

Teen, adult share devotion to rosary

Mike Latona/Catholic Courier

ROCHESTER — What began as a casual conversation about the rosary has evolved into a profound connection between a teen and her youth minister.

One day this past summer, Alison LeChase, youth minister for the Winton-Culver Parishes, mentioned to 16-year-old Liz Bridge that she was planning to design rosaries for her niece and nephew. Liz responded by saying she prays the rosary daily.

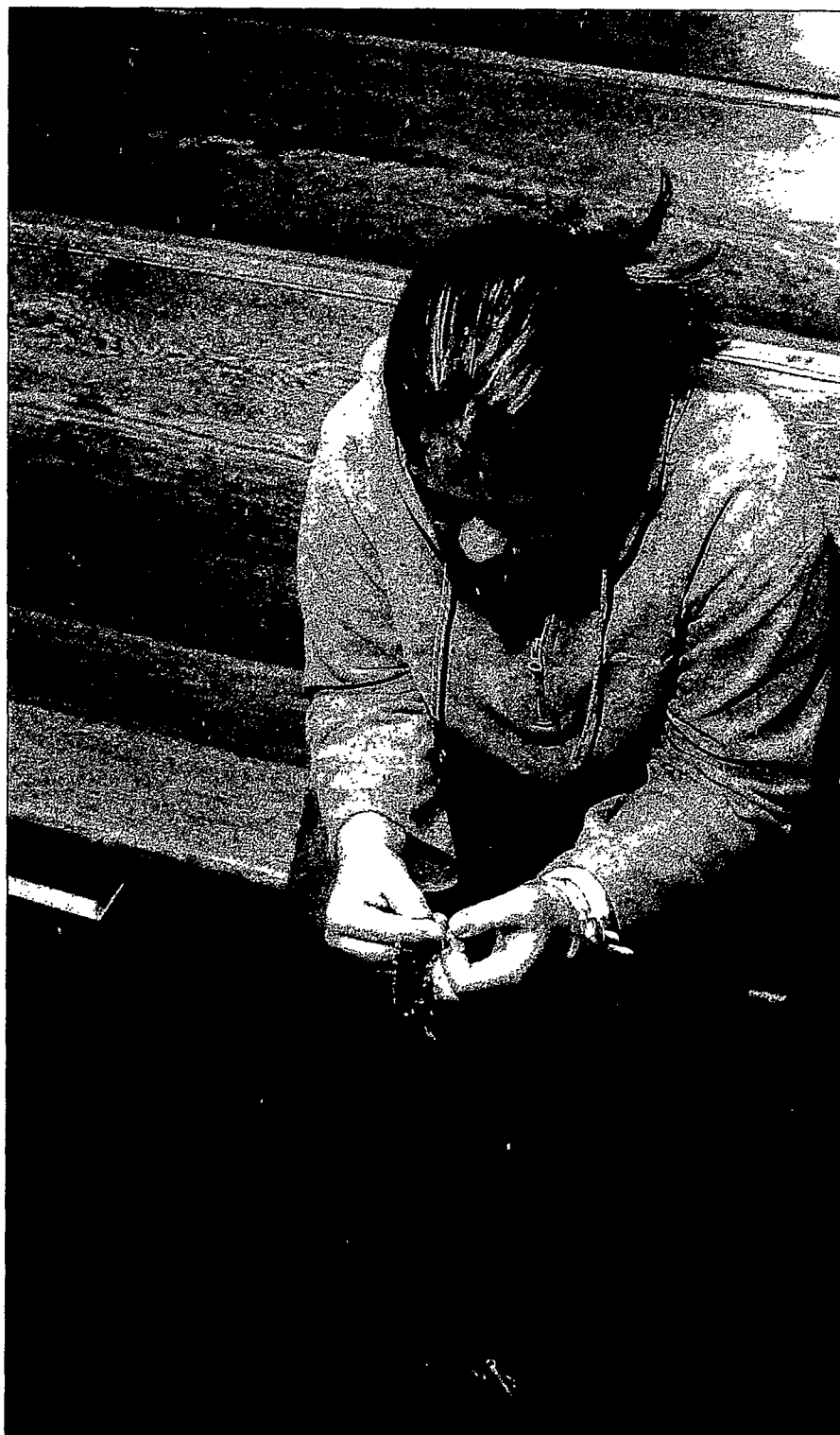
As they talked further, LeChase was surprised and touched to discover that Liz had been praying the rosary on her behalf for the previous two months. LeChase, who has been married for two years, is trying to start a family. Liz told the *Catholic Courier* she hopes her prayers will help bring this about for the youth minister, whom she regards highly.

"It just seems like she does a lot. She's always there for me," Liz said. "I just pray for her every day, for things to go well." Liz added that a group of fellow students at Our Lady of Mercy High School, where she is a junior, also mention LeChase in their intentions during morning prayer at school.

Liz said she prays the rosary every night before bed. Another benefit of this practice, she noted, is that she feels like God "is kind of in the room ... it's just very relaxing. It helps me get to sleep at night."

Liz is a member of Rochester's St. John the Evangelist Parish on Humboldt Street. She was fully received into the Catholic Church at Easter of 2002, through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. Therein lies another link to LeChase, who had gone through RCIA at St. John the Evangelist just one year earlier. Liz, who was baptized Catholic but had never received any other sacraments, said she grew more interested in her faith after she began attending a Catholic high school.

"It kind of made me realize I'd been missing it. People who went to



Leila Navidi/Catholic Courier

Sixteen-year-old Liz Bridge holds her rosary Sept. 27 at she sits in a pew at her parish, Rochester's St. John the Evangelist Church on-Humboldt Street.

Youth

church, there was always something they had that I didn't have," she explained.

Liz became active in the Winton-Culver youth group when LeChase was a volunteer with the group. LeChase was hired as the full-time youth minister over the summer following the unexpected death last winter of her predecessor, Dennis Reno. Her ministry also covers nearby St. James and St. Ambrose parishes.

LeChase said her own attraction to the rosary was sparked during a moving prayer service at St. John the Evangelist shortly after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Now, LeChase said, she has rosaries displayed "in every room of the house." She and Liz each own rosaries that are family heirlooms: LeChase has one that belonged to her husband's grandmother, and Liz's rosary was formerly her great-grandmother's.

Pretty soon, many other teens in the Winton-Culver Parishes will have special rosaries as well. After learning of Liz's devotion, LeChase said she got the idea to make rosaries not only for her niece and nephew, but also for every active member of the Winton-Culver youth group. LeChase buys her own materials and strings the beads and crosses during her free time at home. She plans to keep this up throughout October — a month the Catholic Church dedicates to rosary devotion — and into November so she can give the rosaries to teens with whom she'll travel to the National Catholic Youth Conference in Houston Nov. 13-16.

Even if some youth-group members don't end up praying the rosary regularly, LeChase said they can still value the rosaries that she's creating as important symbols of their faith.

"God is a mystery, and our faith is a mystery. (But) the rosary, it's that physical representation of God," LeChase explained.