

MOVIE on the

Psst ... sorry to be the one to remind you, but it's time to start planning for that annual post-Christmas task of making New Year's resolutions. If



you're still stuck for ideas after the ball drops at midnight, check these pages in our Jan. 4 issue. That's where teens from around the diocese will share their own goals for self-improvement in 1996.

To celebrate Christmas with your relatives, some of you might have to travel to Buffalo or Binghamton or Syracuse. You might have to get up a couple hours early Christmas morning to hit the road, or even stay overnight Christmas Eve in a strange bed.

You think that's a hassle? Well, how do you think it feels to travel halfway around the world for Christmas?

That's exactly the plight each year for new groups of refugees arriving in various parts of the Rochester diocese.

Among the largest of these groups is the Vietnamese. An average of 12 new families of Vietnamese origin have arrived here annually for the past three years.

One of those Vietnamese, 16-year-old Tuyen Nguyen, has only lived in Rochester for eight months. So as she prepares for her first Christmas in the United States, Tuyen is struggling to find some holiday spirit amid the uncertainty of living in a new culture.

"I'm very, very sad and homesick, and it doesn't help to have this cold weather," Tuyen stated through an interpreter.

Tuyen would have felt right at home during last year's unusually balmy Christmas weather here. Spring-like Christmases were common in her home city of Saigon, where 70-degree days are typical at this time of year.

Cold weather at Christmas also required adjustment on the part of Mai Tram Luong, who has lived in Rochester since February 1992. Following midnight Christmas Mass in Vietnam, she notes, "You can go outside and a lot of people hang around."

Incidentally, Christmas holds extra-special meaning for Mai Tram: she will turn 21 years old on Dec. 25.

Both Tuyen and Mai Tram attend St. Anthony of Padua Church, a part of the Holy Apostles/St. Anthony of Padua Parish Cluster on Rochester's west side.

St. Anthony's contains the largest concentration of Vietnamese in the diocese. Ha Nguyen, director of the diocesan Asian Apostolate, said more than 250 people attend the 1 p.m.

Vietnamese Mass held each Sunday at St. Anthony's. She added that more than half of these churchgoers are teenagers and young adults.

With many of these youths able to speak limited English at best, Nguyen is hoping the Holy Apostles/St. Anthony's cluster will continue to increase its limited amount of social activities for Vietnamese youth. Recently, Nguyen noted, a karaoke night was extremely well attended.

Many of the Vietnamese arrive in Rochester in large families and stick closely together. Tuyen, for example, lives in the city with her parents, five brothers and two sisters.

Yet she'd rather endure cramped living conditions than to be here without her family — which is the case of some of young Vietnamese parishioners at Holy Apostles/St. Anthony's, she said.

"I'm very thankful my family is over here with me," Tuyen remarked. "Other kids are by themselves. My family keeps me going and is there to support me."

Tuyen and Mai Tram moved to the United States to escape the Communist rule of their home land. Politics have also caused upheaval in the life of Minela Dzihan, 14, a native of Bosnia-Herzegovina who has lived in Rochester since April of this year.

Minela, who attends Nazareth Academy, gets right to the point when asked why her family fled from their home town of Donji Vakuf back in 1992.

"The Serbs said we needed to leave, or they would kill us," she said.

Since she's left, ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia have left hundreds of thousands of people dead. Only in recent weeks has the fighting dramatically subsided, due to a peace agreement, between all sides, brokered by the United States.

Minela is a devout Muslim. Since her family does not practice Christianity, Minela doesn't take part in any Christmas celebrations at home or at Nazareth Academy.

Yet she feels comfortable attending Catholic school, she said, because the Catholics her family knew in Bosnia enjoyed a peaceful relationship with

the Muslims.

All three people interviewed said learning the English language is the key toward getting over some of their fears and apprehensions.

"I didn't know one word when I came here. It's gotten a little bit better," said Tuyen, who attends Franklin High School. "I'm going to work very hard on it, because it's very important to me."

For any immigrants newly arrived here, Mai Tram advised, "Learn the language and accept the new things." Mai Tram currently attends Monroe Community College and hopes to be a pharmacist.

Tuyen, Mai Tram and Minela also agree that adjusting to a new lifestyle is a fair price to pay for the opportunity to live under a democratic government and without war.

"Here there is peace, so I don't have to worry here," Minela concluded.

Story by staff writer

Mike Latona

Photographs by staff photographer

S. John Wilkin

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Minela Dzihan, a native of Bosnia-Herz lived in Rochester since April of this y

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