospitals turn to the organization as a reference point. During the lockdown in Turin at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, Sheila's organization helped not only Philippine migrants but also those of other nationalities and the locals. These are examples of the third characteristic, which is that faith communities advocate for migrants' rights and advance migrants' "welfare from below" (Molli 2022, p. 12).

According to Kuppinger (2022), who studies immigrant religions and faith communities in their role in urban spiritual geographies, religions, and cultures, migrant faith groups do not only localize and seek to be visible; they also engage in civic participation. With my research participants, a major thrust of their civic participation addresses the plight of (labor) migrants. A key component of the third characteristic of advocating for migrants' rights and welfare is the ministers' and pastoral workers' familiarity with the challenges faced by migrant church members. For example, Annie, a pastoral worker active in the family ministry of the migrant church in Rome, identified the language barrier as an issue that affected migrants' employment conditions and familial affairs. The kind of support church workers seek to extend to their fellow migrant church members responds to their needs:

> Usually, when you are not well-versed in Italian, it is hard for you to get employed. And of course, even if you get a job, it would be complicated for you to negotiate with your employer because you could not express yourself well. You might just say yes to all that they want. Usually that is the reason people, especially migrants like us, just accept the terms of their employers, for example, in terms of salary. We don't bother negotiating anymore. But when I learned the language, I negotiated with my employers. It's a significant factor to know and speak the language. That is what I tell the recently arrived migrants: "You have to enhance your vocabulary." By learning to speak the language, you gain room to grow. You don't have to settle for a particular job. Your opportunities expand.

> We realized that one of the major problems faced by our families here in Italy is the language barrier. The children who are raised here speak Italian. There are parents who are not interested in learning the language and are not fluent in it who have difficulty communicating with their children. They do not understand each other. Parents could not speak with their children. In the family ministry, we focus on assisting families with how to facilitate communication at home. We hold a parents-and-youth forum to address issues and differences. Filipinos, for example, are not as vocal as Westerners. In our culture, we are not really used to expressing our thoughts and feelings, especially to our parents. We can be misconstrued as rude if we voice our concerns to our parents. But Italians can respond in a loud voice, and this is something our children may be picking up in school or in their environment. This is what I explain to our parents. I remind the parents to realize our present context, to understand and accept it, and to consider how this affects our children. I tell them it shouldn't be a problem if our children respond to us expressively, as long as they don't curse at us. Italians encourage kids to express themselves as young as they are, and when they speak, everybody listens. I think that is a positive thing that they do here.

Part of advocating for migrants' rights and welfare is educating them about their (labor) rights and responsibilities in the receiving society. Migrant advocates who are also

faith leaders take it upon themselves to work towards increasing awareness of and concern for the plight of migrants. Rev. Mario, a pastor in Hong Kong and a migrant advocate, actively works to build allies among other church leaders:

> The most difficult thing for me is making the faith communities understand that serving migrants is part of the overall ministry or goal of the church because the nature of most of the churches that we have is very conservative. We are confined to the four walls of the church, as are other faith communities such as Muslims. They are not keen on joining the stand in solidarity with migrants because they think it is not their task. It is not their mission to do solidarity work. That is the most challenging thing on my part.

Although such a task is difficult, Rev. Mario shared some of his accomplishments:

> The most rewarding for me is when they realize it is part and parcel of the overall ministry and program as leaders of faith-based communities, and also seeing the faith leaders express their support and all forms of solidarity with migrants, and then also seeing them speak on behalf of migrants and provide them with space that can be their home. That's the most rewarding part.

