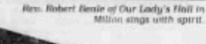
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BY BYCK HUIBIET



Eight vocal priests take their show on the road

Singing fathers

By Nathan Cobb Globe Staff

And hey, we've got the Singing Pricets with us torsight, ladies and gentlemen. When it comes to success, who sugs these guys don't have a prayer? I mean, they were so good that the last time we had them on the show they got a kneeting ovation. But they don't charge admission. Uh-huh. Instead, they take up a collection. I understand they wanted to call themseives the Supremes but the name was taken. Last year they did six weeks way off Broadway - in Rome. Their favorite comedian, you know, is Joey Bishop .

flut serimely, folks:

The Singing Priests are out there. leadly working crowds throughout the Archdiocese of Boston. There are eight of them, in their 40s and 50s, and they've been at it for several years. bringing an estimated \$500,000 into the coffers of various local charities. And we're not talking Gregorian chants here, or liturgy set to song, We're talking Rev. William Commings of Our Lady Help of Christians in Newton kicking up his heels while belting "New York, New York." We're talking Rev. Robert Beale of Our Lady's Hall in Milton l'Tm the only English priest in the Archdiocese.") doing a sudden segue from Beethoven into Shirley & Lee.

"This blows people's minds," con-fesses Rev. Patrick Dolan of Holy Family in Rockland, the one at the plano. People think we say Mass in the moening and go back into the rectory for the rest of the day. They think we live in a coconn.

Consider last Friday night. The modern 413-seat auditorium at Hanover High School was nearly filled, primartly with men and women who were middle-aged or older. On stage, seven folding metal chairs were neatly placed in a row. (Fory, Jon Martin of St. James in Salem had an unexpected commitment elsewhere, although the joking among the other parish primts had it

that he was probably jost somewhere among the mysterious back biways of Hanover | Backstage, the preshow spread consisted of cups of water. Rev. John Connolly of Immanulate Conception in Stoughton stilled up to the curtain and peeked at the growing audi-

"I know what people say when they first see us," he said. 'They say, 'What in the name of God is that

During the next 2% hours, they sund out. One by one - and occasional ly in groups - the men in Roman collars and dark suits took center stage Their musical material reited heavily on show tunes, with additional doses of middle of the road songwriters such as Nell Diamond and John Denver, Long jokes were told with professional and ethnic polish i"And so St. Peter says to the two men, he says ... 7 and there was a brief pitch for recruits C'We're looking for a few good men and a few good women to become priests and nuns with us.") But mostly what went on was a semi-professional variety show set beneath a single row of spotlights and frequently accompanied by a

ng along audience. The priests waved goodnight to a

standing ovation.

The coordinator of all this is Rev. Ned Carroll, age 42, now of St. Peter's in Plymouth and originally of Lowell. Fr. Carroll is boyish and cherubic, the kidd of son every Catholic mother wants. His own mother was a singer in vaudeville, while his father, among other occupations, ran a carmival. He took rate lessons for 15 years and became the student chotrmaster at St. John's Seminary in Brighton while studying for the priesthood. It was there, during the late 1960s and early '60s, that the group that eventually became the Singing Priests was organized. The precise moment of its official debut is a matter muddled by time - Fr. Carroll says it was in 1969, Fr. Cummings in 1975 but in any case the concept caught on. "People actually blied us." Fr. Carroll recalls. "We couldn't get over it." PRIESTS, Page 26.