



Leslie Pierre-Philippe, a member of the Immaculate Conception Liturgical Dancers, performs during the Feb. 20 talent show.

pearance by Dr. David Anderson of the Black Storytelling League of Rochester, who emphasized the importance of knowing one's cultural and family history. Then came a series of small-group activities in which participants joined with volunteers from the Diocesan Youth Committee, exploring such themes as self-identity; strengths and weaknesses; selflessness; community; communication; and overcoming obstacles.

Chavone Vega, 14, said she particularly enjoyed an exercise where her small group was blindfolded and had to help each other undo a rope. The teamwork aspect was valuable to her, she said, because "I don't really trust a lot of people or work with a lot of people."

"It's very interesting, how everybody gets along — no hatred, it's a community. There's no arguing. Everybody connects to each other," observed Chavone, a parishioner in Rochester's Flower City-Lexington parishes.

Chavone said this comfortable at-

mosphere helped her regard the Faith Fest as an event "pretty much where I can let go and be myself." She also found herself growing closer to God during the weekend, saying she realized that "If ever there is a problem you could always go to him. He's there all the time."

Rafael Walker, 13, also said the Faith Fest helped him grow in his faith, inspiring him to "put it to the

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A	D	A	M	A	E	S	O	P	B	L	E	U		
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T	O	B	E	S	A	C	R	A	M	E	N	T	S	
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Melanie Reyes (from left), Julian Bell and Marianna Scott, members of Bata con Pies (Drums with Feet), perform a dance called the Plena during the Feb. 20 talent show.

next level." In addition, he said, "I started to feel more self-confidence. I know I can achieve anything in any situation."

Like Chavone, Rafael said he gained inspiration from the friendly environment. "(At first) I didn't know anybody, but it's been pretty easy," said Rafael, a parishioner of St. Bridget's.

The program at Holy Family put the same emphasis on prayer, discussion, music and dancing as the inaugural Urban Faith Fest held last May. Although that festival was successfully led by Sal Solo — a vibrant Catholic musician who will also keynote the Diocesan Youth Convention Aug. 27-29 — DeJesus said

she opted this time for more inclusive segments, such as a talent show, rather than a keynoter. "We wanted it so there would be more of an opportunity to participate," she explained.

DeJesus estimated that more than 20 parishes were represented at Holy Family. She said the Faith Fest was geared primarily toward urban parishes, but that all were welcome. Among the suburban parishes on hand was St. Paul's in Webster, which had a satisfied participant in Alana Capogreco.

"I've had a great time, meeting the bishop and getting to know all these people," said Alana, 15. "It's great to get to know new people."

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