In addition, migrant churches raise funds to support members of the church and other migrants who are particularly in need. Sometimes, the church groups supply what the Philippine government cannot provide:

> Thanks to the Philippine Embassy for the shelter. If there are domestic helpers or workers who escape their abusive employers, they run to the embassy. Given that the embassy here in Kuwait has a shelter, these people are welcomed there. But the provisions are insufficient. What I do is announce it at Mass and appeal to our fellow Filipino nationals who may have the means to share. We take the assistance, donations, and food that we receive to the Philippine Embassy. We use the money we get to buy food because they are not well fed over there. The government seems to have a limited budget for them. Considering the number of people in the shelter, it really is not enough. Some of them sleep on the stairs (Alvin).

Fourth, as described by the research participants, sharing resources is typical of the members of migrant churches. They offer their time, financial resources, ideas, talents, and skills in the service of their migrant church community (Kuppinger 2022; Molli 2022). Pastoral workers serve in migrant churches and communities voluntarily. Lay workers doing church ministry and the church drawing operating funds mainly from its members are characteristics of migrant religious institutions that are described as having a "congregational structure" (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000, p. 137). Pastoral workers and church volunteers are aware of the demands of ministry work, the inconvenience it may cause them, and the absence of monetary compensation. And yet, they still find reasons to continue serving, one of which is the feeling of consolation they derive from being able to serve the church and their fellow migrants. One of them is Rochelle, an active member of the Filipino migrant church in Rome:

> I may be already tired from my job but still do ministry work, but the happiness I get from it is different. There is a different joy. As others would say, we are not even paid to do this, but we still devote our time to serve. [...] What is good is that my employer understands my commitment to the church ministry. When we have activities at church, I request time off from them. Let's say every Thursday of the month we have a coordinators' meeting. My employer allows me to attend that, and in return, I also stay at night whenever they need me. We have a give-and-take setup.

Sociologist Molli (2022) offers an explanation for the activism exemplified by migrant church members, which, in the case of his study, was focused on women. He posits that by being involved in religious activities, where migrants gain an opportunity to take on

leadership roles, they find a means "to gain a new form of agency" (Molli 2022, p. 9), which can be lost due to a "downward mobility" (p. 9) brought about by their migrant and labor status in the receiving society.

Sociologist Asor (2018), drawing from her research involving Philippine nationals active in church in South Korea, notes that migrants read their volunteerism as caused by their "transformation of the heart" and/or as according to God's will (p. 255). In relation to this, there are participants in my research who engage in volunteer and ministry work to express their Christian faith and their thanksgiving to God, such as Sheila, whose ministry is now beyond their migrant church in Turin, and Ben:

> I am a volunteer. Think about it: I have a job; I am a family woman; I have an eight-year-old child, but I also dedicate my time to the community, to the association, on my Saturdays and Sundays. Let us say we make a cost-benefit analysis . . . I do all these things because I feel the Lord has blessed me. This is my way of giving back. Because I am blessed by the Lord, this is my realization. The Lord has surrounded me with good and generous people. I receive support from my sibling, who looks after my child, when I have things to do for the association. My husband is also good. Let us just say that all these are part of God's plan. This is my role to fulfill, and God will not forsake me. Even though I am struggling financially, I believe God will provide. I just serve and help others, and God will make a way (Sheila).

> Actually, as a Catholic, if you love God, you should also love others. [. . .] I feel obligated to share myself with others. I see that many people are already serving here, but I still want to share myself. At least, you can be one example of what it means to be Catholic and to exercise the faith. I am offering myself in the service of others (Ben).

Sharing resources is not only typical of the active volunteers in church ministry but also of the rest of the members of migrant churches and other Filipinos. The life of migrant churches and migrant-serving organizations, such as Sheila's, depends significantly on the support of community members:

> First is the generosity of the Filipinos. I say this as the treasurer. They are really very generous. If a second collection is needed, we just tell them what it is for, and we receive donations. They are there to give their support. I also sometimes play the piano at mass, and there is another group that serves in that domain. As a religious sister, I see the faith of Filipinos. Even if they are swamped with work, they find time to come and attend the Mass. You can really see how much they depend on God through their experiences. Each day, they work really hard, and every Sunday, they show up for mass (Sr. Dawn).

