

NEWS

Seelos Center



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Miracle? The Ways of the LORD are Mysterious

The following article by John Railey appeared in the June 10, 2000 issue of the Winston-Salem, NC newspaper, Winston-Salem Journal

In the mid-1970s, five Catholic priests flew here on a mission from New Orleans. Alfred Rufty, Jr., a Winston-Salem cardiologist, welcomed the men into his home. The priests wanted to ask him whether a patient he had treated back in 1966 in New Orleans had been cured by a miracle. The deathly ill patient, Angela Boudreaux, had prayed for healing to a late priest, the Rev. Francis Xavier Seelos of New Orleans. The Catholic Church was studying whether Seelos should be a candidate for sainthood, and the priests had been assigned to investigate the case.

Rufty, who had practiced Internal Medicine in New Orleans, told the priests that he wasn't sure that there was any such thing as a miracle. But he had never heard of such an advanced case of liver cancer being cured so quickly - especially by the rudimentary chemotherapy available in 1966. It was, he said, the closest thing to a miracle he had ever seen.

This winter, the Catholic Church did declare the case a miracle, and Seelos was beatified at a ceremony in

Rome, a step that moves him toward the threshold of sainthood. The Catholic Church began serious investigations of American candidates for sainthood only within the past 100 years, and stories of those investigations are beginning to seep into our popular culture. For example, in an excellent movie [now] released in video *The Third Miracle*, Ed Harris plays a priest investigating a candidate for sainthood. But even more fascinating are true stories such as Rufty's that raise intriguing questions about faith, doubt and how God works.

Boudreaux, a 70-year-old mother of four, has no doubt that what happened to her was a miracle. But why, I asked her, did God pick her? "I have no idea," she said by phone from New Orleans. "I just do ordinary things, that's all." I asked her if being healed had made her feel that she better make sure that her life was worthwhile. "You betcha," she said in a voice that choked. She has spent a big part of her life campaigning to have Seelos declared a saint.

Boudreaux has sought help from hundreds of people, including Rufty,

who is Episcopalian. And he is also, he said, a man of science. "There is no scientific evidence for the existence of God. Therefore, it's a matter of faith. And it's pretty good for people to have faith," said Rufty, who is retired. . . . He often told Boudreaux's story to patients to encourage them, he said.

Confirmation of another miracle and years more of investigation may mean that Seelos will be declared a saint. Only four American Catholics have ever been canonized. Seelos, who died in 1867 at the age of 48, was known for his piety and strength as a parish priest.

... As a non-Catholic accustomed to praying directly to God, I have trouble understanding how he works through saints. But whether it was God working through Seelos or God working through Rufty or God working directly, I believe that Boudreaux's cure was a miracle.

Miracles are what the magic and mystery of faith are all about, and I don't believe I'm meant to understand them.

I'm not sure I want to.

From the Editor

Especially during the autumn season, some of the most familiar verses in American poetry always seem to emerge from our collective consciousness:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

.....

*And I - I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

(ROBERT FROST)

I also recall a familiar gospel verse by a "Man for ALL Seasons": "The Truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). With all due respect to Robert Frost, it was a favorite Southern author of mine, Flannery O'Connor, who adapted this gospel verse to read: THE TRUTH SHALL MAKE YOU ODD. Her adaptation captures her experience of what happens if one takes the gospel seriously in our world today, for the gospel truth not only liberates us and sets us free, it can also set us apart and make us different. It is often this freedom in taking the road less traveled that can make all the difference!

When Blessed Francis Seelos made the decision to abandon his ordinary domestic life in Füssen, Germany for a life of ministry as a missionary in the far-away United States, he had absorbed the truths that would set him apart and make him "odd" 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 the spiritual life. Is it a path that has been constantly inviting YOU? Your journey on this path may set you free, render you "odd" by others for doing so, but it may make all the difference you've been looking for! During this change of season, may the Lord of the Harvest give you wisdom and courage in following the Truth, even if it leads you down roads less traveled.



Cherub Cards



AVAILABLE IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS

*Detail, high altar,
St. Mary's Assumption Church,
New Orleans;
mid-nineteenth-century
bas-relief, wooden polychrome.
Photo by Bill Coskrey*



Gift-boxed sets of 20 "Cherub" cards and envelopes. Each card measures 5-1/2" x 4-1/4"; blank on inside; scripture verse on back reads: "From the angel's hand the smoke of the incense went up before God, and with it the prayers of God's people (Rev. 8:4)." Donation of \$12 (plus \$2 p/h) supports the Blessed Seelos cause.

Seelos Center NEWS

A monthly newsletter for friends of Blessed Francis X. Seelos, C.Ss.R.

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DID YOU KNOW . . .

- ⌘ We received notification from Catholic Online that our official website was chosen as "Site of the Week" August 21-27, 2000, based on their in-house criteria.

Have YOU visited our www.seelos.org website lately?

- ⌘ That the Most Rev. Donald W. Wuerl, Bishop of Pittsburgh, invited the people of his diocese to join him in a Mass honoring Blessed Francis Seelos, who served the Pittsburgh Diocese from 1845-1854. The Mass was held at St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday, April 30, 2000.

