News

Simon Peter Engurait

The Vatican announced that Pope Leo XIV has appointed Fr. Simon Peter Engurait, pictured in a screenshot from a diocesan video, as the next bishop of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux in Louisiana. Born in Uganda in 1971, Engurait brings international and academic experience to the role. (OSV News /Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux screenshot)

by Black Catholic Messenger

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

June 6, 2025

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Fr. Simon Peter Engurait, a Ugandan-born priest, has been named bishop of Houma-Thibodaux, the Louisiana diocese he has led as administrator since 2024. The 53-year-old prelate is the first native African to serve as a Catholic bishop on the American mainland.

The Vatican announced the news June 5 via Msgr. Većeslav Tumir of the apostolic nunciature to the United States.

"I did not expect this — I am humbled beyond words that the Holy Father has chosen me, not from outside, but from among the ranks of the priests of this beloved Diocese," Engurait said following the announcement, the diocese reported on its website.

"I give thanks to God for the gift of life, for the call to the priesthood, and now, for this new and sacred calling to the apostolic ministry. Everything I am, and all that I hope to be, is by His grace."

Born in 1971 in Ngora, Uganda, Engurait was raised in a Catholic family. He is among three siblings who entered ministry, including a brother who is a diocesan priest and a sister who is a Franciscan nun. Engurait attended high school at both St. Peter Minor Seminary in Soroti and St. Peter College in Tororo. He earned an undergraduate degree from Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, and an MBA from Maastricht School of Management in the Netherlands.

After a career working for the Ugandan government, Engurait moved to the United States in 2007 to enter seminary for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, which covers part of Southeast Louisiana, just west of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. He has attributed an experience with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal as inspiring his return to seminary.

After moving to America, Engurait earned his master of divinity from Notre Dame Seminary in New Orleans in 2013 and was ordained a priest the same year.

Engurait's pastoral assignments have included the Cathedral of St. Francis de Sales in Houma, St. Genevieve Catholic Church in Thibodaux and Christ the Redeemer, also in Thibodaux. He later became pastor of St. Bridget Parish in Schriever, Louisiana, and in 2016 was named moderator of the diocesan curia and coordinator of Christian formation by then-Bishop Shelton Fabre — one of the nation's African American Catholic prelates.

Advertisement

Engurait has also served as a social services administrator in the diocese. Fabre appointed him as interim director of Catholic Charities Houma Thibodaux after the devastation of Hurricane Ida in 2021. He helped coordinate relief efforts and raised more than $4.5 million for the organization while continuing to serve as a pastor and as an administrator in the chancery. For his efforts, he was named a finalist for Catholic Extension's Lumen Christi Award in 2023.

In 2023, Engurait was named vicar general, the diocese's second-in-command, just months before the death of Bishop Mario Dorsonville, who served less than a year in Houma-Thibodaux before he died from liver disease in January 2024. The next month, Engurait was named diocesan administrator, leading the diocese for nearly a year and a half while the Vatican deliberated on an official successor.

Engurait's appointment as bishop makes him the second native African to serve as a Catholic prelate in the United States. Bishop Jerome Feudjio, from Cameroon, has led the Diocese of St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands since 2021.

Engurait's appointment comes just days after the chief Catholic feast of his homeland, Ugandan Martyrs Day on June 3.

"While I am still shocked by the news that the Lord has asked me to be a bishop, I must admit that knowing the people of this diocese brings me great comfort in saying yes," Engurait said.

"South Louisiana is home, and I love the people here. It is a privilege to say yes to you as much as I am saying yes to God. I love you, and I consider it a great honor to serve you as your bishop."

A livestreamed press conference introduced Bishop-designate Engurait. The date of his installation has not been announced.

This article was originally published at Black Catholic Messenger.