> The Filipino community is willing to help the center because they know what a great loss it would be to close it down. I always tell them that if you don't help us, we will close the center, and we can get some rest. What is good is that the Filipino community supports us. Even on the bus, people approach me and hand me fifty, one hundred, or twenty euros. They are that generous. That is the spirit of community and cooperation here in Turin. That is why it is encouraging and inspiring for us to serve voluntarily. You forget about yourself because you know people support your mission and your organization's mission. I really see that the spirit of community and cooperation is very much alive (Sheila).

Fifth and last, this process of homemaking is about building a home together while adjusting to the new country. In a sense, the pastoral workers and ministers are adapting to the new country alongside the other church members to whom they minister. Since it is not always possible to do as they did back in their home country, members of migrant churches learn to make do with the resources available to them in the receiving country. It is not so much about replicating home, as it is back in the Philippines, as it is about being at home in the receiving country. This means they do things together as a church, such as

celebrating liturgical and national feasts in the receiving country, while adapting to the new environment. For example, Sr. Dawn noted the changes in liturgical celebrations, which initially did not sit well with her but which she eventually accepted upon seeing the need for them:

> Here, it is not like in the Philippines, where we celebrate each day of the Holy Week as it is. Here, on Holy Thursday, we also celebrate Good Friday because no one can make it on Friday. They have work. And then on Saturday, we have the Easter Vigil. In the beginning, I was questioning why they do things that way here. And for the *simbanggabi* (nine-day series of masses in anticipation of Christmas day), we do not have masses at dawn as we would have in the Philippines but in the evenings. That is how we do it here in Italy. I experienced culture shock in the beginning. But you have to accept the reality that we need to adjust. [. . .] There are Filipinos whom I encourage to come on Thursdays, too, but we eventually canceled Thursday masses because people were unavailable. In the winter, it also gets too cold. In summer, many of them go with their employers out of town to the beach. So we have adjusted the number of masses to three instead of five.

Part of homemaking is for members to assist each other in resolving issues. As migrants, often they lack familiarity with the ways, procedures, and practices in the receiving country. There is great value in finding help and support in the migrant community from others who may have knowledge to share. Adapting together may continue to be challenging. However, it becomes more manageable when they can turn to members who can impart insights from their personal experiences. A shelter run by a Catholic priest in Taiwan works this way:

> We do not have professional workers here at the center. What we have are all volunteers, and I believe very strongly in empowerment. In fact, if a person comes to the shelter, the first thing I tell the community is to talk to the person, ask them how they are doing, find out what the problem is, and guide them. It is not just me. The volunteers and the migrants themselves sort things out. If they have a specific problem, for example, a legal concern, I will send them to the corresponding office that can help them. If they have an employment-related issue, we accompany them to the labor office. But for common issues, I allow the migrants to help each other. I believe in empowerment. I do not do a lot of training and training and talking and talking (Fr. Joel).

This last characteristic of adapting together has been noted by other researchers who are investigating the experience of migrant faith communities. For example, Guest (2003, quoted in Kuppinger 2022) observes the significant role played by faith communities in how the immigrants situated themselves in New York's Chinatowns. Marshall, based on her research on Filipino Catholic culture in Manitoba, Canada, notes how religious interaction in immigrant churches fosters "in-depth ties to Canadian society" (Kuppinger 2022, p. 218). In the US, immigrant churches are described as providing opportunities for their members to develop skills that allow them to be involved in civic engagements within and beyond their churches (Nisanci 2022). This shows that migrants' religions, including their native practices and affiliations, do not impede their adjustment to the ways of the receiving society, but become a source of support that allows them to adjust and eventually find their place in it.