*Please remember
our recently
deceased friends
of Blessed
Francis Seelos*

Rev. Alvin Billimek, C.Ss.R.
Patrick Cunningham
John Dunn
Lionel Charles Escude
Rita J. Lecler
Esther O'Donnell Mason
Sr. Lillian McCormack, S.S.N.D.
Anna L. McGinity

"With Him is Plentiful Redemption"

(Psalm 130:7)

The Seelos Center offers the following services:

- Pilgrimages to St. Mary's Assumption Church, the Shrine and Museum of Blessed Seelos in New Orleans. For details and appointments, call the Center at 504-525-2495.
- A Daily Spiritual Message. Call 504-586-1803.
- Blessings of the Sick with a Mission Crucifix of Blessed Seelos in the Greater New Orleans area, please call:
Gerry Heigle (E. Jefferson) 504-482-4404
Jack Pitkin (Uptown/Innercity) 504-524-6591
Teresa LaCour (E. Jefferson) 504-887-0214
Rita Kaul (Arabi) 504-271-4520
Rosary Stoltman (Westbank) 504-393-9423
Jim Howard (St. Bernard) 504-277-7949
Elaine Freeman (Westbank) 504-341-2213
Peter Lukinovich (N.O. East) 504-679-3317
Ethel Kuhn (Ochsner) 504-837-3957
Bill and Sunny Schulz (Northshore) 504-792-5394
- Veneration of Blessed Seelos' Mission Crucifix every Sunday after the 11:30 am Mass in the historic St. Mary's Assumption Church (Josephine and Constance Streets).
- Weekly Mass celebrated for the intentions of the Seelos Center. If you have Special Intentions, please list them in the space provided on the enclosed envelope.

The Seelos Center / Seelos Foundation Office offers the following devotionals:

(Please allow up to 2 weeks for delivery of item(s) requested):

- "Seelos: A Cause to Rejoice," an informative documentary on the life of Blessed Seelos; 30-minute VHS cassette. (Suggested donation: \$20 - includes postage.)
- "A Life of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos," a new 108-page paperback biography by Carl Hoegerl, C.Ss.R. & Alicia von Stamwitz. (Suggested donation: \$8.50 - includes postage.)
- Nothing Short of a Miracle*, a 207-page paperback book by Patricia Treece on the healing power of the saints; two of the chapters feature Father Seelos. (Suggested donation: \$12.50 - includes postage.)
- Pamphlets and prayer cards of Blessed Seelos, available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Audio cassette of a spiritual conference talk on God as Father and Blessed Seelos, given by Father Charles Mallen, C.Ss.R. (Suggested donation: \$6 - includes postage.)
- A Blessed Seelos vigil candle will burn near his tomb or in the Seelos Museum at St. Mary's Assumption Church, New Orleans for an offering of \$3.00.
- First, Second and Third-Class relics of Blessed Seelos. Please contact the Seelos Center, 504-525-2495

Testimonials

Patterson, LA

In 1998, I was rushed to the hospital with a blood clot and congestive heart failure. During the angiogram, my artery was ruptured. I was put on a respirator in ICU for two weeks. On Palm Sunday the doctor called in my whole family; he was to remove the respirator for the fourth time to see if I could breathe on my own.

Before it was removed, the priest gave me an anointing. I've never had such a wonderful inward peace like that before. I guess I was dying and didn't know it - but I was ready. That moment was my turning point. I passed the six-hour point without help of the respirator and I continued to slowly improve. During my illness I continued to pray to Fr. Seelos. I now keep him in my daily prayers. I'm 82 years old and have so much to live for!

Harahan, LA

My daughter, in her 30's fought years of infertility. I prayed very hard to Fr. Seelos for her to become pregnant. On Easter Saturday, she called to tell us she was six-weeks pregnant and due at Christmas. Then, in late June she took a routine blood test that screens for Down's syndrome and other chromosomal abnormalities. The tests showed a high incidence of Down's syndrome and other multiple deficiencies. We were heartbroken.

We prayed, not just as a family, but also as a church community. Then, over the two weeks waiting for the results of the amniocentesis, the whole community became involved in prayers, with much devotional prayer to Fr. Seelos.

The doctor called my daughter to tell her that ALL 400 screenings came back normal. Our granddaughter is healthy and we look forward to her birthday on or around our Lord's. I truly believe that the many prayers by our faith community to Fr. Seelos resulted in a healthy pregnancy after many years of attempts at parenthood. We are grateful to Fr. Seelos for the power of his intercession and encourage devotion to him.

Orchard Park, NY

(From a Monsignor): Recently I had surgery. I prayed to Blessed Francis Seelos and the surgery was a complete success and no cancer was found. God bless you for all your work.

Metairie, LA

(From an oncologist): The patient for whom I am giving testimony had surgically documented advanced liver tumors that had originated in his colon. He was thin and physically depleted by surgery. Several oncologists had previously declared him terminal. The patient told me that he believed in God and would be cured, even in his very weakened state. He chose to take chemotherapy in a prayerful state, listening to scriptures and spiritual music while receiving his drugs. Miraculously, his tumor melted away. He underwent surgery again on December 6, 1999, with ultrasound ablation of the very small residual liver lesions. This was followed by three more months of chemotherapy. At present, he could be a cover boy for a health magazine. He lost no chance to encourage others who are still fighting their disease. In my opinion, he may have been minimally helped by the surgery and drug treatment, but God has given him the miracle of being free of disease. *[This patient was visited by a member of the Seelos Center and given the Blessed Seelos scapular, which he wore during his illness.]*

New Orleans, LA

My sister-in-law underwent pre-surgery tests for her aneurysm. It was then discovered that there was more surgery necessary for two other crucial abdominal problems. Several weeks prior to this, I had sent her a relic of Fr. Seelos with the accompanying prayer. Because she was extremely frightened and depressed about her condition, she had been praying to Fr. Seelos all this time.

She underwent surgery for all problems, including arterial blockages in her legs and came through it all very well, even though she also has emphysema. Recently, she called to say that for the first time in a long time, she had been dancing with her husband.

I firmly believe that our prayers were being answered before the surgery. Had the surgeon not ordered these tests the day before her surgery, the undiscovered other aneurysm and disconnected renal artery would not have been found. Please include my thanks to Fr. Seelos in your prayers.