

Thriving inner-city school

S.R.O. at Holy Angels Elementary

By Connie Lauerman

HOLY ANGELS Catholic Elementary School in the heart of the South Side's inner city has a curious problem.

Unlike many Catholic schools which are facing dwindling enrolments and money problems, Holy Angels cannot accommodate all the students who wish to attend the largest black Catholic school in the nation.

There are 400 names on Holy Angels' waiting list, and its 1,300 students are bursting the seams of the school at 545 E. Oakwood Blvd.

The Rev. George H. Clements, pastor of Holy Angels Church, and the Rev. Paul Smith, school principal, were overjoyed last week when three new mobile classrooms were installed on two vacant lots across the street from the main building. Four other mobile facilities already are in use.

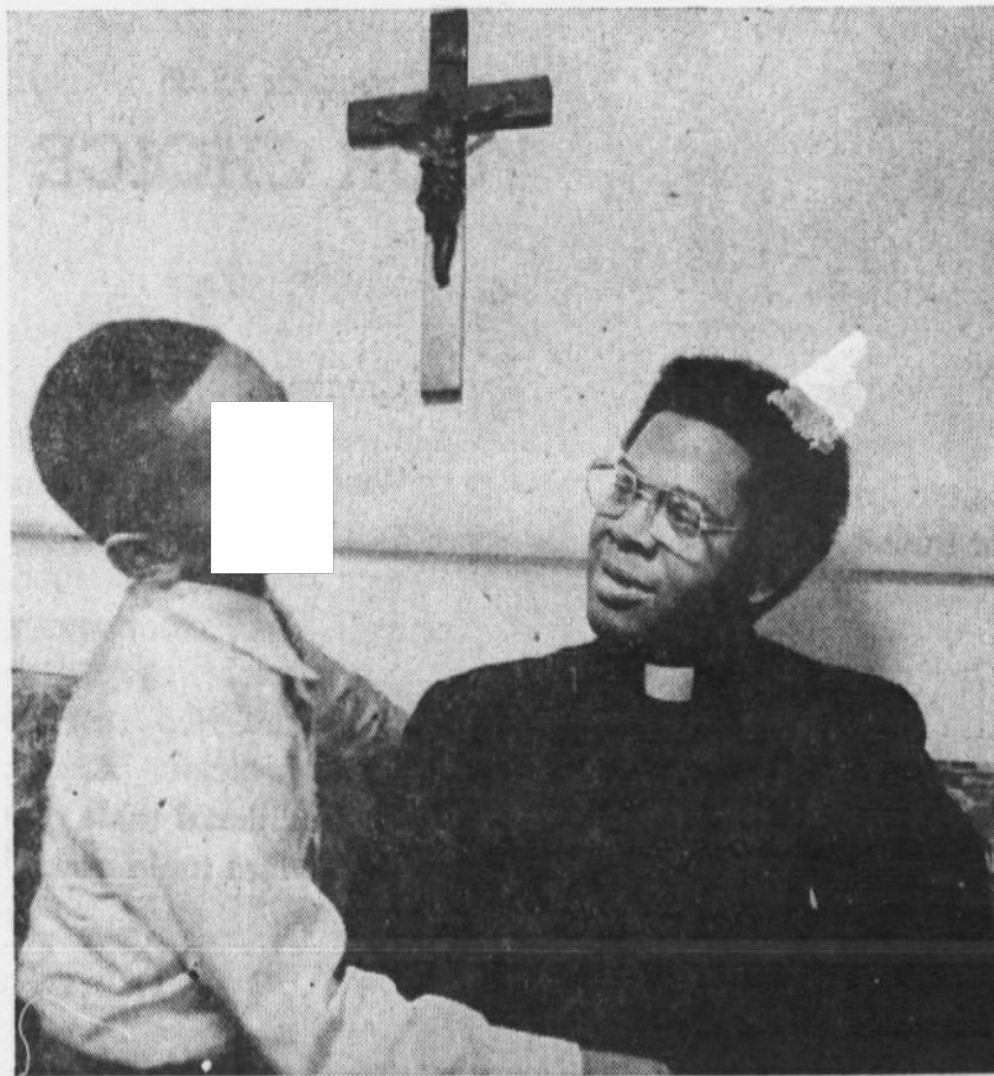
"WE USE the boys' sacristy in the church for a tutorial lab," said Father Smith. "We even use the clothes closets—every available inch of space. As a matter of fact, my office used to be the nuns' kitchen when they lived in the school building.

"We are thriving. And that is an inconsistency when so many inner-city Catholic schools are closing."

Father Smith cited several reasons for Holy Angels' success, including the use of corporal punishment and strict discipline when needed, dedicated teachers who could earn more money at public schools, and highly involved parents who are interested in monthly Parent-Teacher Association meetings.

"Many parents are on public aid and all are working parents. We have no gentlemen or ladies of leisure here. The people are making the sacrifice of paying tuition for this kind of education, Father Smith added.

TUITION AT the school, which is



Fribune Photo by James Mayo

The Rev. Paul Smith, principal of Holy Angels school, has a friendly chat with one of the pupils, [redacted], 5.

open 12 months a year, is \$18 a month for one child and \$20 a month for two or more children. Students from outside the community—and children come from as far as 130th Street—are charged a flat fee of \$25 a month.

Father Smith said he would like to expand by having a permanent building

constructed on the embankment behind the school where abandoned railroad tracks now stand.

"It's a natural expansion area since we're landlocked," said Father Smith. "The Penn Central Railroad said they would give us the land if they were not in bankruptcy."