4. The Significance of Migrant Churches in Migrants' Homemaking

In this section, I shall discuss the significant role played by migrant churches in the experience of homemaking by migrants. Homemaking here is framed according to Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo's (2021, p. 5) argument to inquire into the lived realities of migrants to discover how they strive for "inclusion, recognition and ultimately membership" in the receiving society. To understand the process of integration of migrants, emphasis is given

to the "practical and situated ways" (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 5) they employ to achieve a sense of home, which is a "claim" (p. 7) migrants make for themselves. Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2021) posit a constructive conception of home "as an emplaced social relationship that is co-produced by different and unequal actors" (p. 7).

In the context of this article, there are several advantages to using the homemaking lens in migration research. First, it is possible to learn about migrants' resourcefulness and agency in creating a home for themselves, as well as which types of support—or lack thereof—are beneficial or necessary. Second, as I will discuss in greater detail in the succeeding section, migrants' subjectivity and humanity cannot be lost in migration discourse, particularly in efforts to respond to or resolve what is commonly referred to as the "migration crisis." By adopting the homemaking optic, the gaze is shifted to what matters to migrants as distinct human beings, recognizing their "emotions, ideologies and imaginaries of home" (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 7). Diversity among migrants, even those of similar religions and ethnic backgrounds, surfaces, and tendencies to essentialize migrants, which usually fuel racist sentiments, may, to some extent, be abated. Third, the homemaking optic invites scholars researching migration to reconsider the positive value of religion in migration discourse (Phan 2020). As these points reflect, the homemaking optic privileges migrants' identities, subjectivities, and agency. Thus, using this view to understand the role of migrant churches in migrants' lives can shed light on how a church can become a caring community—one that recognizes and values church members and care receivers as they are.

Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2021) are on point to argue that homemaking can be a struggle for migrants because of the "inequalities of social class, legalities, gender and racialization [that] undergird migrant homemaking practices and projects" (p. 9). A significant number of Philippine migrant workers are in the domestic and care sectors, where they grapple with challenges brought about by low wages, absence of social security, unjust working hours, discrimination, and verbal and physical abuse ("Recognizing the Rights of Domestic Workers" 2018). In this context, migrant churches' faith values, such as love of neighbor, mercy, compassion, and solidarity, to name but a few, make them conducive venues and supportive communities for (labor) migrants, especially the underprivileged ones, in their homemaking. While other Asian immigrants "at the top of the class spectrum" afford multiple homes (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 10), my research participants, like numerous labor migrants, have limited resources. Yet, as described in the previous section, pastoral workers and ministers partake in and foster sharing of resources in their churches to help migrants not only in spiritual and moral domains but also in very practical matters. Migrant churches, which in various cases are run by migrants with and for fellow migrants, provide a means for migrants to achieve "societal inclusion," particularly in difficult areas such as the "labour market, housing, education, [and] language learning" (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 8). Advocating for the rights and welfare of migrants in sending and receiving countries, migrant church workers support and encourage civic engagement (Kuppinger 2022) of fellow migrants, increasing their "access and visibility in the urban and natural environment" of receiving countries (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 8). However, it should also be noted, as described by Rev. Mario in his narrative quoted in the previous section, that there are migrant churches and religious groups which may not be invested in doing social work with and for migrants. Some migrants who are determined to respond to the plight of poor migrants even leave their church or religion, believing it is an impediment to their mission (Constable 2010).

Migrant churches play an important role in the "(re)territorialization and (re)production of home" (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 9) because they provide migrants with a sense of comfort similar to that found at home. Outside of their native country, a migrant church is one place where migrants can be with fellow nationals, sharing and enjoying common language, rituals, celebrations, food, music, aesthetics, memories, and activities without feeling the need "to justify why one does things in a certain way" (Boccagni and

Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 8). The combination of religious and national traditions reproduced in a migrant church, where migrants are practicing a kind of diasporic religion (Palacz 2022), does not only link them to the Philippines as their homeland. They also gain the possibility of constructing their home in the destination country with other people. Mutually, they give and receive a feeling of belonging in the migrant church. As affirmed by a recent study by Molli on the protagonism of women in migrant churches in Italy, migrants' faith and involvement in churches not only give them a way to maintain connections with their past but also to live a meaningful present in the receiving country (Molli 2022).

