

A Guided

Retreat

with

Blessed

Francis X. Seelos

Befriended

A portrait of Blessed Francis X. Seelos, a man with dark hair and a slight smile, wearing a dark sweater over a white collared shirt. He is holding a small book or notebook in his right hand. The background is dark and slightly blurred, with a soft glow around his head.

Byron Miller, C.Ss.R.

Befriended

*A Guided Retreat with
Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos*

Byron Miller, C.Ss.R.



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DEDICATION TO THOSE WHO ARE DEDICATED

This devotional booklet is dedicated to generations of family members who have believed in Father Francis Xavier Seelos' cause for sanctity and to countless Seelos Center volunteers, living and deceased, who have worked so tirelessly for this noble cause.



“TO MEET FATHER SEELOS is to meet someone you will never forget. It isn’t because he was handsome, which he was; it isn’t because he had an attractive personality, which he did; it isn’t because he could tell a joke, which he could. It isn’t for any of these reasons. He leaves an impression because you feel close to God by being with him. And you feel that somehow through him you yourself become nearer to God—now knowing a little bit more about Him and His ways.”

FATHER CARL HOEGERL, C.Ss.R.,
AUTHOR OF THE *POSITIO* ON
FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS

FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS was born on January 11, 1819, in Füssen, Bavaria, Germany. After studying for the priesthood in Germany, he asked to be admitted to the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists) with a view to future ministry in the United States.

In 1844, he was ordained a priest in Baltimore. His availability and innate kindness in understanding and responding to the needs of the faithful made him so renowned as an expert confessor and spiritual director that people came to him even from neighboring towns.

Faithful to the Redemptorist charism, Father Seelos practiced a simple lifestyle and manner of expressing himself. The themes of his preaching, rich in biblical content, were always heard and understood by everyone, regardless of education, culture, or background.

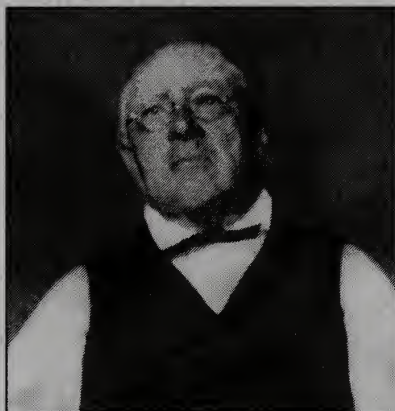
He was stationed in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Annapolis, Cumberland (Maryland), Detroit, and New Orleans. He preached missions and retreats throughout much of what was then the United States. He was transferred to New Orleans in 1866. In God's plan, however, his ministry there was destined to be brief. Father Seelos entered into eternal life on October 4, 1867, at the age of forty-eight years and nine months.

On April 9, 2000, His Holiness Pope John Paul II beatified Father Francis Xavier Seelos. He was the only North American accorded this distinction during the Solemn Jubilee Year. Many miracles are attributed to his intercession, both during his life and after his death.

*Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter:
whoever finds one has found a treasure.
Faithful friends are beyond price.*

SIRACH 6:14-15

MEET A FRIEND OF FATHER SEELOS



Countless people were endeared to the pleasant personality and goodness of Francis Xavier Seelos, and he considered his many friendships to be a blessing from God. Mr. Philip Antoni was such a dear friend who knew Father Seelos toward the end of his life.

Like Francis Seelos, Mr. Antoni was born in Germany and came to America in his twenties. He settled in New York where he eventually worked as a decorator and carver. He moved to New Orleans in the early 1850s and started a small religious articles store on Constance Street in the shadow of St. Mary's Assumption Church. At the time of his death in 1908, Philip's prosperous business was recognized as one of the leading stores of its kind in the city.

As a devout member of St. Mary's Assumption Church, Mr. Antoni surely welcomed the ar-

rival of the new pastor, whose reputation of sanctity had already preceded him. Before long Father Seelos and Philip Antoni became good friends. But sadly, the friendship was short-lived.

