

MOVIE on the

STORY BY MIKE LATONA

GODPARENT

Nicole Keenan is fond of all her relatives — but when it comes to her godparents, those relationships stand apart from the rest.

"They do more things with me, and for me. They're more there for me than my other aunts and uncles," said Nicole, 17, a parishioner at St. Mary's Church in Scottsville. "I know that if I need something, I can always count on them."

Dan Pincelli holds the same high esteem for his Uncle Mike and Aunt Anita, who are also his godparents.

"I feel like they're equivalent to a second pair of parents. I can tell them stuff I could tell my parents," remarked Dan, 17, from St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece.

Dan noted that when he was several years younger, he briefly became upset with his godparents and stormed away from them.

"They followed me downstairs and I said, 'You don't love me.' They said, 'Dan, we're your godparents. We'll always love you,'" recalled Dan, a senior at Aquinas Institute.

According to Canon 872 in the Code of Canon Law, a godparent — referred to as a "sponsor" — is expected "to present an infant at the baptism, and ... help the baptized to lead a Christian life in harmony with baptism, and to fulfill faithfully the obligations connected with it."

Jeniph Fields observed that her Aunt Rosemary — who also serves as her godmother — has helped guide her life by being "kind of like a second mom."

"When I was little, I would spend Friday nights at her home. She'd take me out for dinner and the movies," recalled Jeniph, 17, from St. John the Evangelist Church (Humboldt Street) in Rochester.

Even since her Aunt Rosemary got married and began having

children, Jeniph said, they've maintained close contact.

"She still calls every week to see how I'm doing, and I always babysit for her kids," Jeniph said. She added that she also has a good relationship with her godfather, Uncle Jeff (not the husband of her godmother). However, he lived out of town for several years so she did not spend as much time with him.

Two years ago, Jeniph moved into the rare position of becoming a godparent to her own godmother's child. Her Aunt Rosemary selected her and her brother Matt, now 19, to be godparents of their nephew Jake, now 2½.

"I think my aunt wanted somebody who was younger, because when she became godmother to me, she was

younger," said Jeniph, who was 15 when Jake was baptized. "I felt very honored. It was special."

Under church law, a godparent is normally at least 16 years old. However, Canon 874 allows for a bishop to establish a lower minimum age, or for a pastor to designate a younger person when there is "a just cause."

In fact, a sad set of circumstances led Nicole to become a godmother when she was only 6 years old. When her sister Erin was born with a partial heart and undeveloped arteries, doctors determined that Erin would only live a very short time. So Nicole and her brother Jesse — who is three years older than Nicole — became godparents to Erin in a baptism ceremony at Rochester's Strong Memorial



Nicole Keenan, age 6 to her only lived developed an Godparent exceptions circumstances



Nicole Keenan, 17, has found support in four people she considers "godparents." (From left) her parents; Dottie Bloss was also a baptismal godmother; and Diane LaDue was Nicole's confirmation sponsor.

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