For religious migrants whose meaning-making is anchored in their faith in God, being in the company of fellow believers who can understand and support them through words and in ways to which they can relate makes their "struggle to make themselves at home" (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 9) more bearable. Migrants who claim God's participation in being where they are at present are quite convinced they are in the right place. Personal faith, which is also shared in a community, becomes a motivation for and a source of security and confidence in their homemaking in the receiving country. For example, Athena, a volunteer catechist in a migrant church in Italy, claimed, "The Lord has brought me to them (the children who attend her catechesis). The Lord is among them." She said that, through her mission in Italy of forming young children and their parents, she had understood why she had to leave her teaching profession in the Philippines. Although she would get tired from her full-time job of taking care of children over the week, she would still devote her time on weekends to perform ministry work, bringing her joy. Homemaking for ministers and pastoral workers also operates on a spiritual level, where home is constructed as coming home to God and seeking God's will, such as in Fr. Joel's description of what has transpired over the years of migrant ministry:

> Again, I say nothing is impossible for God. Miracles happen. I have seen changes. I have seen growth. And I have witnessed the difference after 20 years of doing this work. If I count the US experience, that is 40 years of work of being connected to people . . . as a community. I have seen a lot of miracles, reconciliations, of improvement and progress. I have seen a lot of difference. Are there any failures? Yes. But there are more successes than failures. Just to be able to help a person take another perspective of life is, to me, already a big win.

Although the homemaking optic shifts attention towards the subjective realities of migrants, it does not water down the objective presence of various inequalities that present homemaking as a struggle for many. Against this background, I have argued here for the central role played by migrant churches in the homemaking of migrants, particularly those who self-identify as religious. The values, beliefs, and practices shared in migrant churches foster an atmosphere that welcomes, supports, encourages, and accompanies migrants towards becoming at home in the receiving country. For these reasons, migrant churches serve as caring communities for their members, both active volunteers and pastors, and those who attend church celebrations and activities. In conceptualizing care as the overall aim of such communities, it is helpful to inquire into and reflect on what constitutes just care relationships, in this case, taking into account migrants' identities, subjectivities, and agency.

5. Migrant Churches as Communities of Care

In this section, I shall discuss what it means for migrant churches to be communities of care, communities that care about migrant welfare and that support migrants' homemaking in the receiving country. I will specifically look into how migrant churches manage their work with and for migrants in search of practices that avoid paternalistic tendencies and the unjust use of power. Here, I will draw from practical theologian Ryan LaMothe's (2021) exposition of the existential principles of care. According to LaMothe (2021), there are three "dialectical pairs of personal knowing" (p. 58) grounding caring relations. In the succeeding paragraphs, I will describe how Philippine migrant churches become communities of care through practices that exemplify the dialectical pairs of personal knowing, hence valuing

and upholding their members' identities, subjectivities, and agency. After all, although migrants frequently face vulnerabilities as a result of their status, they do not do so passively (Molli 2022). They do require care, but they cannot be viewed as passive recipients of it.

The first pair, identification and disidentification, refers to how the caregivers, for example, parents, recognize the similarities they share with their children and their individuality as unique persons. Caregivers must identify with their care recipients in order to avoid reducing them to the status of objects. Nevertheless, caregivers should remain aware that their ideas and representations of their care receivers do not totally represent who they are.

