

# There's nothing wrong with the Eastern Rite

**R**ick Harabin knows only a handful of fellow Ukrainian Catholics in the entire Southern Tier.

But even though he is a minority in this respect, Rick is pleased to have such a distinction.

"I'm proud of it. There's so few of us, so I feel I can have something (to call my own)," Rick, 15, said.

Rick is a parishioner at St. Nicholas Church in Elmira Heights, where he is a religious-education assistant and a former altar server. St. Nicholas is one of only five Eastern Rite Catholic churches located in the boundaries of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester.

Rick pointed out that Catholics who practice the Latin Rite — more commonly known as Roman Catholics — aren't aware that people in all 17 Eastern Rites are full-fledged Catholics.

"Church is church," Rick said. "We're all Catholic and we believe most of the same things."

Rick noted that there's no major difference between Eastern and Latin Rites regarding basic Catholic beliefs. Rather, many of the distinguishing factors are related to the structure of Mass — known as "Divine Liturgy" to Ukrainian Catholics.

Some of those contrasts, according to Rick, are that readings and verses are recited differently; that Ukrainian Rite liturgies contain more singing than in the Latin Rite; and that some liturgies are celebrated entirely in the Ukrainian language. However, the basic structure of the liturgies — readings, homilies and administering of Eucharist — is the same.

Rick said that he occasionally

brings Roman Catholic friends to Divine Liturgies, and that they have enjoyed the experience.

"They like the Ukrainian language, how it sounds," he said.

He added that he has enjoyed attending Roman Catholic Masses on Sunday mornings after staying overnight at friends' houses.

Yvonne Hanushevsky and Roman Kuchma are two other Ukrainian Catholics who frequently intermingle with Roman Catholics. They belong to St. Josaphat's Church in Rochester.

Yvonne, 12, attends St. Josaphat's School, which is actually attended by more Roman Catholics than Ukrainian Catholics. When she talks to students, Yvonne said, she doesn't stop to consider whether they're Ukrainian or not.

"I just meet them," Yvonne said.

Roman, 15, is a native of Ukraine in eastern Europe. Currently a student at Irondequoit High School, he said his friends are more curious about his nationality than his religion.

"I just say I'm from Ukraine and they say, 'How was it there?' and 'Where do you like it better?'" Roman remarked.

Both Roman and Yvonne are very active in their parish. Roman is an altar server, and Yvonne helps on Sunday mornings by staffing a table at which religious videos are rented. She is also a member of St. Josaphat's youth group.

When Roman moved to the United States five years ago, he recalled, he felt fortunate that the St. Josaphat's parish community helped him adjust to his new environment.

"There's a lot of (Ukrainian) people here, so it's not that hard," Ro-

man said.

A strong sense of community is also felt by Chris Elhilow, a parishioner at St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Parish in Rochester. This 85-family Eastern Rite parish is a Melkite Greek church with a large Lebanese heritage.

Chris, 14, recalls how difficult it was when the church vacated its former location in Rochester in late 1993.

"It was kind of like a home," said Chris, who added that he cried at the final liturgy there. "It was kind of hard to let it go, but the new church is going to be just as good."

A new St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Church is currently under construction in Gates and is scheduled to open by the end of next year. Parishioners are currently using a Roman Catholic facility, the old St. Jude's Church building in Gates, for their Sunday liturgies.

Chris' family members share his level of devotion to his parish community. His father, Edmond, is the deacon at St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. Meanwhile, Chris and his brother Joe are longtime altar servers.

"I've been nine years in the serving business," joked Joe, 16.

As is the case with Ukrainians, Melkite Greek Catholics hold liturgies that differ from Roman Catholic Masses. For instance, Chris pointed out, Eucharist is received by all baptized parishioners in the form of bread, not hosts. The bread is dipped into wine and then placed on the tongue. Chris added that the Eucharist can only be administered by priests and deacons, and not by lay eucharistic ministers as in Roman Catholic parishes.

Joe said that he might have a hard

time adjusting to a Roman Catholic Mass after spending so many years in his Melkite Greek parish. However, he said that he might consider attending a Roman Catholic Mass if there was no Melkite Greek church nearby.

"I'll probably go to see what it's like, and how it's different. Then I'll come home and tell Dad all about it," Joe said as he grinned at his father.

Chris said that liturgies at St. Nicholas the Wonderworker Church resemble family gatherings.

"I guess it's a feeling of closeness," he said. "It's like one, big, happy family."

Rick in Elmira pointed out that the preservation of a close community is a challenge for his Eastern Rite parish because few Ukrainian immigrants have come to the Elmira area in recent years. Therefore, he feels it's vital for him to help preserve Eastern Rite traditions for future generations.

"There's not that many Ukrainians in the United States, so my parents don't force us to go (to St. Nicholas) but they direct us to it," Rick said. "Otherwise the Ukrainian (Catholic) population will decrease."

Rick emphasized one more vital fact about his parish that he'd like to share.

"We make the best *holupci* (a Ukrainian dish of cabbage stuffed with rice and ground beef) and *pyrohy* (dough stuffed with sauerkraut, potatoes or prunes) around," he stated proudly.

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