The Middle Domino!

By E. FRANCIS McDEVITT
Washington —(NC)— With 12 seconds of air time for the interview left, the "Today" show's Barbara Walters asked a final question.

It was directed to a tall good-looking priest. In effect, it was: "Would it be better for the U.S. and the people of South 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: "Well, I have...

Such an answer may not have been typical. It is difficult to defend Laos politically, economically, militarily. It is difficult to defend Cambodia and Thailand except territorially. It is difficult to defend the dominoes just as well by not pushing over the middle ones.

But he can claim, if he so desires, to be quite an expert on Laos. If my memory 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 knoed into every feature of Laotian life and affairs.

Some of the richness of Father Menger's knowledge of that remote region on this dis-tricted 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 beautiful people on earth but a key to the very future of human freedom in Southeast Asia.

"By consent," Father Menger said, "it is not political, economic or even geographic. 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 geopolitics.

"Laos is more important than Vietnam in the effort to stem the flood of communism in Asia," he said. "There is an appositeness to dominoism that is too often overlooked. Most of us think of a row of dominoes falling if they are knocked over from one end. You can deflect 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."

Blessed Mother Statue Crowned at Holy Redeemer

Youngsters at Holy Redeemer Church, Rochester, pictured at annual May crowning ceremony there May 24.

Priest Sees Laos as ...

Bishop's Coat-of-Arms To Be Enshrined

By JOSEPH M. WRIGHT

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