Identifying with one another is a feature of the research participants' homemaking experiences. The members of the faith community share things in common that give meaning to their understanding of themselves and their concept of home. Among their commonalities are their migrant status, race or nationality, language, faith or religion, culture, and traditions. When ministers and pastoral workers identify themselves among church members and vice versa, affinity and concern for each other can develop, establishing a good care relationship. However, there should always be room to allow each other to discover their respective differences. For example, while Sr. Dawn identified with the migrants in experiencing challenges for being out of their country, she noted their experiences differ: "We go through different suffering. As they go through hardships, I try to be there for them and be in solidarity with them. Compared to my struggles, what they go through is so much more. This is what I realize when I listen to their stories". By starting with their shared identities—common humanity, common migrant status, to name a few—a sense of openness to discovering how others differ from oneself develops. Similarly, Annie shared how they would encourage the parents attending their family ministry programs to understand that their children raised in Italy may act differently from their expectations of Philippine children because of the difference in the environment. While church pastoral workers recognize their role in contributing to the (Christian) formation of the members, they should expect and seek to understand that others' journeys of faith and processes of moral development may vary from their own. As LaMothe (2021) argues in relation to caring for refugees and immigrants, among others, "it is necessary to retain the dialectical tension between identification and disidentification, ensuring Others appear in their singularities in the polis" (p. 59). From the perspective of being a community of (Christian) faith, it helps to ground the caring relationship on the goodness of creation, and part of acknowledging this is an openness to encounter members of God's creation as they are. Assuming the perspective of other migrant church members, there is value that they can also identify with their pastoral workers and leaders, who themselves are migrants. Migrant pastoral workers become credible care givers in their church communities as they "embody the suffering that all members of the community have typically experienced in the settlement process" (Molli 2022, p. 7).

The second dialectical pair is that of determinate and indeterminate knowing. Caregivers need to possess the capacity to understand their care receiver, particularly what their needs are and how they can be cared for. However, the kind of knowing that inspires caring actions should humbly recognize the receiver as a "mystery" that remains, to some extent, "unfathomable" (LaMothe 2021, p. 60). With determinate knowing, there is always an intention to comprehend how the other can be cared for. Contrastingly, indeterminate knowing occurs when those in caring relationships are together for the sake of being together without having a specific caring need to address.

Years of serving in the migrant ministry allow pastoral workers and ministers to become knowledgeable of the usual concerns faced by migrants and how to handle them (See also Ley 2008; Molli 2022). This permits them to advocate for the rights and welfare of migrants. Determinate knowing shapes the capacity of migrant churches to be that caring community to its members. However, humility is needed in recognizing that one's familiarity with a person will always be limited, yielding to "this unfathomability with regard to the Other" (LaMothe 2021, p. 60). Several of the research participants, such

as Sr. Dawn, Sheila, Fr. Jorge, and Fr. Joel, shared some practices that added to their determinate knowing while also becoming a means for indeterminate knowing—knowing the other with no other aim than being together (LaMothe 2021, p. 60). Fellowship activities over familiar food, rituals, and stories; spending days off and unwinding together; and celebrating special occasions together are ways that strengthen migrant church members' knowledge of each other, the community spirit, and the level of comfort and feeling at home with each other. In these instances and specific moments of counseling and consultation, ministers and pastoral workers listen as migrants share their stories and concerns.

The third set is restraint and unrestraint. By exercising restraint, caregivers make room for their care receivers to maintain their identity. In acknowledging care receivers as they are, caregivers practice restraint by regulating their own needs to prioritize those of their care receivers. However, some unrestraint is important for caregivers to remain connected to their care receivers. LaMothe (2021) notes the significance of achieving mutuality and balance in terms of the care receiver's and caregiver's "exuberance" (p. 61).

