Flecky focuses on far away lands

By Cristina Flagler

The mysterious African lands of Tunisia and Algeria will be shown photographically in a slide presentation by the Rev. Michael Flecky, S.J., on Sunday at 4 p.m. in the Performing Arts Building.

Flecky’s photographs of these North African countries are part of a study he has been collaborating dealing with the world of St. Augustine.

Flecky began work on this project in 1980 when the Rev. Davis, S.J., wrote him from Cambridge asking for his photographic help. Davis has a research grant by which he was surveying a research study on the life of St. Augustine.

In the summer of 1980, Flecky began his photographic work in North Africa. The political situation along the Tunisian-Algerian border was so dangerous, they decided to leave Algeria.

Last summer Flecky returned to North Africa, visiting Algeria, the only country left for completion of the project.

Not only did Flecky run into numerous difficulties but he said that he also found himself in tense situations when photographing the inhabitants of the area. “I felt very inhibited to photograph people because they are very private as far as being photographed,” Flecky said. There is an Arab suspicion toward the photographic art, he added. It is a religious aversion to representational art connected with the elaboration of idols, he said.

Flecky’s work in Algeria and Tunisia has had an important impact in his photographic career, he said. “All the work I’ve done there is good and ready for publication,” he said. “People who have seen it respect it,” he added.

More important is the impact his work has had in the research field. Davis is content with the work done because there is not a book on the theme published in English, Flecky said.

The only books on the subject are published in French and German. The photographs are black and white prints of the 1940s when the country was still under foreign oppression, he said.

“I’m really glad I’ve done this photographic work,” Flecky said. “I feel I brought some things to light in the English speaking world.”

Flecky had acquired a tremendous respect for the Roman architecture and civilization as a result of his contact with the Roman ruins scattered along the area.

Flecky was impressed by the common people whom he described as being very warm. “There are remarkable Jesuits there,” he said. “That was the warmest Jesuit community I’ve ever been in,” he added.

Flecky has been teaching at Creighton since 1961 and is also a member of the Artist Cooperative located in the Old Market.

His photographic work has been exhibited in different galleries throughout the country including Nebraska, Washington, New York, Indiana, California and others.

His literary works include poems and his last book titled “ Places I’ve stopped on the way to somewhere else” was exhibited in Seattle, Washington.

With a faculty research grant, Flecky is presently working on a photographic work related to the Sand Hills area in Nebraska.