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Freeing The Christ Within

This retreat will help us develop an awareness of the Christ who dwells at the core of our being, the cave of our hearts. The Christ within is our True Self, the person we were created to be, the person we were called to be. This person, special and unique, is our Christ-Self. The light of the Christ within shines forth from that center enlightening every aspect of our lives. This is the person we really are behind the masks and beyond the negative attitudes and patterns that make up our False Self.

It is our False Self we must "lose" or in the language of Paul: "put to death." It is our True Self, our Christ-Self, we must "find" and free and nurture. Our False Self is like so many boulders that pile up before the entrance to the cave of our hearts, blocking the light of Christ from coming forth. Spirituality is removing the boulders and freeing the Christ within.

In practical ways we will learn to identify such boulders as fear, hurts, sadness, low self-esteem. Rolling aside the boulder of our anger, for example, we allow the Gentle Christ to come forth.

Reminded of Easter Sunday, we will experience a personal resurrection in our own lives. We live out the meaning of our Baptism, or more precisely, our CHRISTening. Dying to ourselves, we die with Christ. Rising with Christ, we are formed, reformed, conformed and transformed into Christ.

We will take note of what can become boulders in the priesthood: sexuality and celibacy, loneliness, ambition, power, prestige, work-aholicism, (over worked and under prayed), cooperating with authority on one hand and exercising authority on the other, use of money and possessions, peace and justice issues on national and global level, retirement, poor health, death.

Fr. John Mergenhagen is a priest of the Buffalo Diocese. He has been a parish priest and a teacher in a minor seminary. From 1974 to 1978 he served overseas for Catholic Relief Services in Rome, Vietnam, Indonesia, Yemen and Haiti. Along with the last remaining foreigners, he was evacuated from Vietnam the night before the fall of Saigon. He has been a full time retreat director for over twenty years, giving retreats in U.S. and Canada as well as overseas. In recent years he has given the "Freeing the Christ Within" Retreat in India, Papua New Guinea, the West Indies and Central America. He has been a member of Jesus Caritas off and on since the early 70's and has visited the fraternities of Charles de Foucauld in different parts of the world.

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