For most pastoral workers, if not all, ministry work is performed voluntarily. This entails a great deal of restraint on their part, devoting time, effort, and resources to serve and care for others without receiving any compensation. Research participants shared religious and spiritual motivations for wanting to help other migrants, whether it be through (spiritual) formation activities or assistance with practical concerns. They claim to feel good or be happy while serving others. LaMothe (2021) notes that unrestraint manifests in the parent–child relationship through parents' "spontaneity or play" (p. 61). In the context of migrant churches, the common endeavor of homemaking stimulates exuberance among members who may be homesick and long for things and people from their home country. Ethnic churches in Italy are described to be "lively and dynamic" and conducive venues for "a wide- range of socio-religious initiatives" (Molli 2022, p. 14). Reproducing traditions and familiar elements from the native land requires creativity and energy. Doing this together creates a space for both restraint, expressed in service and generosity to others, and mutual unrestraint, which is made possible by being comfortable with each other.

LaMothe (2021) posits that keeping these dialectical pairs in tension is necessary to ensure care is based on "personal recognition" that supports the care receivers' capacity to "assert their needs and desires" (p. 62). This, then, might address concerns observed by sociologists regarding the tendency of or possibility for migrant churches to control their members (Ambrosini et al. 2021; Asor 2018). Care and support for the migrant members will certainly draw inspiration and guidance from the wealth of resources of the church, such as the scripture, traditions, and teachings, but always in dialogue with the lived realities of the migrants as they express them. The concept of homemaking emphasizes the communal nature of the migrant church, where everyone actively participates in various ways in the construction of a home in the receiving country. LaMothe's principles of care, which value and recognize care receivers' identities, subjectivities, and agency, underpin this paper's definition of a community of care. Using the homemaking lens and investigating how migrant churches contribute to migrants' homemaking experiences points to how churches serve as communities of care. In this regard, certain practices within Philippine migrant church communities reveal that as migrant churches support migrant homemaking, they become caring communities. In the same way, by becoming a caring community—one that duly recognizes its members as they are—migrant churches significantly support their members' experience of homemaking.

6. Conclusions

Adding to existing research on the significance of religion in migration, this paper specifically looked into the role of migrant churches in migrants' homemaking. By looking into the lived experiences of migrants who serve in migrant churches, (Christian) values, beliefs, and practices shared in migrant churches foster an atmosphere that welcomes, supports, encourages, and accompanies them towards becoming at home in the receiving country. Migrant churches, through the participation of ministers, pastoral workers, and

members alike, deliberately put structures in place to facilitate dialogue with each other and encourage moments of fellowship, contributing to each others' "(re)territorialization and (re)production of home" (Boccagni and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2021, p. 9). This exposition that centers the migrant church in migrants' efforts to construct a home in the destination country invites churches to rediscover themselves as communities of care. In keeping with the idea that the church is a parent to its members, LaMothe's (2021) concept of "dialectical pairs of personal knowing" (p. 58) ought to underpin the care relationship between the ministers or church leaders and members, where care receivers are listened to and recognized as they are, in their singularities. Being in such an environment, as exemplified by the experiences of the research participants in their membership and participation in Filipino migrant church communities, can support migrants' capacity to feel at home even in a place where the mainstream may choose to see them as others. To some extent, it can be validly argued that active migrant church members and leaders, such as the research participants, may generally be challenged to critically view their participation in migrant churches and how this affects other members. Nevertheless, their practices and narratives, analyzed in dialogue with LaMothe's normative conception of care as based on personal knowing, provide insights into churches' capacity to be communities of care. In this sense, the global Christian church can draw inspiration from migrant churches. Future research can extend the findings presented here by also looking into the experiences of other ethnic churches and immigrant religious institutions, including non-Christian religions. Another relevant trajectory that can be pursued should involve the second and succeeding generations of migrants, in order to give a more complex illustration of the role of religion and churches across generations of individuals with migration backgrounds.

Funding: This research was funded by Bijzonder Onderzoeksfonds, Zuidbeurzen grant number 3H200448.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of KU Leuven (protocol code G-2020-2238 21 August 2020).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available for ethical reasons.

Acknowledgments: I express my sincerest thanks to all my research participants for their willingness to partake in my research project and for their generosity and trust in sharing their time and stories. I would also like to thank the reviewers of this paper for their valuable input.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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