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THE MORTIFICATION OF FATHER SEELOS

by Father Grangell

One day a young man called on Father Seelos and told him he would like to be a Redemptorist Priest. After talking a long time with this youth, Father Seelos said to him; "I don't think you would make a good Redemptorist, our life is a bit too hard for you." The young man looked at the Priest and asked: "Do you have a Crucifix in the house?" "Certainly, many of them." "Then, I can live any kind of a hard life." The young man impressed Father Seelos so much that he helped him to become a confrere of his, and saw him go on to become an exemplary Priest and Religious.

St. Alphonsus, in the Redemptorist Rule of Life, gives his followers the virtue of mortification to be studied and practiced in a very particular way, in the month of September.

Father Seelos wished to be a perfect imitator of Jesus Christ,—and Christ said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take upon himself the cross and follow me." So, Father Seelos planned his whole life to be one act of mortification. It did not make him sad. Sadness is not a virtue. Christ condemned the Pharisees because they appeared sad in their penances to be noticed. Mortification made Father Seelos cheerful always. He did everything from the motive of the love of God. He wore a perpetual smile. In his life he exemplified the saying: "Smile a while and as you smile, another smiles and then they're miles and miles of smiles and smiles, — and life's worth while because you smile."

There are two kinds of mortification — interior and exterior. Interior mortification is when the faculties of the soul suffer. It is called mental suffering. Exterior mortification is when the body, the flesh suffers pain.

At Fatima, one of the little children asked our Blessed Lady what kind of penance the people of the world should suffer to appease the Anger of God. Mary answered that each in his state of life should be patient in the 10,000 annoyances occurring every day and should in silence offer them up to God. That was certainly the way Father Seelos suffered. He had to do things he did not like to do. He was appointed often by his Superior to a task that was disagreeable to him, but he performed it with such grace that one would imagine it was to his heart's delight. Many a time something was wanting, but

instead of complaining, he said nothing and suffered in silence. Sometimes something was denied him, but he was glad to offer up to God another act of mortification. One day, hearing somebody complaining because something was denied him, he quoted the Chinese proverb: I complained that I had no shoes 'til I met a met who had no feet.

The Redemptorists have an evening meditation on the Passion and Death of Christ. As Father Seelos knelt before the Blessed Sacrament with his eyes on the Crucifix over the tabernacle, he would get all the strength he needed to suffer as Christ did. He would think of Christ, sorrowful, depressed, abandoned in the Garden of Gethsemane. He could suffer the same if he had to. He saw a thief, Barabas, preferred to Christ. If others were preferred to him, he could take it. He saw Christ humiliated, made a fool of by Herod, and laughed at and mocked by the people. He could suffer that too. He saw Christ falsely accused, unjustly condemned at the trial by Pontius Pilate. He would suffer that, too.

Father Seelos would look at the Crucifix in the Chapel. He would make it come to life. He would see Christ writhing on the Cross in extreme agony. He could see His sacred flesh in ribbons on His bones from the scourging. He could count His bones. He saw the Crown of Thorns as a weight on His brow which bent it to His chest. He could see the nails in His hands and feet. He would say: I can punish this body of mine every day for the love of God. I can't perform the penances of those austere Saints of history, but I can suffer every pain and ache of the day and night for the love of God. His prayer was: "May I die for the love of Thy love, Who wast so graciously pleased to die for the love of my love."

He practiced much interior mortification. His many acts of exterior mortification made a mosaic of his life.

He never had robust health. He never asked for any particular kind of sickness or disease. He left that entirely in the hands of God. Thy will be don, not mine: He used to pray: Send any cross, good God and send lots of patience with it.

Father Seelos denied himself every bodily comfort. His room had the bare essentials in it, and some of them were missing. We have so many creature comforts, don't we? If any are missing, we raise a complaint to high Heaven, and make everybody around us miserable.

