



Capuchin Franciscan Friars

PROVINCE OF ST. AUGUSTINE

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January 2026

“These two guys are salt of the earth.”

Those words come to mind every time I think of Fr. Leon Leitem and Fr. Bob Craig, two Capuchin friars who have spent their entire lives joyfully serving God’s people. Wherever they were assigned, they gave their best—quietly, faithfully, humbly, and with a generosity that continues even now in their retirement.

Despite age and growing medical challenges, both of these friars keep showing up every day with gratitude in their hearts and a smile on their faces. When I asked if I could feature them in this year’s appeal, they immediately said “yes,” and then added a request of their own:

“Please tell everyone how grateful we are for their love and support, and that we pray for them every single day.”



Fr. Bob Craig (standing) and Fr. Leon Leitem.

Fr. Leon Leitem — Years of Faithful Service

We recently celebrated Fr. Leon’s 94th birthday in November, making him the senior friar of our Province. He receives the attention politely but playfully brushes it off: “Well, I can’t do anything about that. It’s no big deal.”

But in truth, his life has been a very big deal to thousands.

Shortly after being ordained in 1957, he eagerly asked to be sent to the missions in Papua New Guinea. Instead, the superiors told him he was being assigned to Puerto Rico. Fr. Leon protested that he didn’t know Spanish. The response was simple: “You’ll learn it after you get there.”

And learn it he did.

Fr. Leon often says this unexpected assignment became one of the greatest blessings of his life. He came to love the people of Puerto Rico deeply, and they loved him in return. He served as a pastor, mentor, counselor, and friend—always patient, always available, always centered on Christ. In those early mission years, he even rode a horse through mountainous terrain to reach remote homes of the poor.



Today, Fr. Leon moves through the friary with the help of a walker. He is grateful for every bit of assistance that allows him to keep as much independence as possible. One of his weekly joys is the faithful visit from his sister, Mary Lou, and her husband, John, whose love has been a steady blessing in his later years.

But now, as he once cared for others, Fr. Leon needs care himself.

Fr. Bob Craig — A Shepherd to Veterans

This coming March, Fr. Bob Craig will turn 85. For more than two decades, he poured his heart into ministry as a hospital and VA chaplain—work he loved deeply. He began at St. Francis Hospital with the Milvale Sisters of St. Francis, and after the hospital changed ownership, he continued his vocation among our nation's veterans across multiple VA sites in the Pittsburgh area.

Fr. Bob has always carried a special love for the men and women who served our country. He walked with them through moments of uncertainty, illness, loss, and healing. For over 20 years, he offered them the compassion of Christ when they needed it most.

But in recent months, Fr. Bob's own health has changed. A rapidly deteriorating spine has caused a pronounced lean to his right, requiring regular medical care, weekly physical therapy, and now the support of a cane.

True to his character, he continues to face it all with humor and hope. When someone jokes that he resembles "a moving Leaning Tower of Pisa," he laughs right along with them. His spirit is unshaken—but his body needs help.

They Have Given Everything. Now They Need Us.

Fr. Leon and Fr. Bob are living reminders of what a life of humble service looks like. These two Capuchin friars have spent decades pouring themselves out for the Church, for the poor, for the sick, for veterans, and for countless individuals who simply needed a listening ear or a compassionate heart.

Now we have the privilege—and the responsibility—to ensure that they are cared for with the same love and devotion they showed to others.

Your gift directly supports the medical care and daily assistance that our retired friars depend on. You are not just giving a donation - you are honoring their lifetime of service.

Please consider making a generous gift today for Fr. Leon, Fr. Bob, and all the friars who have devoted themselves so faithfully to the Lord and His people.

With deep gratitude and prayers,



Fr. John Pfannenstiel, OFM Cap.



P.S. Your kindness truly makes a difference. Every gift—large or small—helps us provide the essential care our elder friars need. Fr. Leon and Fr. Bob pray daily for all who support them. Please join in caring for these remarkable servants of God by sending your donation today.