



Rebecca Gosselin/Catholic Courier

Hong Kong native Sandra Chan took part in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program at Rochester's St. Anne Parish and was initiated into the Catholic Church on April 19.

Young adults fill recent RCIA class

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — They came from diverse geographic and personal backgrounds. However, thanks to St. Anne Parish, a group of young adults had a common bond this past year: making St. Anne a key stop on their road to full membership in the Catholic Church.

That journey intensified last August for Steve Muchard. Baptized a Catholic, he didn't practice the faith growing up but had a change of heart after his father underwent treatment for cancer. At that point he and his girlfriend Kristi Mullins, 24, began attending Mass weekly at St. Anne.

"I felt I needed something to help me through a tough time. I think that starting to come to church on a weekly basis, getting off my chest the problems in my life ... I felt so much more at ease, walking out of church knowing my prayers are being listened to," said Muchard, 25, who added that his father's health has since improved.

About that same time, Sandra Chan, 30, arrived in Rochester to begin a post-doctorate fellowship at the University of Rochester. She had become attracted to the Catholic faith in her native Hong Kong, so one day she took a long walk in search of a Catholic church and discovered St. Anne. The at-

mosphere, she said, was just right.

"I registered myself and asked how I could be baptized," she said.

In October Muchard and Chan joined an eight-member class for the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. They turned out to be among an unusually large amount of young-adult catechumens (those preparing for baptism, Holy Communion and confirmation), candidates (those already baptized who are preparing for Holy Communion and confirmation) and sponsors.

"It's good to see there's a next generation," Muchard said.

"I was impressed with that," said Mullins, who was Muchard's sponsor. "Definitely, I know for myself, I felt more comfortable."

Sister of Mercy Roberta Rodenhouse, pastoral associate, said she was surprised by this demographic because St. Anne doesn't have an especially large young-adult population. Yet Muchard and Chan credit Sister Rodenhouse — who coordinates the RCIA program — and Father William Leone, pastor, for creating a welcoming environment.

Sister Rodenhouse said she greatly enjoyed working with this group in which members also hailed from Ghana and Korea. "I felt like it was a league of nations," she quipped.

This type of diversity is what makes Catholicism so appealing to Chan. "Whatever tongue you're



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Steve Muchard also participated in the St. Anne RCIA program. Since being received into full communion April 19, he has become an usher at St. Anne.

Young Adult

speaking, Catholicism is united," said Chan, citing Acts 2, the Pentecost Sunday reading where disciples begin talking in different tongues.

Muchard said he became more excited about his RCIA experience as the months went along. "When I came to class, I was learning things that were astonishing," Muchard said, referring to church history.

And Mullins, who grew up in St. Mary's Parish in Honeoye, found her own faith rejuvenated based on Muchard's enthusiasm. "I got a lot more out of it than I expected," she said. "It helped our relationship grow as well. I think there was another aspect to it."

"It definitely brought us closer," Muchard agreed. "Every Tuesday night she was right by my side."

The RCIA class was officially welcomed into the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil Mass April 19 at St. Anne. "It was so overwhelming to me, such a beautiful Mass," recalled Muchard, who had equally high praise for the congregation that night: "They just genuinely cared. They really, really, really wanted to see good things happen to other people."

Chan concurred, saying, "I have

YOUNG-ADULT EVENTS

■ **THU, JUNE 26** — **Theology on Tap** for young adult 20s & 30s: "Celibacy: Does it Work?", Fr. Lee Chase, speaker; Johnny's Smoke Free, 1382 Culver Rd., Rochester; 6:30 p.m. happy hour, 7:30 p.m. discussion; 585/328-3228, ext. 1375.

■ **THU, JULY 10** — **Theology on Tap**: "Why Bother with the Bible?", Nora Bradbury-Haehl, speaker; Tully's Good Times, 1225 Jefferson Rd., Henrietta; 6:30 p.m. happy hour, 7:30 p.m. discussion; 585/328-3228, ext. 1375.

■ **THU, JULY 17** — **Theology on Tap**: "It's the End of the World As We Know It — Will You Be Left Behind?", Sr. Kathleen Wayne, speaker; Tully's Good Times, 1225 Jefferson Rd., Rochester; 6:30 p.m. happy hour, 7:30 p.m. discussion; 585/328-3228, ext. 1375.

■ **THU, JULY 24** — **Theology on Tap**: "If the Pope Played Jeopardy Would He Always Be Right?", Fr. Brian Cool, speaker; Tully's Good Times, 1225 Jefferson Rd., Henrietta; 6:30 p.m. happy hour, 7:30 p.m. discussion; 585/328-3228, ext. 1375.

■ **SUN, AUG. 3** — **Picnic & Mass**; St. Thomas More Church, 2617 East Ave., Rochester; picnic 2 p.m., Mass 5 p.m.; Bishop Matthew H. Clark, celebrant; \$10 tickets at all Theology on Tap events or call Shannon Loughlin 585/328-3228, ext. 1218 or 800/388-7177, ext. 1218.

so much comfort in this Catholic community."

Encouraged by that support, Muchard has become an usher at St. Anne and has made friends of all ages — a step he hadn't been sure would be possible. "I had looked at Catholics as older people going to church, doing the routine on a weekly basis. I didn't know there was a place for me," he said.

Whereas Muchard has deepened his involvement at St. Anne, Chan was obligated to leave town in mid-June following completion of her fellowship. However, she said her RCIA experience will have long-term effects as she returns to Hong Kong, where she is resuming her psychiatry practice. She said she plans to promote her Catholic faith "hopefully to everyone I come in contact with."

"I am proud to say I was baptized, and I take the body and blood every week. I am so proud to say that," she stated.