

NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

LIEUTENANT VINCENT R. CAPODANNO, CHAPLAIN CORPS,
UNITED STATES NAVAL RESERVE, DECEASED

Vincent Robert Capodanno was born in Richmond County, New York, on February 13, 1929, son of Vincent and Rachel (Basile) Capodanno, both now deceased. He graduated from Curtis High School, Staten Island, New York in 1947 and attended Fordham University, Bronx, New York (1948-1949); Maryknoll Seminary College, Glen Ellyn, Illinois, from which he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1953; and Maryknoll Seminaries in Bedford, Massachusetts (1953-1954) and Maryknoll, New York (1954-1959), receiving the degrees of Bachelor of Sacred Theology and Master of Religious Education. Ordained on June 7, 1957, he joined the Catholic Foreign Mission Society and served as a Missionary in Taiwan during the period September 1958 to August 1964 and in Hong Kong from March to August 1965. On December 28, 1965, he was commissioned Lieutenant in the Chaplain Corps of the U. S. Naval Reserve.

After receiving his commission, he had indoctrination at the Naval Chaplains School, Newport, Rhode Island, during January and February 1966. Ordered to Vietnam, he was assigned in April 1966 to Headquarters and Service Company, First Battalion, Seventh Marines, First Marine Division, Reinforced as Battalion Chaplain. In December 1966 he reported as Battalion Chaplain with the First Medical Battalion, First Marine Division and was serving as Chaplain with the Third Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division, when he was killed on September 4, 1967 by enemy gunfire in Quang Tin Province, Republic of Vietnam. "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty...in connection with operations against enemy forces in Quang Tin Providence, Republic of Vietnam on September 4, 1967..." he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. The citation further states in part:

"In response to reports that the Second Platoon of M. Company was in danger of being overrun by a massed enemy assaulting force, Lieutenant Capodanno left the relative safety of the Company Command Post and ran through an open area raked with fire, directly to the beleaguered platoon. Disregarding the intense enemy small-arms, automatic-weapons, and mortar fire, he moved about the battlefield administering last rites to the dying and giving medical aid to the wounded. When an exploding mortar round inflicted painful multiple wounds to his arms and legs, and severed a portion of his right hand, he steadfastly refused all medical aid. Instead, he directed the corpsmen to help their wounded comrades and, with calm vigor, continued to move about the battlefield as he provided encouragement by voice and example to the valiant Marines. Upon encountering a wounded corpsman in the direct line of fire of an enemy machine gunner positioned approximately fifteen yards away, Lieutenant Capodanno rushed forward in a daring attempt to aid and assist the mortally wounded corpsman. At that instant, only inches from his goal, he was struck down by a burst of machine-gun fire. By his heroic conduct

on the battlefield, and his inspiring example, (he) upheld the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life in the cause of freedom."

He was also posthumously awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

In addition to the Medal of Honor and the Purple Heart Medal, Chaplain Capodanno had the National Defense Service Medal and the Vietnam Service Medal. He was also awarded the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Silver Star and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device.

The Capodanno Memorial Chapel at the Naval Base, Newport, Rhode Island, named in his memory, was dedicated on February 5, 1968.