

Father **Santo's** victory

# Second-chance school graduating 8 students

By Lyan Taylor

**EIGHT PUPILS** will be graduated tomorrow from St. Dominick's Catholic alternate grade school, 825 N. Hudson St., a branch of St. Joseph's Catholic School.

For them, and for the **Rev. Mark Santo**, who founded the unusual school, it will be a victory. That is because St. Dominick's pupils, by and large, are students who might never have graduated if they had stayed in regular parochial or public grade schools.

Of the 45 pupils at St. Dominick's some had been expelled as discipline problems, some were as much as four grades behind in their work at other schools, some are exceptional students who were bored with school and wanted to quit. These are not wealthy kids whose parents can afford to send them to an expensive private school. Most live in the Cabrini-Green housing project right across the street from St. Dominick's Catholic Church, 357 W. Locust St.

"**THE PROJECT** began three years ago when five different families came to me within two weeks asking where they could send their children who were being expelled from grade school as disciplinary problems," Father **Santo** said.

Within a few weeks one classroom was set up in the rear of the church's sanctuary. As of this month the Catholic School Board is recognizing it as a separate school and it will no longer be considered merely as a branch of St. Joseph's school.

It takes a year or two of an 11-month long school year for most of the pupils to pass a ninth grade national proficiency test, the requirement for graduation, Father **Santo** said.

"**THESE ARE** exceptional kids," Father **Santo** says proudly of their achievements.

It also is an exceptional teaching system he and his teachers have evolved. The four male teachers, each of whom has a class of from 8 to

15 students, are residents of the Cabrini-Green area. The pupils are given their home phone numbers and can call their teachers at home.

Central Y. M. C. A. college education seminar students tutor St. Dominick's students several days a week.

The students are made aware of the alternatives facing them if they fail at St. Dominick's, Father **Santo** said. "We take time to spell out their alternatives with them. We kind of make an agreement with the kids, like a contract, so they know what we will do for them and what in turn we expect from them."

**THE SCHOOL**, which has moved into a former convent on Hudson street, may have an enrolment of 60 students next year. Another 40 are expected to be enrolled in a day school project. Until now the Servite order, of which Father **Santo** is a member, and the students' parents have been raising the funds to keep the school operational. But expenses are increasing and Father **Santo** hopes this year to get \$24,000 from the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago to meet next year's budget.

Walking back from the school to the church, Father **Santo** waved toward a large, grassy area adjacent to the alternate school where the former St. Dominick's parish school stood before it had to be torn down.

"I'd like to see another school here someday," he says wistfully.

You get the idea that someday, somehow . . .

## State sued over medical plan

Two welfare rights organizations accused Gov. Walker's administration yesterday in Federal District Court of hiding a free medical program available to children from welfare and Medicaid families.

The Chicago Welfare Rights and Illinois Welfare Rights organizations filed suit asking the court to force the state government to print 200,000 pamphlets to welfare families in-

order and had 200,000 pamphlets describing the benefits printed for distribution. Before they were distributed, however, Ogilvie was defeated by Walker in the November elections, and the pamphlets remain in a Springfield warehouse, the groups charged. The suit charges Walker is attempting to hold down costs by not publicizing the free benefits.