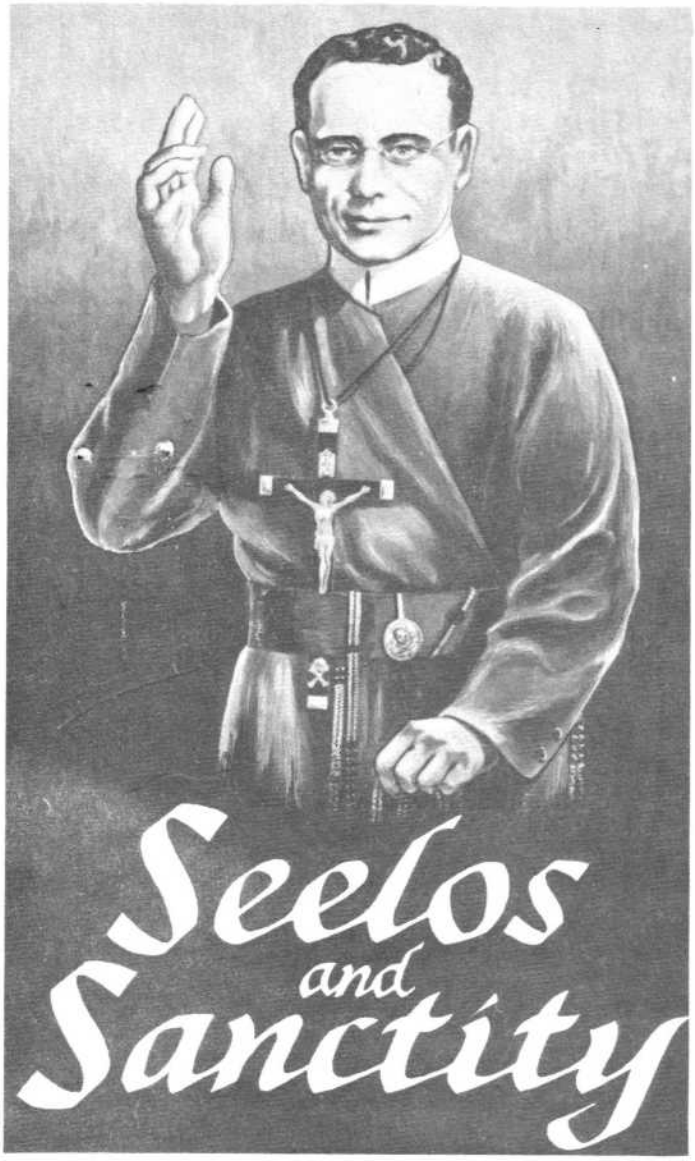

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THE MEANING OF PAIN

by JOHN J. VAUGHN, C.SS.R.

When sickness and pain strikes, a sudden transformation comes over the sick person. He enters a different world. He seems to be so alone. He loses all realization of the outside world and thinks only of the pain in that part of his body where it resides. He is humiliated because pain renders him helpless and he is forced to accept help from other people. It seems to the sick person that this pain will go on and on without stopping. He is fearful that the sickness which is causing the pain may grow worse. The possibility of death stares him in the face.

As this helpless and pain-racked person lies motionless in the bed, he can't help wondering, "WHY? WHY ALL THIS PAIN?"

IF ONLY THAT SICK PERSON CAN SEE SOME REASON FOR HIS SUFFERING, HE WILL FIND IT MUCH EASIER TO BEAR. A MOTHER GIVING BIRTH TO A CHILD FINDS HER PAIN QUITE BEARABLE BECAUSE HER PAIN HAS A PURPOSE. REAL RELIEF TO PAIN IS NOT TO BE FOUND IN MORPHINE, BUT IN A REALIZATION OF THE PURPOSE OF ONE'S SUFFERING.

It is my intention here to point out some of the reasons why we must endure pain. I do so in the hope that when severe pain comes to you you might remember these ideas -- or if suffering comes to a loved one, you might give them some measure of relief by presenting these ideas to them.

First of all, PAIN KEEPS US HUMBLE. It makes us realize how totally our lives rest in the hands of God. In the moments of our suffering we are so alone. We have nowhere to turn but to God. Human help is now very limited if not useless. Pain reminds us that God is still the Lord and Master of our bodies.

Secondly, PAIN MAKES US GRATEFUL TO GOD. We never really appreciate anything until it is taken away from us. Many of you who are reading this article have probably taken your health for granted. Pain makes you realize that the gift of health can be taken away if God chooses.

Thirdly, PAIN MAKES US MORE SPIRITUAL-MINDED. It makes us realize that building one's happiness simply on some earthly value like health, is a very dangerous thing. When a millionaire is in pain, his millions mean nothing to him. It is then he must realize that unless he builds his life on a solid devotion to God and on hope of a future life, he has built his life on sand.

Fourthly, PAIN IS SOMETHING REALLY QUITE BENEFICIAL. Pain is nature's way of letting the doctor know that something is wrong and of giving him an indication as to where the malfunction is occurring. Pain is PART OF THE HEALING PROCESS. When a person becomes sick, he cannot be made well except through pain. Like the mother giving birth to the child, his pain has a purpose. Its purpose is to make him well.