When another yellow fever epidemic hit New Orleans in 1867, the Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers were severely affected. A concerned Philip Antoni was regularly admitted into the rectory to help provide care to the bedridden. When Father Seelos himself contracted yellow fever he entrusted his own mission cross to Philip Antoni. From his deathbed, Francis Seelos wanted to show appreciation to his friend for all the pastoral care given to him and his confreres.

The 1908 obituary, "Pioneer Religious Bookseller Passes Away," from a New Orleans newspaper, credits Philip Antoni with an interesting legacy. It remembers him as the man who "fixed the clock on St. Mary's Assumption Church when all of the jewelers of the city gave it up as a bad job in 1875, and, although not identified with the jewelry trade at any time during his life, received great credit for this feat."

Let us now "turn back the clock" and allow Mr. Philip Antoni to be our personal retreat guide. He will share firsthand his experiences with Father Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R., who was his good and holy friend.



ST. MARY'S ASSUMPTION
NEW ORLEANS, LA

HOW TO USE THIS RETREAT BOOKLET

Retreats inspired by saints and holy people are moments of shared friendship with the court of heaven. Through our friendship with a particular person who is close to God, we are assisted to live our own lives steeped in deep love for God and neighbor. Like those we pray to, we strive to be a light in the world, bringing the compassion and love of God to all we meet in our journey of life. A retreat like this one is a good way to relate to a favorite Christian role model while in the midst of our daily lives. Through these prayers and devotions, we bring those whom we remember into our lives and share with them our needs and worries. We ask them to join their prayers with ours, and as we do, our friendship with them and with God grows.

When making this private guided retreat, it is suggested that if possible you find a place where you can be comfortable and quiet, away from distractions. Begin by closing your eyes and becoming aware of God's presence with you in that place at that moment. Before beginning, call to mind what it is you want to ask of Blessed Francis Seelos this day.

When using this retreat, each reflection will

have its greatest effect if approached slowly in a thoughtful manner. The meditations may be used over the course of several days, although more than one may be considered each day if desired.

Each time you begin to contemplate another reflection, you may wish to start by reciting this prayer:

O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer, let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight. I offer praise to you for the grace you have bestowed on this humble Redemptorist missionary, Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos. May I have the same joyful vigor that Father Seelos possessed during his earthly life to love you deeply and live faithfully your gospel. Amen.

I

The truth will make you free.

John 8:32



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

Father Seelos contracted yellow fever in September 1867 after ministering to those already stricken with the dreaded disease. New Orleans in September can still resemble the summer. But in Germany—where Father Seelos and I are from—the forests are brilliantly colored in the fall. I cannot help but think that while on his deathbed, Father Seelos had time to recall the autumn seasons of his homeland and those in the northeastern parts of the United States where he ministered so tirelessly.

For Reflection

Especially during the autumn season, some of the most familiar verses in American poetry emerge from our collective unconscious:

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood...
...And I—I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN, BY ROBERT FROST

Recall, too, a familiar gospel verse used in the play, *A Man for All Seasons*: “The truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). The gospel truth not only liberates us, it can also set us apart and make us different. With all due respect to Robert Frost, often it’s not so much the road itself, but the *freedom to choose* that road that really makes all the difference.

When Francis Seelos made the decision to abandon his ordinary, comfortable life in Germany for life as a missionary in America so far away, he had already absorbed the truths that would set him apart and make him different in the eyes of many.

We create our road in life through the decisions we make as the available paths fork along the way. One of those paths—perhaps one far less traveled these days—is our spiritual path. Is it a path that is inviting you?

In and out of season, allow the Lord of the Harvest to give you wisdom and courage in following the Truth, even if it leads you down roads less traveled. Your journey on that spiritual path may set you free and label you as different by others for doing so, but it just might make the difference you have been looking for.

Prayerfully consider Luke 9:62 where Jesus admonishes anyone who begins plowing but keeps looking back.

Have you plowed a path in life that causes you to keep looking back at roads not taken? Are you constantly in search of greener pastures?

Offer a spontaneous prayer for the insight to view the “here and now” as an abundant gift from God, and to peacefully accept the path in life that you have created thus far.



