



Seelos and Sanctity

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MARY IS MY SONG

(We here reproduce a very excellent article on the devotion of Father Seelos for the Blessed Mother. This article was written for the January issue of the Perpetual Help Bulletin by Frater Joseph Spitzfaden, C.S.S.R. We feel it is especially appropriate for the month of May.)

A group of teenagers knelt silently in the little parish church. Flickering vigil lights emphasized the peace and quiet of the holy place.

This is a love story. And it begins and ends with a song. No, that's not right! It began much earlier than the song and it has never ended. The boy's name is Francis -- Francis Xavier Seelos. The girl's: Mary.

Francis had not just suddenly fallen in love. It had been going on for quite a long time for a teenager. But you might say this was his first public announcement.

He began to sing.

The others nudged him, whispered hoarsely: "Xavier, please be quiet." But Xavier wouldn't. He just kept on singing. The others genuflected and left in an embarrassed hurry. When Xavier had finished his love-song, he, too, left. He knew that he faced heartless jokes and the cruelty of loneliness. He was in love.

He used to talk to his love at night, too. He'd lie in bed and pray her rosary. This made him unpopular with his brother who whined to their mother "Mom, tell Xavier to shut up. I can't sleep with all his mumbling." After that only Mary heard what he had to say.

As Francis grew, love kept pace. But love isn't still. It wants to get out and do things. So one day he asked Mary what she wanted him to do for her. She told him in a dream . . . She'd like very much for him to become a priest. Better still -- a missionary. Xavier thought about it and liked the idea.

He talked it over with his dad.

It wasn't long before Francis was off for America. (Francis, by the way, was born in Bavaria. When he set sail he was on his way to join a group of priests, Redemptorists, who had themselves

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In conformity with the decree of Pope Urban VIII all statements contained herein are unreservedly submitted to the judgment of the Holy See and to the decision of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

IMPRIMATUR † Archbishop John P. Cody, April 24, 1964, New Orleans, Louisiana

only recently settled in America.)

Naturally, he brought his love with him.

In America, Xavier became Father Francis Xavier Seelos, Redemptorist. His favorite sermons were always the ones in which he could tell the people about his Queen. Mary was not just a part of him - she was his life.

Let me take you on a "whistle-stop" tour of his life in America. You'll see what I mean.

He had only been a Redemptorist four years when he became novice-master. Surely he taught his novices to love Mary. They used to boat on a nearby lake and . . . as Xavier remarked in a letter: "We have a few small rowboats in which we make short excursions on the water if the Bay is calm. While rowing on the water the novices usually sing hymns to Our Lady." I wonder who started that?

When the whole group would get together to relax after dinner or supper, he would fascinate them with stories about Mary. He usually found these stories in the many books he read about her. But on some days he could not find any stories. Then he would begin a song to her. The novices couldn't help but join in.

He liked to sing to Mary. It seemed that wherever Francis was, Mary somehow crept into the conversation. And everyone would end up singing a song to her.

When Francis was with others he showed how wonderful it was to be in love with Mary. When he was alone he told Mary how much he loved her. People in love like to do hard things for the ones they love -- like climbing the highest mountain or swimming the deepest ocean. Francis was no different. On all Saturdays and on the day before any of her great feasts he would skip breakfast and fast the remainder of the day.

And if lovers are always thinking of each other, he was like all other lovers. Every time he heard the clock strike the hour he would say a little prayer asking Mary to give him a happy death. And when the half hour rang he would say 'hello' with a Hail Mary.

In 1861 the Civil War, which was to tear America apart, began. At the time, Francis Seelos was stationed in Cumberland, Maryland. And the battle came so close to the monastery that the roll of the drums and the noise of rifle and cannon could be heard. There was even a rumor that the students and priests were to be accepted into the army and the monastery converted into a military hospital. Father Seelos quickly called on Mary to protect them. Each day the whole community said special prayers to Mary. The monastery remained untouched and everybody was safe from the dangers of war.

One day Father Seelos was summoned for a sick call. When he arrived he found a poor woman lying in a coma. He took out Mary's scapular, placing it gently over her heart. He asked Mary to help her to regain consciousness long enough to make a good confession. Her eyes opened and the woman cried out: "Who is this holy man of God?" She made her confession, received Holy Communion and Extreme Unction, then lapsed back into the coma and died peacefully.

Father Seelos was forever encouraging people to pray to Mary, telling them that if they prayed with confidence she would surely hear them.

After the Civil War had collapsed into an exhausted climax at Gettysburg, Father Seelos was transferred to New Orleans. Enchanting old New Orleans was not so enchanting in those hot summer months of 1866. She had lost all her charm and lay in the grip of the ugly claws of death in the form of the dreaded plague: Yellow Fever.

Shortly after he had arrived Francis blessed a new statue of Our Lady of Sorrows which had been erected in Saint Mary's Assumption Church. At the blessing ceremony he remarked that he hoped to be buried near this new shrine of Mary.

