The Rev. John T. Cherry, 53, of Gary, Ind., former vice principal of Aquinas Institute and Aquinas High School in Houston, died yesterday morning in his quarters at Gary. Father Cherry had been a teacher at St. Thomas High School in Gary since September 1970. He was born in Houston to teach biology and was appointed dean of students a year later.

Father Cherry was named school treasurer in 1961 and vice principal in 1966. He went to Gary in 1970. Father Cherry is survived by two sisters, Sister Victoria and Sister Thomas, both of the Dominican Order in Houston.