By Bob McDonald

The Rev. Michael Flecky, S.J. will spend about six weeks photographing in the Adirondack Mountains in northeast New York this summer after recently being awarded a grant for the project from the New York State Council for the Arts.

Flecky, who has taught photography at Creighton since 1981, said he will have unlimited access to the “extensive and complete” photographic facilities at the Adirondack Lake Center for the Arts in Blue Mountain, N.Y. He will also be provided with lodging for the six weeks and a $1,000 stipend, he said.

In exchange, Flecky said, he will make photographs in the area, give one presentation to the Blue Mountain community, and be available to work with students five to eight hours a week, if any are interested.

“It's really a wonderful grant,” Flecky said. “Basically, it's a grant for somebody to do the work that they do, without any other distractions, in a very, very beautiful area, with great facilities and the support of the local community.”

Flecky said he first became interested in this “artist-in-residency” program almost two years ago when he was visiting in the Adirondacks.

'Excited by work'

He had previously photographed there in 1980 while working on his graduate thesis, he said. He showed some of these photographs to the program directors, and “they were very excited by the work I had done up there,” he said.

After having some of his works placed in a nearby art gallery so that the community could get “a feeling for the work I was doing,” Flecky actually applied for the residency in February 1983.

He was notified about four weeks ago that he and another artist, who specializes in watercolor painting, had been awarded the residencies.

While the main concern in awarding the grants is that “we do quality work and we have the time to do our work,” Flecky said there is also another concern of the program's directors.

He said, “Because there's such a density of art-related activities in New York City and in downstate New York, they're very happy to see people utilize the resources and local color and facilities of upstate areas.

"Both of us had worked in upstate New York, shown our work and celebrated the possibilities of upstate New York."

Not first grant

This will not be the first time Flecky has received a grant for his work in photography. He spent 10 weeks in the Sand Hills of western Nebraska last summer on a Creighton faculty research grant.

He said the work in the Sand Hills "was an effort to establish the same rapport I felt with the natural environment when I was in New York" doing thesis work in the Adirondacks.

However, Flecky said he found it much more difficult to photograph in the Sand Hills than in the Adirondacks, which is largely state park and wilderness area.

The Sand Hills are "not as visually exciting" as the Adirondacks, he said, and "it was difficult to establish a perspective because you were surrounded by 360 degrees of grass, field and sky."

He said, "It was almost necessary to get up above the land in order to really see it."

Although he called the Sand Hills "unyielding," Flecky said, "having spent 10 weeks out there, I really got to love it."

Some of Flecky's work in the Sand Hills is now on display in the Fine Arts Gallery at Creighton and in the Artists' Cooperative in the Old Market.