

## Fr. Gary Stakem

March 31, 1926 - October 5, 2022

FATHER GARY STAKEM, OFM Cap.

Father Gary J. Stakem, OFM Cap., died peacefully in his bed at St. Augustine Friary, Pittsburgh, at 5:30 A.M. on Wednesday, October 5th, 2022. He was 96 years old at the time of his death, a Capuchin friar for 76 years and a priest for 71 years. He was the senior member of the Capuchin Province of St. Augustine, Pittsburgh, PA.

Born James Edward Stakem to parents Richard and Mary Angela (Cosgrove) Stakem, he was the fourth of seven children. He attended St. Joseph Elementary School in Midland, PA, before entering St. Fidelis High School and College Seminary for his secondary and collegiate education.

Upon his entry into the Capuchin novitiate at Annapolis, MD, he was invested with the religious name Gary, which he kept for the rest of his life. He made his profession of religious vows on July 14, 1946. After beginning theological studies at St. Fidelis Seminary in Victoria, KS, the Province consolidated its theology programs and frater Gary came to Capuchin College in Washington, DC, to complete his preparations for ordination to the priesthood. He was ordained on August 28, 1951.

Following his ordination, Father Gary ministered in Herman, PA, Pittsburgh, Annapolis, MD and Washington, DC, before beginning his journey of eighteen years in the province's mission to the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea in 1956. He spent ten years in bush ministry, five years as Superior

Regular of the mission and three more as Administrator of the Cathedral of the Diocese of Mendi.

He returned to the U.S. in 1974 as a delegate of the mission, but was elected to the Province Council and subsequently assigned to the formation staff at Capuchin College in Washington, DC. He would not return to Papua New Guinea to say "farewell" until 1991. He was elected to two additional terms on the Council, a mark of the respect his confreres held for his patience, equanimity and wisdom. Both during and after his time on the Province Council he was regularly consulted regarding significant decisions for the province. He was instrumental in the sale of the St. Fidelis property in Herman, the improvement of the friars' plot at St. Mary cemetery and the development of a new friars' plot there. He had an abiding interest and involvement in the varied discussions regarding the location and lifestyle of the province hermitage, and served numerous Secular Franciscan communities in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Father Gary himself was not a man of surprises: he was known to be unflinchingly calm, respectful and approachable - in the words of one Provincial Minister "as gracious and gentlemanly a friar as ever there was." Over his 76 years as a Capuchin and 71 as a priest, Father Gary had more than 30 different assignments at home in the USA and overseas in Papua New Guinea, and 22 changes of address. He once wrote that "most of my assignments came as complete surprises."

He was much respected as a caretaker of the corporate memory of the province and took great pleasure in spending a week each year educating new classes of postulants about the history of the province. He was asked to be a part of the Province History Committee in preparation for the 125th Jubilee of the province in 1998, and subsequently authored "Reaching New Horizons," the opening chapter of the provincial memoir *Change and Become: Capuchin Friars: The Province of St. Augustine 1948-1998*.

It was at the turn of the millennium that Father Gary realized his energies were starting to fade and his capacity for full-time ministry was becoming

limited. Writing to Provincial Minister Paul Kuppe he remarked, "I've become more Laissez-faire now; my get-up-and-go got up and went." What did not fade was his generous spirit and obedient attitude toward any duty requested of him. He took on the role of Coordinator of Replacement Ministry from 2000-2006 with a brief stint as Administrator pro-tem of St. Clare parish in Clairton, PA, which would be his final parochial assignment. He spent most of his last years in his beloved Herman, PA, assisting with local friary administration and ministry to Secular Franciscan communities before accepting his final assignment to the newly rebuilt St. Augustine friary in 2020 so that he could receive the medical attention necessary to maintain his surprisingly good health and support his limited mobility. A dedicated Capuchin to the end, he would be found in private prayer in the chapel at all hours of the day and night, and celebrated the entire Divine Office and Mass. Looking back at his Jubilees of 75 years of Profession and 70 years of Ordination in 2021, Gary simply remarked, "It has been a great life." It is a virtual certainty that no one who knew him would ever disagree with that!

Besides his parents, Father Gary was preceded in death by each of his siblings: brothers Richard, Jr., William, Joseph, and Leo, and by sisters Mary Elizabeth (Betty) Minke and Rose Mary Webster. He is survived by his nephew, Father Ward Stakem, OFM Cap. and many other nieces and nephews.

Father Gary's body will be received at St. Augustine Friary by the friars on Tuesday afternoon, October 11th and reposed in St. Margaret of Cortona chapel there. Viewing will be held from 7 until 8 P.M. with the Vigil for the Deceased being celebrated at 8:00 P.M.

On Wednesday morning, Father Gary's body will be transferred to St. Mary of the Assumption Church, 821 Herman Road, Butler, PA. where viewing will be

conducted from 10 to 11 A.M. The funeral Mass will begin at 11:00 A.M. with interment in the new friars' plot of St. Mary cemetery immediately following the Mass. A reception will be held at Shindigs, 705 Herman Road, Butler, beginning at 12:30.

Contributions in honor of Father Gary may be made to: Capuchin Friars, Province of St. Augustine, 220 37th Street. Pittsburgh, PA 15201.

Professional services trusted to D'ALESSANDRO FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY LTD., Lawrenceville. [www.dalessandroltd.com](http://www.dalessandroltd.com).



# Cemetery Details

## **St. Mary's Cemetery - Herman**

821 Herman Rd.  
Butler, PA 16002

# Tribute Wall

KM

“  *Vjecñaja Pamjat, Welcome Home My Blessed And Humble Servant Of One True God*  




Kassandra Marija Milost - October 01, 2023 at 02:50 AM



“ *Fr. Gary Stakem*

January 13, 2023 at 04:43 PM

GR

“ *+Gospa, The Lord Bless You And Keep You. The Lord Let His Face Shine Upon You And Be Gracious To You. The Lord Lift Up His Countenance To You And Rest In The Loving Arms Of Jesus. Pocivaj u miru. +g.michael rozman.*



g.michael rozman - October 20, 2022 at 07:22 AM

TO

“ *It was through our mutual friend Peggy Rooney of Cleveland, Ohio, that I was privileged to meet Fr Gary and benefit from his kindness. He treasured his Irish heritage and brought joy to all he met. Fr Gary, may the angels lead you into Paradise! We know you will continue to help your family, friends and confrères from heaven.*

*Therese Osborne  
Dublin, Ireland*

Therese Osborne - October 11, 2022 at 06:48 PM

JE

“ *He was so very kind and soft spoken.  
I am grateful for the blessing of knowing Father Gary.  
His council during difficult times was a gift from God.*

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**Jennifer** - October 08, 2022 at 11:59 AM