Fifthly, when God wished to demonstrate his love for us, he did so by enduring pain. Christ took on a body to suffer as a sign of God's love for man and to give man an example of how he should show his love for God. ENDURING PAIN IN UNION WITH THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST BECOMES THEN A SIGN OF OUR LOVE FOR GOD.

....We still have a supply of Father Seelos doubloons available but they are going fast. Sets of five .999 silver, copper, verbonze, oxidized silver, aluminum (only 1,000 issued) $15.00; individual aluminum doubloon $1.00.... Pieces of wood from Seelos tomb available at Seelos Center and in St.Alphonsus Rectory...Hospitalized patients in New Orleans area blessed with crucifix used by Father Seelos, phone 895-6176....Make an hour of adoration each month before the tomb of Father Seelos in St.Alphonsus Church.... Father Curley still working on life of Father Seelos. No publication date set yet....If you wish literature about Father Seelos to give to friends please drop us a line. We'll be glad to send you any amount. We especially urge people outside New Orleans to make Father Seelos known....

Finally, THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT PAIN THAT SOMEHOW MAKES US A MORE COMPLETE PERSON. Pain brings out qualities of the human spirit that would not be brought forth in any other way. It somehow matures a person to face the realities of life. Life indeed is a combination of pleasure and pain. A complete life requires the combination of both.

In the long run I suppose it was best summarized in the quotation above the doors of the Cathedral of Milan, Italy: "ALL THAT GIVES PLEASURE PASSES AWAY. ALL THAT GIVES PAIN PASSES AWAY. ONLY GOD LIVES FOREVER."

Thanks To Father Seelos For.....

.....the recovery of my nephew from cancer of his head and face. He has been able to go back to sea, probably to the war zone.

.....the recovery of my sister from kidney surgery. Several times during the operation it seemed she would not live through it.

.....successful surgery for the removal of one of my kidneys. I had been to several doctors who were unable to diagnose the cause of the severe and almost constant pain which I suffered.

.....helping my husband become more contented at work. He was very discouraged. I prayed to Father Seelos. Last week he was given a raise in salary and working conditions have improved for him.

.....curing my father of his illness. Last year his doctor said he had cancer. This year when he returned for another examination, we were advised there was no sign of cancer.

.....receiving news of a member of the family from whom we had not heard in quite a while.

.....conversion of a friend.

.....financial help for my husband and me.

.....the recovery of two of my sons from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. They were both in critical condition. One had serious brain injury.

N.B. These reports of "Thanksgiving" are from the statements of our correspondents. Official judgement of the favors granted can be given only by the proper church authorities.

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THE SEXTON'S PRAYER

by LUANA THIEL JAMBOIS

The first cool blue of the light before dawn was breaking through the night when Sexton Seelos left his home. For several years now, Mang Seelos had been Sexton of the parish church. His good wife, Francesca, had already begun her daily baking after his breakfast. Now she would wake the children one by one touching their foreheads gently. As he walked to the Church, he counted his blessings. Even as he walked further away, the fragrance of his wife's cooking followed him. In his house he saw the candles lighting. The castle of Hohenschwangau atop the hill outside of Fuessen looked dreamlike in the clouds of daylight awakening. The River Lech tumbled and gurgled while the wild spring daffodils on the Bavarian hillside moved with the breeze. He was off to church to be alone in the time before Mass. His children, though he loved them, could not share this wonderful time with him. "Thank you, Blessed Lord, my God. My cup runneth over," he said aloud.

Bavaria, 1828, in the spring. In the house Elizabeth, Antonia, Josephine and baby Frances were busying themselves with their feminine ways preparing for their day. Downstairs their brothers were already settled at the table waiting. The hearty voice of Ambrose and the thin piping of their smallest brother, Francis Xavier, stopped short, "Girls! Now at once!" They rushed down. When their mother spoke so, it was time to move quickly.

Around the table they sat, heads bowed for the morning blessing. In time, there would be other Seelos children, one of them an abandoned orphan boy who they would take into their hearts. But even though there had been three boy and girl infants who died, this group knew and loved each other. Merry and quick and sturdy they sat, basking in their love for their Creator and for each other. Death had not touched them nor unhappiness. "We thank Thee, God,"said Francesca Seelos. And her family thanked Him too.

In the Church, down thirty five steps, past the burial chapel was Sexton Seelos favorite place, the Chapel of St. Mang. Since the year 625, the chapel had been there. The Benedictine monks of St. Mang, serving the good people of Fuessen and the areas around, tended their heritage here. Now, in the early morning before Mass, steeped in antiquity and nostalgia for times in which the first knights of Christ had fought so hard for heaven, the father of Francis Xavier Seelos loved to pray. The candlelights flickered and the marble floors were cold; but here in the near dark he felt alone with God. "If it is Thy Will, God, let my children serve Thee. Even from such a humble peasant as myself, surely the wish to serve might make them worthy."

How could God hear such a prayer and turn away? In the shadow of His goodness, God chose. Anna and Frances to be sisters Romoulda and Damiana, one to serve the sick and jailed criminals, the other to teach. Xavier to be a priest.

Jesus Christ, the God to Whom he spoke, answered the prayers of the humble sexton, by making of one of his children a priest so great that he could reach out his hand when he prayed to touch the stars.