

In Tanzania Catholic Monsignor is a very simple Italian man who seems to like us

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Photo date and location unknown

The Catholic Monseigneur is a very simple Italian man who seems to like us. He said if there is anything he can do for us he would be happy to. He stands in a position of Pope for all of the country the forest before dark. The route down to the river, although thickly overgrown in places, was thin in comparison to the foliage we faced in our struggle up the river. And as my companion and I crawled through the narrow places in the lattice of undergrowth -- something like trying to crawl through a wicker chair -- we concluded that were we to meet an adversary in such a place our best strategy would be to make friends with him at once.

As we struggled upstream and the sun settled inexorably lower in the sky, I began to wonder if this river hadn't taken a sneaky couple of extra bends between the falls and our location. And I began to privately contemplate the contingency of our not reaching the falls by sundown. Knowing we were sharing our surroundings with leopards, I concluded that such an eventuality would drastically reduce our chances of seeing the following sunrise with our physical eyes, so we struggled on.

As weariness descended by degrees upon us -- our clothes and skin clawed by thorns and our way barred at every turn by sturdy poles as thick as your wrist, crisscrossing every which way like a wooden cage so I began to feel anger and frustration rising inside me. At that point we came to a halt and spent a few minutes in sincere prayer.

Such a time is a good time to pray. We especially prayed for the others whom we had neither seen nor heard from for several hours, that none of them would suffer an injurious accident requiring him to be carried out. As to ourselves, we told Heavenly Father not to worry. We would reach our goal in time.

Then with renewed spirit, frustration defeated, we pushed on. But we had hardly gone five paces when we: saw the top of the falls through the trees. It was a gloriously welcome sight!

After resting at the foot of the falls, we climbed the steep trail out of the canyon and made our way back to camp. Reunited, we were all wonderfully exhausted and grateful to be alive and safely out of the woods. We felt we had all been given a training exercise in perseverance and overcoming obstacles by Heavenly Father.

A few weeks later, I accompanied William to his home in Kisil District in the green highlands of western Kenya. I spent four days with him and his family and myriad relatives in a little hut without electricity, plumbing, windows or floors, some two kilometers from the nearest road.



Ugali and Sukuma

We ate Ugali [Kenyan cornmeal] and Sukuma [a vegetable like Kale or Collard Greens] with our hands and slept in the same bed.

In four days in the heart of Kenya I learned more about the traditional African way of life than I could have learned in a whole semester of university anthropology.