*“Have a reason to live, and know
how to sacrifice yourself for it.”*

F. X. SEELOS

II

I will be a Francis Xavier.



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

From my conversations with Father Seelos, it appears as though he had the courage to follow the Truth from an early age, even when that meant becoming a missionary on roads leading to a foreign land.

He told me that his mother often read to her children pious books about the saints. On one occasion, after listening to the story of Saint Francis Xavier, the brave Jesuit Apostle to the Indies, young Francis Xavier Seelos announced to his mother, "I will be a Francis Xavier."

Let us examine Saint Francis Xavier who so inspired Francis Xavier Seelos in his formative years.

For Reflection

Saint Francis Xavier, SJ (1506-1552), patron of foreign missions, was born in Spain to a noble family. While studying and teaching in Paris he met Ignatius of Loyola. Later, Francis made the spiritual exercises under Ignatius' direction, and

in 1534 they both made their religious vows in the new Society of Jesus.

Under obedience, Francis was sent to the Far East. He left on his mission less than twenty-four hours after receiving his orders, delaying the trip only long enough to patch a pair of worn trousers. For ten years he labored intensively, sharing the faith throughout India, Ceylon, Japan, and other places.

Despite almost insurmountable odds, Francis Xavier's mission was successful because of his strong conviction and determination. He wrote in a letter to Ignatius: "My arms are often almost paralyzed with baptizing and my voice gives out completely through endlessly repeating the creed, the commandments, the prayers, and a sermon on heaven and hell."

The missionary zeal described by Saint Francis Xavier in his letter to Saint Ignatius is strikingly similar to the many letters written by Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos to his family in Germany while he was a missionary in the United States. That boy who wanted to follow in the footsteps of Saint Francis Xavier had achieved his goal.

Were you named after a canonized saint?

Were you named after a family member or family friend because of some admirable quality they possess?

Like the “Francis Xavier” in Seelos, to what degree is your patron saint or namesake a reflection of you?

Research your saintly namesake, whether canonized or not. Then reflect on the parallels between his or her life and your own.



“I have the joy of living in a religious community where I am loved, esteemed, helped, and corrected, instead of being scorned. I am happy, protected, satisfied, and honored. I have no crosses. I have only blessings.”

F. X. SEELOS, 1845

III

Eternally united without fear of separation



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

Father Seelos often recounted to me that the wonderful news he received on the Feast of Saint Cecilia (patroness of musicians) was truly like music to his ears. It was on that day—November 22, 1842—that his application to join the Redemptorists in America was approved.

Although jubilant, he had mixed emotions over telling his family about his decision to become a foreign missionary. In order to ease the pain of separation, he told only his father, preferring to inform the rest of his family in writing.

When Francis was ready to leave, no one else understood the gesture that Mr. Mang Seelos made to his son. Pointing to the sky, he indicated to Francis that their next meeting would be in heaven.

For Reflection

We read in the Book of Genesis, “the LORD told Abram, ‘Leave your country, your relatives,

and your father's house...’ So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed him” (Genesis 12:1, 4 [NLT]). Biblical scholars tell us that the verb *to leave* calls to mind the thrill of travel and adventure. Think about the excitement summer vacation brings as you leave work or studies behind.

Leave is a word pregnant with hope: the infant leaves the mother's womb; the young adult leaves childhood behind. Life is a series of beginnings that require leaving the old behind. Leaving also suggests the pain of separation and an uneasiness about the unknown.

Abram's odyssey into the desert resembles the faith-journey of all pilgrims. No life exists without some separation; no adventure without some risk; no faith without some uncertainty. A blind leap of faith can catapult us into the realm of the Transcendent One who never abandons us to wander in the dark.

Just like life, faith is always a journey of leaving. It is an exodus because it leads us little by little to the place where God may be calling us. And like those temporary departures from work or studies, it is the conversion from who we were and the detours from where we were going, that often prove to be the most refreshing travels in life.

Refer to 1 Corinthians 13:11-13 where Saint Paul encourages putting childish ways aside. At some point in every life journey, the young adult leaves childhood behind.

What was the one incident or period in life that most signifies your right of passage from childhood to adulthood?

