



Blessed Mother Statue Crowned at Holy Redeemer
Youngsters at Holy Redeemer Church, Rochester, pictured at annual May Queen crowning ceremony there May 24.

Priest Sees Laos as . . .

The Middle Domino!

By E. FRANCIS McDEVITT
Washington (NC)— With 13 seconds of air time for the interview left, the "Today" shows' Barbara Walters asked a final question.

It was directed to a tall good-looking priest. In effect, it was: "Might it not be better for the U.S. and the people of Southeast Asia if this country withdrew from its commitments there and let the Communists take over?"

More seconds had ticked by. The young priest said quietly: "Miss Walters, have you ever lived under communism?" She shook her head. The priest then added: "Well, I have."

Such an answer may not be classic, but they are typical of Father Matt J. Menger, O.M.I. The 6-foot plus Texas missionary priest would be the last person to claim that he is an authority on Southeast Asian affairs, including Laos.

But he can claim, if he so desires, to be quite an expert on Laotians if only because of the fact that he has lived and worked among and with them for 14 years.

Father Menger, a native of

San Antonio, Tex., is the first American priest ever assigned to Laos. In his more than a dozen years there he has become kneaded into every texture of Laotian life and affairs.

Some of the richness of Father Menger's knowledge of that remote region on this distracted globe is now available for sharing by Americans in his new book, "The Valley of the Mekong," published by St. Anthony's Guild Press of Paterson, N.J.

Laos currently is front-page news. To Father Menger it has been "hard" news for many years, politically, economically, militarily — and, most of all socially. For a long time he has talked and written about Laos.

His concern for the Laotian people and over the menace of world communism has driven him to range periodically throughout his native land trying to spread his conviction among his fellow-countrymen that Laos is not just a "tiny kingdom" of two and a half million of perhaps the most benighted people on earth but a key to the very future of human freedom in Southeast Asia.

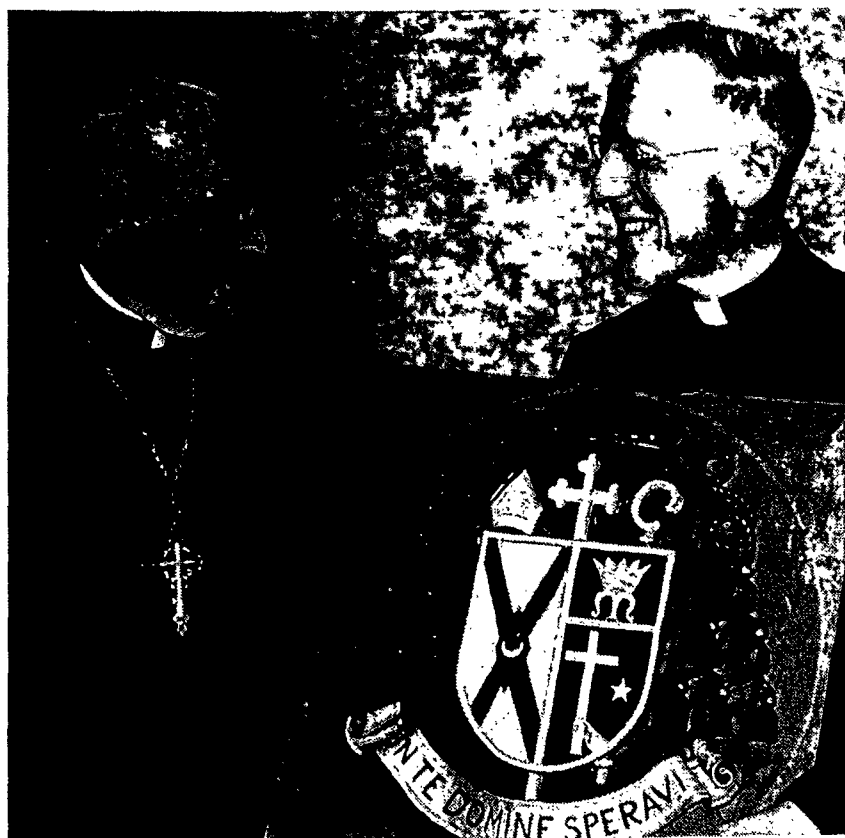
"My concern," Father Menger

said, "is not political, economic or even evangelistic. It is moral. It is a matter of morality that Laos be defended by the U.S. to whatever extent is necessary."

Father Menger is a staunch believer in the "domino" theory of geophysics.

"Laos is more important than Vietnam in the effort to stem the flood of communism in Asia," he said. "There is an aspect to dominoes that is too often overlooked. Most of us think of a row of dominoes falling if they are knocked over from the ends. You can scatter the dominoes just as well by pushing over the middle ones."

"Laos is a middle domino, a very vital one. It is strategically important, politically and militarily. It is difficult to defend Cambodia and Thailand except by defending Laos."



Bishop's Coat-of-Arms To Be Enshrined

Retired Bishop James E. Kearney, Rochester's sixth bishop, presents his coat-of-arms to Father Robert F. McNamara of St. Bernard's Seminary, diocesan historian. The Bishop's coat-of-arms, mounted above the episcopal chair in the Cathedral during his episcopate, 1939-66, was removed when Bishop Fulton J. Sheen came to succeed him. Similar symbols of all Rochester's bishops will be permanently enshrined in the Lake Avenue seminary.

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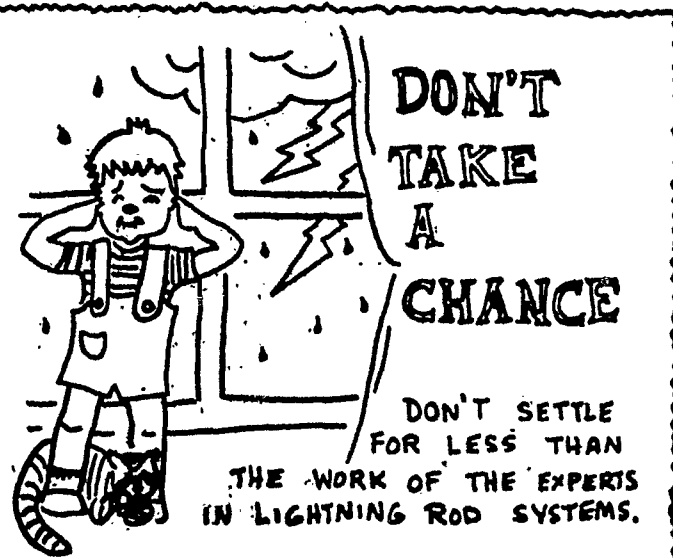
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