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METRO

ANGELS SOARING AGAIN

HOLY FAMILY CHURCH | Handcrafted in 1870, they were taken down, spruced up after 1 fell



A gilded angel orchestra has been restored and is being remounted at Holy Family Church on West Roosevelt. A parishioner refurbished them at no charge. | JOHN H. WHITE-SUN-TIMES PHOTOS

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Twirling slowly, tiny horn in hand, an elf-size golden angel rose heavenward Wednesday, all to the strains of Bach's Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C.

With the help of ropes and pulleys, he rejoined 28 other members of a gilded angelic orchestra, all of them handcrafted in 1870 by Charles Olivier-Dauphin of Montreal for the main pipe organ at Holy Family Church on West Roosevelt.

"It's part of the ongoing resurrection of the church," Holy Family's administrator, the Rev. Jeremiah J. Boland, said before Wednesday's holy hoisting.

Established in 1857, Holy Family is one of just two churches to survive the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. (The other: Old St. Patrick's on West Adams.) After many decades of neglect, its organ angels — like the church itself — were showing their age. In 1989, there was even talk of tearing Holy Family down. In 2003, one angel toppled from its perch, crashing two stories below.

"So before someone was killed by an angel, we took them all down," Boland said. In all, the parish has



The angels had adorned the pipe organ at Holy Family for years until one toppled in 2003. Their return is part of the ongoing restoration of the church.

spent \$12 million on restoration since 1990. The angels, though, were a freebie. Parishioner Dieter Meister, a painter-decorator from Lombard, painstakingly refurbished them in his home studio — more than 1,500 hours of work.

Now, they're headed back where they belong, the lit-

eral and figurative pinnacle of Holy Family's rise. They should all be in their familiar places on the organ by Easter.

"It's a fantastic occurrence," said organist Gregory Kuklewicz, whose fluid playing accompanied the first angel's four-story ascendance.