To spare himself and his family the pain of a personal farewell, Francis Seelos decided to take leave of his family by letter. He corresponded to each family member separately. "With a very heavy heart," he wrote to his sister, reminding her that "in heaven we will be eternally united without the least fear of separation."

Recount any final separations that have occurred between you and any of your loved ones. Bask in the assurance of an eternal heavenly reunion.



“It is therefore God’s holy will that I go to that country which I already showed you on the map during those happy hours when we were always together on Sunday morning... If it were up to me alone, I would always stay with you and our family, but I will not and cannot resist the inner call that comes from the other side, but I will give myself freely with entire love.”

F. X. SEELOS IN A LETTER
TO HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, ADAM, 1842

IV

Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Thomas Haynes Bayly



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

In 1866, Father Seelos received news from his Redemptorist superior that he was to leave the parish in Detroit, Michigan, for his new assignment in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Before heading south he made a ten-day retreat at Saint Michael's, a parish staffed by Redemptorists in Chicago. I do not know what personal resolutions Father Seelos made while on retreat there. However, I do know that on a retreat some years earlier in Pittsburgh, he resolved to include additional forms of penance and self-discipline along with those already prescribed for Redemptorists in their Rule.

What my eyes witnessed through my friendship with him gives me every reason to believe that Father Seelos was conscientiously faithful to those resolutions until his dying breath.

For Reflection

Recall that list of ambitious resolutions you may have created at the beginning of this year. Most likely you made them with every good intention of following through: to lose weight; to quit smoking; to floss regularly; and so on. If you are like most people, a few of the pledges made in this annual ritual have already been quietly abandoned. Catholics can always reassure themselves that they will do better with such commitments during Lent. Or perhaps, a new year's resolution next year will be to no longer make any new year's resolutions.

As self-disciplined as he was, Father Seelos made many personal resolutions during his lifetime. For example, he vowed never to use tobacco and to avoid delicacies in food and drink. He never used salt or seasoning in his food, even while living in New Orleans where spicy food is a staple. In 1848, he resolved to abstain even from the little food that was allowed in the morning on days of fasting. He also resolved to reflect on the Passion of Christ during his thanksgiving after Mass and to sleep on the floor three nights each week.

Amazingly, for someone who often ministered on an empty stomach and without a good night's

rest, Father Seelos was always the most joyful person in the community. He was wise enough to know that depriving one's self of certain pleasurable indulgences helps prevent us from taking those delights for granted.

Yet, giving up self-gratification in some way is not an end in itself. Rather, it helps us to better appreciate all that God offers us. Something is missing if our personal resolutions and penitential practices do not lead us to a deeper relationship with God.

It is said that "absence makes the heart grow fonder." For Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, fasting and discipline made the heart grow fonder of God. His life of holiness and happiness demonstrates that absence of certain personal pleasures can even make us more receptive to the joy of salvation.

What gifts from God do you most often take for granted? your health? your faith? your freedom? Pause to offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for those blessings.

Do you expend a lot of energy in determining how *others* need to improve? What positive change can you make starting today that will make life more meaningful and enjoyable for you, and ultimately for those who encounter you?



“We must strive to embrace the crosses which God sends us with a willing, even joyful heart.”

F. X. SEELOS

V

An inheritance worth more than silver or gold



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

I remember that Father Seelos had been in New Orleans only five weeks when the sad news reached him that his mother had died in Germany on September 27. That was in 1866.

The priests and Brothers offered the customary eight days of prayer for a Redemptorist's mother, and Father Seelos celebrated a Solemn Requiem Mass for his mother on November 14. The good people of St. Mary's Assumption Church took up a collection totaling twenty-five dollars for a second Mass—besides other Masses—as our way to help Father Seelos deal with the loss.

Father Seelos was once the Prefect of Students over some of the Redemptorists who were now priests and stationed with him in New Orleans. They recounted that while seminarians, he told them if he ever had the chance to see his mother again, he would fall on his knees and kiss her feet for all she had done for him. That chance came for

him less than a year later, when he joined his mother in heaven.

