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Drug-Busting Catholic Priest to Receive Honorary Degree

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DRUG-BUSTING CATHOLIC PRIEST TO RECEIVE HONORARY DEGREE

DAYTON, Ohio -- The Rev. George Clements, the first Catholic priest to adopt a child and an outspoken anti-drug crusader whose work as part of Chicago's "God Squad" has captured national attention, will receive an honorary degree from the University of Dayton on Sunday, April 28.

Clements is the founder and president of "One Church, One Child," a program dedicated to finding black adoptive parents for black children. The program has helped to reduce dramatically the number of black children awaiting adoption in Illinois and has resulted in the establishment of similar programs in more than 30 states. In 1981, he became the first Catholic priest to adopt a son and has since adopted three more.

The pastor of Holy Angels Church in Chicago for more than two decades, Clements recently gained national attention again--this time for successfully fighting to have laws enacted forbidding the sale of drug paraphernalia in Chicago and 17 states. In 1989, Clements and another Chicago priest invited parishioners to join with them to participate in rallies and boycott retailers who sold drug paraphernalia. They earned the nickname, "the God Squad," and President George Bush named Clements one of the nation's top 20 anti-drug fighters.
Clements, who will be awarded the honorary degree of doctor of humane letters, is one of the founders and former executive director of the Black Catholic Clergy Caucus. He is chaplain and founder of the African-American Police League. In 1989, he was made a chief of the Yoruba Tribe in Imeko, Nigeria, for his work in helping African students pursue higher education.

Clements, who has dedicated his life to improving the lot of the less fortunate, is the focus of the award-winning NBC movie, "The Father Clements Story," which starred Louis Gossett Jr.

The University of Dayton will also award honorary degrees to Joseph E. Keller, a retired lawyer widely credited for his work in integrating the Boy Scouts of America in the Washington, D.C., area and Burnell R. Roberts, chief executive officer of Mead Corp., the Fortune 500 forest products company based in Dayton.

The University of Dayton, founded in 1850 by the Society of Mary (Marianists), ranks among the 10 largest Catholic universities in the country and is the largest independent university in Ohio.

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Editor's Note: To arrange an advance telephone interview with Father George Clements, contact Darryl Rouson at Holy Angels Church in Chicago at (312) 624-5375. To arrange an interview with Clements in Dayton, contact Teri Rizvi at (513) 229-3241 or 698-6646.