Father Seelos had a tricky appetite. He would eat much of the things he did not relish. He went easy on the things he liked. Nobody ever accused him of being a mortified man at table. He fooled them. He never ate between meals, unless to avoid an embar-

assment. What is our score in this appetite department? By the way, denying one's self food and drink has never killed anybody. It's just the opposite. When one gets sick, the Doctor orders a strict mortification. He doesn't use the word "mortification", he used "diet". Every young High School athlete mortifies himself to make the team. We are all spiritual athletes striving for an imperishable crown. We must say "no" to many things for the love of God. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up the Cross and follow me." In a changing world today, these words of the Crucified Christ are infallible. The spirit of mortification is gone from the world. That means we want to follow a Christ without a Cross. Ridiculous!

Father Seelos' rule allowed him a certain number hours of sleep. He kept that rule. The reason many people do not go to daily morning Mass is because it deprives them of an extra hour of sleep.

The Church leaves mortification -- abstinence and fasting -- to the individual Catholic. There are no more Ember Days, no more hard days of Lent, no more penance on eves of big feasts, no more meatless Fridays. What are we doing on our own? We must do something, because Christ says: "Except you do penance, you shall perish" (Luke 13/5, and, again Christ says: "He that taketh not up his Cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (Matt. 11/38). St. Paul says: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh." (Galatians 5/24). Again St. Paul: "We always bear about in our bodies the mortification of Jesus, that the life of Jesus may be manifest in our bodies." (2 Cor. 4/10). If we are mortified we can say: "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2/20).

Father Seelos made the Way of the Cross every evening. He put in the first twelve stations the names of the Apostles, who were his favorite patrons. He put them in the Stations in the order we see them in the Canon of the Mass. In the 9th Station, he met Matthew. All the Apostles, the first Priests and Religious, were martyred. Greater love than to die for a friend no man can have. If we only loved God as the Apostles did!

Father Seelos said the Seven Dolor Rosary of Our Blessed Mother daily. He saw in Mary, a great woman of mortification and penance. She was a mirror for him.

IF THINGS GET HARD IN YOUR LIFE, MY DEAR READER, PICK UP YOUR CRUCIFIX -- AND THEN NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE IF YOU LOVE THE CRUCIFIED GOD.

CIRCLE OCTOBER 6 (SUNDAY) ON YOUR CALENDAR

On Sunday, October 6, we are planning a Mass commemorating the 101st anniversary of the death of Father Seelos. The Mass will be at 10 A.M. in St. Alphonsus Church, where the remains of Father Seelos now rest in the sanctuary, near the altar of our beloved Mother of Perpetual Help.

Fathers William Grangell and James Hennessy will be on hand to meet and greet all of you after the Mass.

We will give further details in the October issue of this paper.

If any boy or man is interested in the Redemptorist Priesthood or Brotherhood, would like to live the kind of life Father Seelos lived, write to Father William G. Grangell, C.S.S.R., 2030 Constance Street, New Orleans, La. 70130 for information, or call him at 522-6748.

On Friday nights, Mr. Cletus Stack gives his happy service. God love him.

Father Grangell is willing and happy to visit sick people in hospitals and bless them with Father Seelos' Crucifix on any night of the week. He needs transportation. If anybody is willing and happy to be of service, occasionally, please call 895-6176 and give your name and telephone number. This is one of the Acts of Mercy: to visit the sick.

For all business calls and general information, call Mrs. Agnes Bourg, our secretary, at the Seelos Center, 525-2495.

When Father Seelos lived at 2030 Constance Street he loved to spend time in the big garden of the monastery. He would say his Breviary there, he would say his Rosary there, he would meditate on the wonders of God as he looked at the Roses, or studied one blade of grass. We are trying to keep up that garden. We need voluntary workers. If anybody would like to seep the walks, cut the grass, trim the trees, etc. just make yourself at home as a friend of Father Seelos, God's love is your reward. THANKS!

A PRAYER TO FATHER SEELOS

For your own intentions, 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

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