

NEWS

Seelos Center



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Important Message Concerning Relics

Well-intentioned, but uninformed Catholics are advised to know that bidding and posting of relics on Internet auction sites are prohibited. When the practice of venerating bone fragments from the bodies of the saints became widespread as early as the fourth century, abuses often accompanied this devotion in the form of simony, that is, the buying and selling of sacred things. Church authority did what it could to assist the faithful against deception and thwart those who were profiting from the sale of fraudulent relics. In medieval times, those who created or wittingly sold, disseminated or displayed false relics for veneration were subject to immediate excommunication reserved to the bishops. Nevertheless, even relics of which the validity is certain, the revised 1983 Code of Canon Law uses the strongest



language written in the Code to prohibit the sale of relics, "*Sacras reliquias vendere nefas est*," "It is absolutely forbidden to sell sacred relics" (Canon #1190). The use of the word "*nefas*" ("nefarious") only appears in the Code to describe sins against the Blessed Sacrament, forced ordination and priests breaking the seal of confession.

While it is true that a relic may not be sold, the Church does allow a contribution to be made to cover expenses such as for the relic case and mailing charges. These contributions are normally made to the non-profit Church distributors of first class relics. These contributions also help to support the canonization causes of holy persons who have been officially declared Blessed by the Church. The trade of these sacred items on Internet auction sites is all the more dubious when the seller's

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Second-Class Relics Of Blessed Francis Seelos

In the New Testament we read about second-class relics of the Apostle Paul and the wonders the Lord worked through them:

"...God worked extraordinary miracles at the hands of Paul. When handkerchiefs or cloths which had touched his skin were applied to the sick, their diseases were cured and evil spirits departed from them"

Acts 19: 11-12

Father Seelos died on October 4, 1867. His body was first exhumed in 1902 when the diocesan inquiry was made into his life. On February 26, 1999, Redemptorist Postulator-General Father Antonio Marrazzo was in New Orleans to conduct another exhumation of the earthly remains of Father Seelos. This private ceremony was presided over by Archbishop Francis B.



Schulte of New Orleans. The examination of Father Seelos' remains was made by the Vatican officials as a necessary part of the beatification process.

Second-Class Relics of the cloth that bound the bones of Blessed Francis Seelos during this examination are available in a 2"x3" special envelope for the purpose of carrying in a wallet, purse, glove compartment, etc. They are complimentary; we welcome a freewill offering to help defray the cost of printing the envelopes and the increased cost of postage to mail them to you.

Seelos Center NEWS

Recall that a reason first class relics became so esteemed in our tradition was due to the belief that the saint's intercessory power permeated their every bone and marrow.

identity is unknown and when the relic's documentation of authenticity is questionable or missing. Even more disturbing is the possibility that an unscrupulous buyer could be using these sacred items for profane use. It is not safe to assume in cyberspace that only good Catholics bid on relics for noble reasons.

Catholics who, for whatever reason, have acquired a first class relic, such as through the estate of a deceased relative, and do not find it useful in their own spiritual life, would do well to consider a few options:

Offer it freely to another family member, friend or person of faith who would benefit from its intended purpose to increase one's faith and aid one's spirit of prayer and devotion. Recall that a reason first class relics became so esteemed in our tradition to those who were fortunate enough to possess them was due to the belief that the saint's intercessory power permeated their every bone and marrow.

Offer it to the local church or return it, for example, to the religious community to whom the particular saint belonged. As rightful proprietors of these sacred items, they find it distasteful and reprehensible to see a member of their own "religious family" for sale to the highest bidder on the Internet. Be aware that in some instances actual family members or descendants of the recently canonized are still living and would react in the way of most people who might see their own loved one's remains for sale.

As a concerned Catholic, write to the corporate owners of Internet auction sites to express displeasure with the specific trade of first class relics. In the same way that public outcry caused Internet auction sites to prohibit the sale of vital human organs for transplant purposes to the highest bidder, pressure from Catholics who find the relic trade offensive may result in a similar ban.

