

### Meet our Mission Presenter

Father Mergenhagen is a priest from the Diocese of Buffalo, New York. He has been ordained over 50 years. I'll let him tell you a little about himself from some correspondence that I have had with him.

Fr. Dan

# February 5–8, 2007

**St. Augustine – 9:30 AM**

**St. Elizabeth Seton – 7:30 PM**

After ordination, some of the class was sent for a year of higher studies. I studied journalism at Fordham University. Early on, I realized I did not have the gift of newspaper writing. Although I faithfully attended all the classes and did all the assignments, in my spare time I saw many, many movies, Broadway musicals, plays, ballets, and operas, visited museums, art galleries and tourist attractions. I made the rounds of all the Italian restaurants. I decided the year in New York was God's ordination gift to me.

A year at St. Jude's Church in Sardinia was followed by nine years at St. Vincent de Paul in Buffalo. (Seven other assistants came and went while I stayed. My friends said they could get along with the pastor but could not get along with me.) Then, I taught at the Diocesan Preparatory Seminary for nine years until it closed. In 1974, I joined **Catholic Relief Services** and served in Vietnam. I was evacuated from Danang on Good Friday, 1975, and a month later was evacuated the night before the fall of Saigon. For the next few years, I worked in Rome, Yemen, Indonesia and Haiti.

In Yemen, I was chaplain to Mother Theresa's sisters (Missionaries of Charity) who operated a leper colony. I was in Haiti when Mother Teresa arrived with the sisters. In any country where CRS has a presence, the Missionaries of Charity work very closely with CRS. (Several years ago, I learned the sisters had moved into the house I occupied in Yemen. One day on their way to work a madman gunned three of them down in the street. This was not the first time the sisters have been martyred).

After Haiti and a year of study in spirituality in Berkeley, California, I joined the staff of the Center of Renewal at Stella Niagara for 18 years. The Center continued its mission to serve people but no longer required a staff to give retreats. In 1997, I moved to St. Columban's Center in Derby and, although officially retired, have continued giving retreats there and elsewhere.

In September 1999, I retired but have continued giving retreats. Overseas retreats included: India (twice), Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Central America (Belize), and the West Indies (St. Lucia). All that retirement has meant is that I no longer attend meetings. The next meeting I expect to attend will be the Last Judgment which I believe will be more like a family reunion and a welcome home party. See you there - but if it is alright with you, let's make it the distant future.