For Reflection

Washington Irving wrote,

“There is an enduring tenderness in the love of a mother to a son that transcends all other affections of the heart.... She will sacrifice every comfort to his convenience; she will surrender every pleasure to his enjoyment; she will glory in his fame and exult in his prosperity; and if adversity overtake him, he will be the dearer to her by misfortune; and if disgrace settle upon his name, she will still love and cherish him; and if all the world beside cast him off, she will be all the world to him.”

THE WIDOW AND HER SON
FROM *THE SKETCHBOOK OF GOEFFREY CRAYON*

Visualize Michelangelo's *Pieta*, where Jesus is cradled in his mother's arms after being removed from the cross and Irving's words will come to mind. Similarly, we can imagine the great love Frances Schwartzenbach Seelos had for her son Francis Xavier.

Of the many virtues Mrs. Seelos instilled into

her son's mind, love for prayer was supreme. Prayer became even more appealing to her son when she would have him envision the glories of heaven and the deep love that the Virgin Mary has for us. Mrs. Seelos would later say, "I have not done more than what every Christian mother is supposed to do, only it struck deeper roots in my dear Xavier than in others."

Father Seelos jokingly recalled that his father was always talking and his mother was always working. And she usually prayed during her work. She even knelt down in the field when she heard the bell signaling the consecration in some nearby church. Years later Francis Xavier said, "Dear Mother, how I thank you for having taught us children a great devotion to the Mother of God. Such an inheritance from parents is worth more than gold or silver."



The greatest gift a mother and father can give to their children is themselves, their time, and their love. Read Proverbs 2:1-11 and reflect on how such an inheritance can be worth more than gold or silver.

What prayers and prayerful practices did your

parents teach you? How are you passing these on to your children and to others?

Parents can give you life, but they cannot live your life for you. Is there anything for which you need to forgive your parents so that you can “move on” in your life?

“My Unforgettable Mother...do not forget your Xavier. You have always loved this rascal too much and will not now forget him in your fervent prayers, and in heaven will recommend him especially to the mercy of God. I am, my dearest mother, Your grateful son, Xavier.”

LETTER OF F. X. SEELOS
TO HIS ELDERLY MOTHER, 1854



“Whatever you saw in Father Seelos of qualities of gentleness, of love, of amiability, of giving, of self-sacrifice—these are gifts inherited from his mother.”

OBSERVATION MADE BY
A FAMILY ACQUAINTANCE, 1877

VI

Earthly coworkers; heavenly co-intercessors



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

Father Seelos was a man of deep prayer. He did not seem to distinguish between talking about God and talking with God. And he certainly had many prayerful models to inspire him: growing up in his own family which was very devout, and spending time as a young priest in the company of the saintly Redemptorist, John Neumann.

Now that Father Seelos sees God face to face, we can be confident that he continues talking with God in prayer on our behalf.

For Reflection

Despite many improvements in our quality of life, people today are ten times as likely to suffer depression as those born two generations ago. Research has determined that once money has provided our basic needs, it does not necessarily

lead to happiness. According to author and teacher, Holly J. Morris, “Strong marriages, family ties, and friendships predict happiness, as do spirituality and self-esteem. Hope is crucial, as is the feeling that life has meaning.”

Some studies suggest that about half of one’s potential for happiness is inherited. If that is true, then Francis Seelos’ proverbial glass was already half full. Yet, if this “Cheerful Ascetic” was born predisposed to happiness, he still could have led a half-empty life, void of hope and spirituality. But instead he found a vocation that gave him meaning and a personal relationship with his Creator in prayer. He also belonged to a community of priests and Brothers who gave him a sense of family and friendship. Moreover, with a vow of poverty meant to provide only for his most basic needs, his detachment from earthly possessions brought him even greater happiness.



Dorothy Day once said, “I am praying because I am happy, not because I am unhappy.” Do you pray only in times of crisis, tragedy, or need?

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-10 about how God loves a cheerful giver. Can you offer your daily moods as prayer?

Saint Teresa of Avila said that prayer is “being in the presence of One whom I know loves me infinitely.” When have you sensed that you were in the presence of God?