Specifically bequeath relics in verbal and/or written form to loved ones so there is no uncertainty regarding their disposition after you are called from this life. The survivors are apt to cherish these keepsakes, not only because of their sacred nature, but also

Who Touched Me?

The week after returning home from the hospital for surgery after a surprise diagnosis of advanced ovarian cancer, I was flipping channels on the new cable TV, which I had previously never had the time or inclination to do. I accidentally saw a show about Mother Angelica (of whom I know nothing). For some time I stopped and listened.

The man Seelos interested me because he was called cheerful. I am a lady of 52 known for my active life, four grown amazing children, and sometimes irreverent sense of humor. I have a deep but non-traditional relationship with God. I had a Catholic background but not after 14 years of age. I do not pray to saints.

But before I saw the program I had been thinking of the scriptures where Jesus is in a crowd and the old woman reaches for the hem of his garment, sure of healing. Jesus stops and asks, "Who touched me?"

Relics, cloth and bones were spoken about and I did not miss the connection. I knew nothing of Seelos, so I listened to his story on TV and I related. I did not know the cancer connection between Seelos and people until the end of the program. I sensed I could ask for prayers for myself from this cheerful human man no different than the many other friends, family and coworkers who have asked on my behalf for mercy. I realized I was not sure how to pray for myself, other than asking God's will and covering of those I love. So I asked for understanding of my illness and healing when it came.

Since that day, my diagnosis was changed from ovarian cancer (which is quickly fatal) to appendiceal, which has hope for remission. I had originally asked God for only one thing – not to have the part of me that gave life also be the part that killed me. He answered.

I would like to know more about this man Seelos and his joy and his love.

Touched by the Hem of His Garment
Burke, Virginia

because of your care and concern in determining who will inherit them.

Handle relics sensibly and reverently, without abuse. Also resist the temptation to rationalize the disposal of these sacred items: "The bidders are Catholics and I want these relics to have a good home," "Others post relics to make a buck, but I eventually give what I profit from the sale of relics back to my local church in the weekly collection." All justifications aside, involvement with the trade of first class relics to bidders on Internet auction sites gives the Church's good intention for relics a bad name overall.

Byron Miller, C.Ss.R.



(Photo credit: Diane C. Garcia)

Banners on historic
St. Charles Avenue,
New Orleans

Seelos Center NEWS

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

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Seelos Center News

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DID YOU KNOW?

Sophisticated DNA testing on relics believed to belong to St. Luke indicate the remains may have actually belonged to the second-century apostle, although scientists will probably never know for sure. Last year an Italian scientist examined the relics of St. Luke, which were interred in Padua. His findings were documented in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States. St. Luke, author of one of the four gospels, is believed to have died in about 150 A.D. in the Greek city of Thebes at the age of 84. His body was first moved to Constantinople in 338 A.D., and then taken to Padua sometime around 1177.

Even though the Padua coffin fit exactly into its former resting place in Constantinople, some theorized that Luke's body was replaced with that of another male around 300 A.D. Scientists tested a tooth in the coffin for DNA, and identified it as belonging to a Syrian male, sometime around 300 A.D. Luke is believed to have been born in Antioch, in Syria.

In order to test further, scientists examined the head of St. Luke, which was removed by Emperor Charles IV in 1354 and taken to Prague. The skull fit the other remains almost exactly, and the tooth taken from the coffin fit into the right socket of the jawbone.