Two short months later Father Seelos lay dying. For weeks all of the Redemptorists had been working twenty hours a day answering sick calls. Responding to as many as he could, especially the night calls, Xavier finally fell prey to the disease.

During his sickness, the brother who cared for him asked if Mary had appeared to him. He smiled and answered: "No!" A week later the brother repeated the question. "Yes," the priest replied. "How many times?" "Once," replied Xavier. On the last day of his life he answered the same question: "Twice." "Was she beautiful?" the brother wanted to know. "Oh, how beautiful," he smiled, "how beautiful is the Mother of God."

The fathers and brothers gathered around his bed, praying. When asked if he wanted them to sing, Father Seelos nodded 'yes.' But no one felt like singing. "Brother Louis," the pastor whispered weakly, "will you start Father's favorite song?" Soon the man who had spent his whole life singing to Mary was listening to the song praising his most beautiful Lady.

Father Seelos was buried at the altar beneath the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows . . .

This is the end of my story. But, really, it is just beginning. Because now and for all eternity, Mary will be his song

For Seelos Guild Members Only

Our Guild now numbers 1467. What a wonderful number of people storming heaven for all of our petitions!

During the past month we were notified of the following deaths among members of our Guild:

MRS. ETHEL BEER KAIRDOLF
MRS. GORDON JOFFRION

(who met with an accidental death)

REV. WM. P. McCULLOUGH,
C. SS. R. (of Canada)

SISTER MARY THEKLA, O. S. B.

We were notified of the death of Father McCullough by one of our correspondents in Canada. He has been very interested in spreading devotion to Father Seelos. We will miss hearing from him at the Seelos Center.

GOD BLESS YOU!

A SPECIAL INTENTION FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

We have received very many petitions requesting prayers for loved ones to return to the Sacraments and the practice of their religion. In this month we would like to recommend to your prayers the conversion of those of the Catholic Church who have turned their backs to God. Let us offer special prayers to Father Seelos that they will receive the grace of God and go to Confession and receive Holy Communion during this Easter season which ends on Trinity Sunday, May 24.

THANKS!

"My wife was having very severe pains in the neck, which radiated down the left arm. The doctor recommended that she enter the hospital for tests, which he indicated would suggest surgery. At that particular time her mother was very ill and it was impossible for her to enter the hospital, so a neck brace was made for her and she wore it for several months. That was the only way she seemed to get any relief. When her trouble started I recited the prayer to Father Seelos daily, so that no surgery would be necessary. She is now able to discard the brace and had had no pain for about two months now.

"My sister developed symptoms which the doctor thought would necessitate surgery, and again I began praying to Father Seelos so that no surgery would be necessary in her case. After tests were made it was discovered that her condition resulted from medication.

"I am grateful to Father Seelos for these favors and shall continue to ask his intercession."

"Our son became very ill in February with acute glomerulonephritis (acute Bright's Disease) and at the same time contracted the measles. He is just four years old and my husband is in the Air Force. I had no one close to be with me. No one but God, St. Anthony Mary Claret and a new friend - Father Francis Xavier Seelos.

"I can now write my son is well. I promised that I would write about this favor that was granted to us - that we were spared our son."

PLEASE!

"I am a patient at our Infirmary and can offer only my prayers. I am begging Father Seelos every day for help to get to the Chapel and back to my room and for some release from suffering. He has helped me. I am begging him to cure my nephew, a priest, who is suffering greatly. Father Seelos could ask and get a miracle for him.

"I will try to make him known and pray that his cause will be hastened."

"I wish you would pray for my grandfather so that he will get better. He has been sick for such a long time and also on the verge of death a few times.

"I also wish you would pray for my little brother. He has gone through three operations to make his legs even so he can run and play like the other children. One of his legs is shorter than the other and he has been in a body cast after each operation for three summers now. He has to have another operation this summer and again has to be in a body cast all summer. So please ask Father Seelos to make his legs even so he won't have to have another operation. Thank you very much!"

"A friend has told me that her grandmother has cancer and it is just a matter of time. The grandmother is in her seventies and has been very active all of her life. Besides the suffering, the inactivity is really getting her down. In a week or so the doctors will start treating her to try to arrest the rapid spreading of the cancer. (It has already affected her intestines, liver, kidney and is in her blood stream.)

"I am introducing her and her family to Father Seelos in the hope that even if she cannot be helped by a cure, she may have less pain and discomfort.

"The reason why I am so devoted to Father Seelos is that when I was expecting my second baby my aunt introduced him to me. I have the R. H. factor and was having the second baby within a year. We visited the tomb of Father Seelos on October 4 and then my aunt prayed to him to help me have the baby safely and without much trouble. He was born October 5. I was in labor 8 hours and when the family really started to storm heaven to invoke Father Seelos, the baby was born in 10 minutes."

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For your own intentions, the intentions mentioned above, and all the petitions placed before the tomb of Father Seelos, let us pause and say -

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 FATHER 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

On May 31 at 9 A.M. there will be a special Mass for the members of our Perpetual Adoration program. Those participating will receive further details by mail and we will report on the outcome in our July issue.