

Episcopal ordination of Serapio Magambo who would eventually succeed him.

But his pastoral vision stretched beyond Fort Portal. As chairman of the Uganda Joint Christian Council, Bishop Vince assisted greatly the growth of an ecumenical spirit in a country where religious division had deep roots. He also led the planning and fund-raising for a new National Seminary. He was the prime mover in organizing gatherings of the African bishops at Vatican II, and upon return to Uganda he promoted the teachings of that council, especially among bishops, clergy and religious.

After handing over the diocese to Bishop Magambo in 1972, he had no intention of resting! He moved to Nairobi where he served as Secretary General of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) from 1973-79. The many who benefited from his visionary leadership there call him the “Father of AMECEA.” The late Cardinal Otunga of Nairobi summed up his contribution: “Whatever unity we bishops in Eastern Africa have, we owe it to Bishop McCauley.”

“How he loved our people and how they loved him!” (Bishop Serapio Magambo)

Bishop McCauley’s pastoral and administrative accomplishments are remarkable by any criteria and an incredible gift to the East African church.

But what the people mostly remember is his love. He was a shepherd who literally gave his life for his flock. He genuinely loved people, and they loved him. He had a joyful sense of humor, a big laugh, and his generosity knew no limit. He could not see a poor or needy person and remain unmoved, and he assisted countless refugees from Rwanda and the Congo in Fort Portal Diocese, and in Nairobi those escaping Idi Amin’s Uganda. Always available with his door open, his common greeting was “What can I do to help you.”

And throughout all these years of missionary love and service, Bishop Vince suffered without complaint a disfiguring facial skin cancer that required numerous trips to Mayo Clinic and some fifty surgeries. He was a true suffering Servant of God.

At Bishop Vince’s burial service several noted that though the sky was mostly clear on that cold November day, a small cloud appeared as his casket was sprinkled with holy water and a few snow flurries fell. It seemed an appropriate sign of heaven’s welcome for one who dedicated his diocese to Our Lady of the Snows.

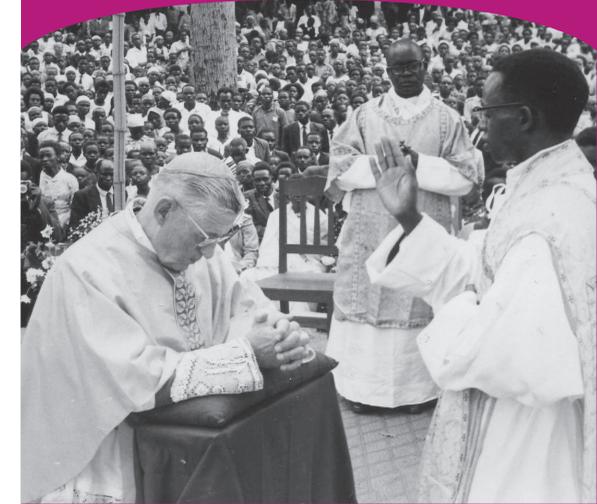
Note: To learn more about the remarkable life of Bishop Vincent McCauley, we recommend Vincent McCauley, C.S.C.: Bishop of the Poor, Apostle of East Africa, by Rev. Richard Gribble, C.S.C. (Ave Maria Press)

Fr. Tom Smith, C.S.C., was ordained in 1972 and ministered in East Africa for six years after his ordination. He returned to the United States in 1978 to serve as Superior/Rector of Moreau Seminary returning to East Africa in 1985 where he served as District Superior, Formation Staff Member and Pastoral Associate. In 2001, he returned to the United States to serve as Director of the Holy Cross Mission Center, a position he held for six years before returning to ministry in East Africa. He is currently the Director of Novices for the Holy Cross community at Lake Saaka, Uganda.



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MONTHLY REFLECTION SERIES

A Valiant Man of God

Rev. Thomas Smith, C.S.C.