Read Exodus 33:7-17 about God’s desire to have an intimate friendship with Moses.

Assume a prayerful posture, and be content in the company of God who desires to speak “face to face, as one person speaks to another.” Also, take delight in the company of Saint John Neumann and Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos—earthly coworkers and now heavenly co-intercessors—who offer loving assistance in your conversations and intimate friendship with God.



“What can console us in moments of depression? Stopping to look at our own failures? The only thing that can heal our wounds is the holy exercise of prayer. To make an act of supplication only takes a few moments. We only have to tell God our secrets, our mistakes, and our sicknesses, and he will cure us even while we are speaking.”

F. X. SEELOS

VII

***With malice toward none;
with charity for all.***

Abraham Lincoln



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln received Father Seelos and another Redemptorist to hear their concerns about drafting seminarians during the Civil War. I once asked Father Seelos what it was like to have met such a revered president. "I liked President Lincoln very much when I went to see him," he said. "He spoke to us in a sincere, free, and friendly manner."

"Good Father Abraham" and "Good Father Seelos" met face to face in mutual respect for the duties they each performed. In many ways they shared much in common.

For Reflection

Both Abraham Lincoln and Francis Seelos were born of humble beginnings. *Humility* is a word derived from the Latin *humus*, meaning "earth." Without question, these two humble

men were down to earth. Neither of them ever forgot the freedom that comes with simplicity of life and detachment from worldly possessions.

Because both experienced firsthand the atrocities of war, they never ceased praying for peace. During the same month that Lincoln received Father Seelos in Washington, D.C., the President spoke these words after the Battle of Gettysburg: "Never before had I prayed with so much earnestness...I felt I must put all my trust in Almighty God. He gave our people the best country ever given to man. He alone could save it from destruction."

Father Seelos wrote this about the war: "Earthly things are truly quite secondary to me and I leave all to the wise Providence of God. He only knows how to bring good out of evil."

These two powerful orators were also distinguished for their bellowing laughter and their infectious sense of humor. Lincoln said, "Most folks are about as happy as they make up their minds to be." Similarly, a contemporary of Father Seelos wrote that while he "literally killed himself with labor, mortifications, and exertions, [he] was the most cheerful and humorous of the community."

Perhaps the most striking trait shared by these two admirable men was their basic belief in hu-

manity as good and equal. His biographer wrote that Seelos was always the “favorite among all classes, male and female, young and old, rich and poor, white and black, secular and religious. . . . He knew no distinction of condition. He received [the lowly] with the same gentle deference as the highest gentleman and lady.”

Similarly, Abraham Lincoln wrote in his second inaugural address: “With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive. . . . to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.”



With the same honesty that Abraham Lincoln and Francis Xavier Seelos exercised, examine your own attitudes and the generosity of your heart toward the poor and downtrodden.

How do these great men inspire you to treat each person you meet, especially those in need?



“I am encouraged by that love of God with which he leads us along the rough road upon which he first led his most beloved and first-born Son. Yes, I am encouraged by the thought that the poorest, most sorrowful, most despised, rejected, martyred, crucified, and dying Son of God is our only and greatest model by which we are to judge ourselves.”

F. X. SEELOS

VIII

At God's Threshold



Mr. Antoni, our retreat guide, recalls:

At the time of his death on October 4, 1867, Father Seelos was accompanied into heaven with the sound of music. His Redemptorist confreres had gathered in his room and at 5:45 p.m. they sang his favorite Marian hymn in German as he expired.

For Reflection

Rabbi Abraham Heschel wrote: "Music leads to the threshold of repentance, of unbearable realization of our own vanity and frailty and of the terrible relevance of God. I would define myself as a person who has been smitten by music." It is safe to say that Francis Seelos was also smitten by sacred music.

Once, he and others entered a church in his hometown of Füssen and began to sing a Marian hymn. Toward the end, the others halted, but Francis kept right on singing *viva voce!* When he sang at Mass it was with so much enthusiasm

that on one occasion, a friend whispered to him, “Seelos, not so loud!”

