

# St. Mel Class of '78 the last?

By Michelle Stevens

Sun Times  
6-5-78

making the decision to close without discussing the issue with school officials.

Despite the banner across the stage that proclaimed "Providence-St. Mel is staying alive," the financially troubled Roman Catholic high school held what could be its last graduation Sunday.

Forty-six students received diplomas during a 2½-hour ceremony that was punctuated by several standing ovations for principal Paul J. Adams.

He told the audience that the school would remain open despite a statement by the Archdiocese of Chicago that it was withdrawing financial support. The archdiocese earlier this year announced that \$350,000 a year was needed to keep the school at 119 S. Central Park open. More than \$100,000 would be needed for repairs, the archdiocese said.

**ADAMS NOTED** that the archdiocese said it no longer could afford the \$1,300-per-pupil cost at Providence-St. Mel.

"But is that too much to pay at a school where absenteeism is less than 4 per cent a year, where discipline is a plus, and where 85 to 95 per cent of the students go on to college?" he said.

"You don't close a gold mine that is yielding gold," he added. "You don't close a silver mine that is yielding silver."

The frantic fund-raising since the archdiocese's announcement is not unusual for the school in recent years. Providence-St. Mel first had serious financial problems in 1974 and forestalled closing by raising \$24,000.

In 1976, the school raised \$54,000 and last year raised \$95,000 to keep the doors open.

**ADAMS CRITICIZED** the archdiocese for

He insisted that the school would continue private fund-raising efforts and would open this fall as a private school even if the archdiocese does withdraw financial help.

"Don't worry," he told the younger students in the audience, "we'll see everybody next year for graduation."