

Too HOLY?

Ian Caloobanan changed when he joined the Church. His friends noticed.

BY R. VAL JOHNSON

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You're too holy." Twelve-year-old Ian Caloobanan was astounded at his friend's words. He didn't consider himself holy.

His friend continued, "Ever since you joined the Mormons, you've become a killjoy. You don't drink with us anymore. You don't have fun with us on Sunday. You're too holy."

The words hurt, and yet . . . what else could he do? He had been baptized and now held the Aaronic Priesthood. He had changed, and as far as Ian was concerned, he had changed for the better. But holy? Well, maybe not yet.

Ian, who lives in the Las Piñas

Philippines Stake, was baptized when he was 10. When the elders gave him the lessons, they asked him to pray to know that the Church was true. He did. "I felt happy and very light," he says. He realized later that it was the Holy Ghost bearing testimony of the truth to him.

Before he joined the Church, Ian used to drink tea with his friends. He also went to cheering practice on Sundays, preparing to lead cheers at his school's sporting events. But he stopped doing those things. Instead, he started going to church, even though he is the only one in his family who does. His father supports Ian in his Church attendance, and his stepmother, who is not a member, takes him to church and then picks him up afterward.

When asked why he comes to church when it would be easier to stay home, he says simply, "I come because I want to keep my faith strong."

"Ian is a good example of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ," his bishop says. "He faithfully comes to church, and he doesn't get upset. He has many friends here. He was excited to receive the priesthood and asked his father to buy him a white shirt so he could wear it when he passes the sacrament."

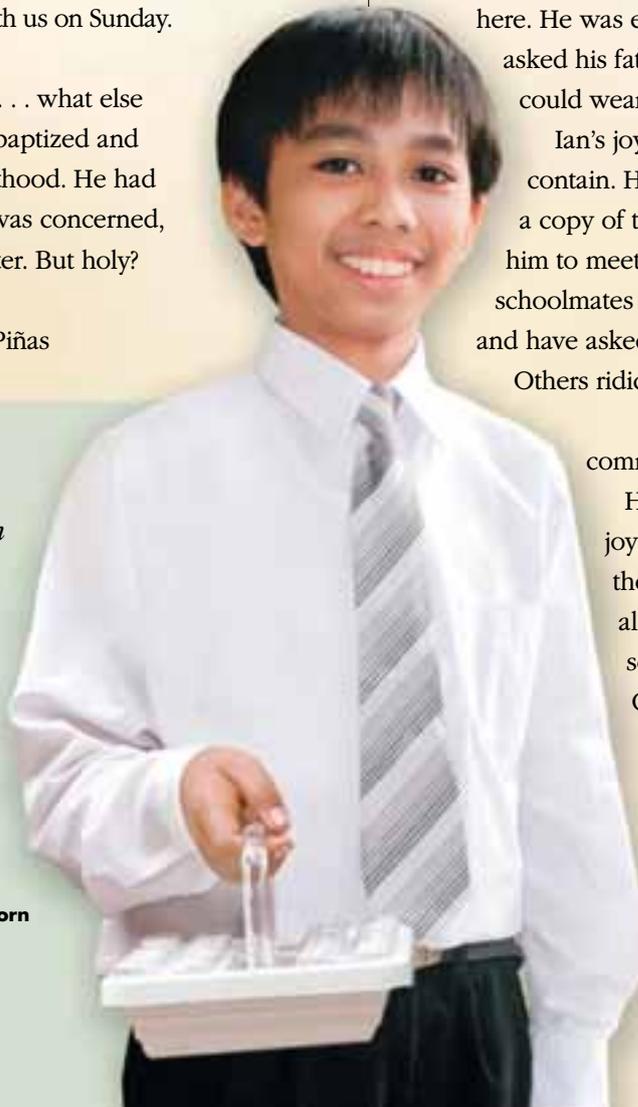
Ian's joy at finding the gospel is hard to contain. He has given one of his teachers a copy of the Book of Mormon and invited him to meet with the missionaries. Some of his schoolmates respect him for his new standards and have asked him questions about the gospel. Others ridicule him.

Ian just keeps on keeping the commandments the best he can.

Having experienced a measure of joy as well as persecution in joining the Church, Ian has wise counsel for all of us: "Keep the faith. Study the scriptures. Pray. Trust in Jesus Christ. Commit yourself to living the gospel. Change for the better."

And isn't that what Church membership is supposed to do? Help us change for the better. Help us, eventually, become what Jesus wants us to be—holy. **NE**

PHOTOGRAPH BY EDWIN REDRINO



IT STARTS WITH FAITH

"Spiritual rebirth originates with faith in Jesus Christ, by

whose grace we are changed. More specifically, it is faith in Christ as the Atoning One, the Redeemer, who can cleanse from sin and make holy."

Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Born Again," Ensign, May 2008, 78.