"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 F. 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 F. 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) 504-241-2746
Ethel Kuhn (Ochsner) 504-837-3957
Bill and Sunny Schulz (Mandeville) 985-792-5394
Carmelie Mancuso (Slidell) 985-641-6999
Mary Jo Stewart (Slidell) 985-643-5548
Pam Crutchfield, R.T. (Covington) 985-892-6560
Ethel Gallagher (Reserve) 985-536-1052
Dan Montz, L.P.C. (Houma/Thibodaux) 985-446-1805
- Veneration of Blessed F. 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 F. Seelos; 30-minute VHS cassette. (Suggested donation: \$17.00 - 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: \$9.00 - 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: \$15.00 - includes postage.)
- Messengers: After-Death Appearances of Saints & Mystics*, a 343-page hardbound book by Patricia Treece on the authentic appearances of the holy dead sent as God's messengers. Chapters on Fr. Seelos; photos included. (Suggested donation: \$24.00- includes postage.)
- Seelos Medals: Blessed F. Seelos medal, made of nickel silver. Round (3/4" diameter), with loop, antique finish, finely crafted in the United States. (Suggested donation: \$3 each or 2/\$5 (+\$1p/h).
- Pamphlets and prayer cards of Blessed F. Seelos, available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese.
- Audio cassette of a spiritual conference talk on God as Father and Blessed F. Seelos, given by Father Charles Mallen, C.Ss.R. (Suggested donation: \$7.00 - includes postage.)
- A Blessed F. 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 F. Seelos. Please contact the Seelos Center, 504-525-2495

Testimonials

LAFAYETTE, LA

Six years ago my mother had a large tumor removed from her spinal column. Someone had given me a Father Seelos prayer card and I prayed to him for her recovery. For six months after, she was in a wheelchair; now she walks with only a crutch for support.

Through the years I have continued to pray to Father Seelos for guidance. It has been a great source of comfort knowing he is on my side. In January of this year, I had laparoscopic gallbladder surgery resulting in complications. I was sent by ambulance to Ochsner Hospital in New Orleans for corrective surgery. I don't remember much, but according to my family, it was a close call. My aunt pinned a Father Seelos scapular on me, and a representative from the Seelos Center came and gave me a blessing. I was never afraid and felt fortunate to be in the same city where Father Seelos lived and worked.

I am well on my way to recovery. I will always pray to and thank Father Seelos for his intercessions in my life. I will continue to pray for his sainthood.

PERTH AMBOY, NJ

I am a 69-year-old widow. I said to Father Seelos, "If you're so powerful, you'll heal my capped tooth." I was in pain. The *next* morning it was gone. That Friday evening while walking into the supermarket I said, "Blessed Seelos, do you see how I can hardly walk? If you really care, you'll heal my leg too." While almost done shopping, my spine felt like it was dissolving (no other way to describe it); it was as if someone was pulling every fiber apart. I became frightened and asked the checker to hurry as my back was giving out. The next day I awoke with a *new* leg. I could run, even skip. His answers to me were immediate.

TELL CITY, IN

Never have I written a letter like this one. I just had to tell you about the miracle Blessed Francis Seelos performed on my son. He will be 56 and has had diabetes since he was 18-years-old. My son had stumped his big toe and broke it. When the doctor took tests for the toe, it was discovered that my son had two arteries clogged, one 100%, the other 80%. He could have had a heart attack. For the next two months, he took antibiotics for the toe. The doctor said he was sure the toe would have to come off. Blessed Seelos performed another miracle. The toe did not have to be removed, and he doesn't even need crutches!

FREDERICK, MD

Just a note to let you know I had made a Novena to Blessed Francis Seelos for my niece to be able to conceive a child (She had been having difficulties). Today, she called to tell me – much to her surprise – that she was pregnant! We are very grateful and thankful to the Lord through the intercession of Bl. Seelos for this favor.

MANDEVILLE, LA

My husband was diagnosed with Lymphoma and given three months to live. A priest friend of ours gave him the Sacrament of the Sick and also blessed him with a Father Seelos relic that had been blessed by the Pope. We asked Father Seelos to let this be his other miracle. My husband recently had a P.E.T. Scan and the results were "no evidence of active disease" in a patient who had been diagnosed with Lymphoma. Thank you God and Father Seelos.

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- Have a new address Receiving more than one copy of the newsletter
(please return enclosed envelope with your correction(s))

OR CALL: 800-464-2555 Ext. 425 (Please allow a minimum of 30 days to process your changes.)

The Seelos Museum, Shrine and Gift Shop are now open on Saturdays!
New Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday 9 AM - 3 PM • Saturday - 10 AM - 3:30 PM
Tours available during the hours of operation - Other times by appointment. (504) 525-2495