On All Saints Day, November 1, 1982, “a valiant man of God died, but a saint was born.” This gracious assessment of the life of Bishop Vincent McCauley, C.S.C., comes from his companion throughout the 20+ years of his ministry in Africa, Fr. John Croston, C.S.C. It celebrates the way God was clearly at work in this holy man of vision, boundless energy and courage in service of the Gospel.

You cannot understand him at all apart from his devotion to Our Blessed Mother Mary. It is a great love story. She was his heroine, his inseparable companion. He spoke and wrote of her as if she was right by his side.

Bishop Vince’s love for Mary, so beautifully affirmed here by Fr. Arnold Fell, C.S.C., one of his closest friends, grew naturally out of the faith and devotion fostered in his Irish Catholic family. His parents, devout members of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Council Bluffs, Iowa, gathered their family daily to pray the rosary. Throughout his missionary life, Bishop Vince turned again and again to Mary to strengthen and guide him. In 1936, on his way to his first mission assignment in what is today Bangladesh, he made a side trip to Lourdes to ask Mary’s help. It was the first of many trips to this shrine of Our Lady. Years later, in 1958, while tirelessly raising funds in the States for Holy Cross mission work, he learned that he had cancer and was told

he likely had just 1-2 years to live. Excited about the possibility to help begin the Holy Cross mission in Uganda, he again turned to Mary, insisting on another stop in Lourdes where he promised to give his life to the Church and people of Africa if his health would allow. When ordained the first Bishop of Fort Portal Diocese in Uganda in 1961 he chose as his Episcopal motto *Mariam Sequens Non Devias - If You Follow Mary You Will Not Stray*, and he named the cathedral, in sight of the snow-capped Rwenzori Mountains, Our Lady of the Snows. His was an unassuming but deep prayer and spirituality, and devotion to Mary was at its core.

“If you follow
Mary you will
not stray.”

Vincent Joseph McCauley entered formation to be a Holy Cross priest at Notre Dame and soon after discovered his call to serve God and the Church in the foreign missions. He was ordained in 1934 and assigned to the Holy Cross mission in Bengal, the present Bangladesh and Northeast India, finally arriving there in 1936. He fell in love with the people of

Bengal from the moment he stepped off the boat. For the next eight years he taught seminarians and catechists and then did primary evangelization among the mountain Kuki people, living in a bamboo one-room residence where, he wrote to friends, “the mosquitoes have been getting after me.” Contemporaries report that he was invariably enthusiastic, kind and cheerful despite suffering many bouts of malaria, chronic varicose veins and serious phlebitis. Continuous painful attacks on his health finally forced a return to the States in wartime 1944. Thanks to the providential, life-saving assistance of a childhood friend stationed with the army in India, he was transported on a military plane as a “wounded soldier” in chaplain’s uniform!

After recovery, Fr. McCauley’s mission expertise led to his appointment as superior of the Holy Cross Foreign Mission Seminary in Washington D.C., and his genius for fund-raising was honed during several years as mission procurator during which he made contacts so important to his future work in East Africa. Throughout these 14 years in the States he never stopped asking to be allowed to return to the mission in Bangladesh.

It was not to be. In 1958 a trip with Fr. Fell to investigate the possibility of opening a new Holy Cross mission in Uganda gave his missionary zeal a new direction. “This



is where I should be,” he told Fr. Fell, and within months his remarkable African ministry was underway. Holy Cross joined with the Missionaries of Africa to evangelize in the huge western Uganda diocese of Mbarara. By 1961 the northern half of that diocese was entrusted to Holy Cross with Fr. McCauley as first Bishop of the new Fort Portal Diocese. Convinced that his mission was to create a truly local church with its own well-trained ministers, he placed priority on the formation of catechists, clergy and religious and on improving education. He organized the diocesan structures, established new parishes, and employed his “midas touch” to solicit needed funds. He understood the African political climate of the time and, in line with it, was convinced that the Church in Africa must be led by Africans. In 1969 his request for an auxiliary bishop was granted with the