The designer of the modern violin was from Füssen and the symmetrical “f” on the instrument may be a homage to his hometown. It is interesting to note that Francis Seelos played the violin well enough to be invited to accompany the choir at Sunday Mass. However, at the end of the Gloria when the choir had stopped singing, he continued playing. The “calamity” did not escape the watchful eye—and ear—of the good Benedictine rector. The next morning, he discreetly dispatched a note to the classroom for Seelos, and others, who didn’t quite measure up to the rector’s musical standards, informing them that their services were no longer needed at the holy Eucharist. Later in life, when recalling the blunder, Seelos said it was just as well, for the Redemptorist Rule in his time would have prohibited him from playing the violin anyway. Seelos may have cast his violin aside, but his love for God through sacred music echoed loud and clear...with no strings attached.



Do you love God “with strings attached,” that is, on your own terms and when it is convenient? Or do you strive to love God unconditionally, as God loves you?

Father Seelos drew all of his support and energy from God alone. In what areas of life are you aware of your dependence on God?



“Think always on the shortness of life and on the eternal happiness that we will enjoy in glory and contentment, which now we cannot even imagine.”

F. X. SEELOS

“This is the greatest grace—to persevere to the end in a humble and contrite frame of mind.”

F. X. SEELOS, 1866

CLOSING PRAYER

*O my God, I truly believe
you are present with me.*

*I adore your limitless perfections.
I thank you for the graces and gifts
you gave to Blessed Francis Seelos.*

*If it is your holy will,
please let him be declared
a saint of the Church so that
others may know and imitate his holy life.*

*Through his prayers
please give me this favor...
(Mention your special needs)*

Amen.

MIRACLE NEEDED

At the entrance to the office of the vice-postulator for the Canonization Cause of Blessed Francis X. Seelos is an amusing wall hanging that sometimes feels like a partial job description: “*If it’s difficult we do it immediately. If it’s impossible it takes a little longer. Miracles BY APPOINTMENT ONLY.*”

For beatification, a candidate has already passed the most rigorous part in the canonization process. The threshold has been crossed, but the final goal remains. Thankfully, the *Positio*—a carefully researched and notarized testimony on the life and virtues of the candidate—needs no further revision or defense. But what is needed is another “divine sign,” or miracle, performed through the intercession of the candidate after the time he or she has been declared Venerable. Once a miracle (normally, a physical healing) is examined and accepted, the pope issues a Bull of Canonization declaring that the candidate may be venerated as a saint throughout the universal Church.

At this time, Blessed Francis X. Seelos is only one miracle away from canonization. “Miracles by appointment only” is not only a personal job description, it is also our prayer

to the One who appoints miracles...that is, if God wills it.

Since Francis Seelos' intercession has helped so many others, he will very likely help you, also. Why not begin today to ask Father Seelos to help obtain favors from God for you and for others. Please report all favors received.

If you wish your intentions recommended to the prayers at the National Shrine of Blessed Francis Seelos, please contact

The Seelos Center
2030 Constance Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
(504) 525-2495
www.seelos.org

NATIONAL SHRINE OF BLESSED FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS

The church in Füssen, Germany—Francis Seelos' birthplace—has a fitting memorial to their native son. But the sacred remains of Father Seelos are in New Orleans, Louisiana. Few American cities can boast of having a national shrine to a future saint.

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Each year the shrine, with its museum and gift shop, attracts an increasing number of local, national, and even international visitors. Here these pilgrims discover a sanctuary of prayer, hope, and healing.

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All items shown are available at the Seelos Center gift shop and support the cause for Father Seelos' canonization. Please visit or call (504) 525-2495 for details.

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Mr. Philip Antoni lived

in New Orleans in 1866, at the same time as Father Francis X. Seelos, C.Ss.R. He was a member of St. Mary's Assumption parish where Father Seelos ministered during the final year of his life. These two men became dear friends.

Through the eight meditations in this booklet, Mr. Antoni will guide you on a spiritual journey as he shares details he remembers from the life of Blessed Francis X. Seelos and from their relationship. In these pages you will experience the goodness of Father Seelos' heart and develop a heavenly friendship with this holy Redemptorist priest.



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