

on the MOVE

Forgiving

comes east

Story by Mike L

Photograph by Matt

When an unprovoked attack leaves you with a broken nose, hairline skull fracture and split lip, an act of forgiveness may be tough to muster up.

Tim Murphy faced this challenge. In fact, he is one of several diocesan youths who agreed to share how they were able to forgive despite the emotional issues they faced.

Early in March, while walking down a street on the city of Rochester's southeast side, Tim and a friend were jumped by six teens they did not know. After they threw Tim to the ground, one of the teens gave him a vicious kick to the face.

According to Tim, one of the six attackers was caught and admitted to the beating. Tim's parents are now pressing charges against the youth.

Although Tim's facial injuries have required plastic surgery, he said his Catholic beliefs have helped increase his ability to forgive those who attacked him.

"In the days after (the attack), I was praying for an answer. I found myself wanting to go to church more," recalled Tim, 17, a parishioner at St. Anne Church in Rochester. "Then I sort of realized that it didn't have so much to do with me. I told myself it was a random event."

Tim also developed compassion toward his attackers. "I didn't know their situation in life, where they were coming from. They could have been coming from a harsh neighborhood," he said.

Ultimately, Tim remarked, he feels he made the right choice to extend forgiveness instead of seeking revenge.

"I feel like a better person, to myself and to my God, if I can put this behind me and forgive them," Tim said. "Some people out there would say, 'How can you say that? They beat you and kicked you.' But the power of forgiveness is a very powerful thing.

The sooner you can let (anger) go through your system, the better off you would be."

Tim said that if he met up with the gang members again, 'they'd probably expect me to be angry and embittered. But through the power of my faith, I'd be able to look them straight in the face and say, 'I forgive you.'"

On the other hand, Tim noted that forgiveness was far more difficult for him to practice after one of his friends began dating a girl he had been dating.

"It's a lot harder to forgive when it's someone you know personally," Tim commented. Yet he added that he was able to forgive both people by asking himself if they were both happy now, rather than "thinking about myself."

Mike Shannon recently struggled with a similar forgiveness issue when his girlfriend began dating someone else. Though initially angry, Mike said he drew strength from a pin he always wears on his jacket. The pin, which he received at a parish retreat in 1995, states, *Forgiveness heals and renews.*

"Whenever I have a problem, instead of going crazy and going nuts, I'll stop and realize that if you forgive somebody, it's a heck of a lot easier than going off on them," said Mike, 18, from St. John of Rochester Church in Perinton.

Mike added that he and his girlfriend eventually reconciled and are going steady again.

"I was right on the edge, but had to swallow my pride. If I'd actually gone off and yelled stuff, we wouldn't have gotten back together," Mike commented. "It's not always easy to forgive, but it's a lot better than what the

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