In 2009, a Vatican decree established the October 5th celebration of Blessed Francis X. Seelos as an obligatory memorial in the New Orleans Archdiocese & an optional memorial in each of the dioceses of the New Orleans Province.

Tobit of the Old Testament suffered many difficulties, including blindness; he prayed that death would relieve him of his misery. There was also a woman named Sarah who had been married seven times, but her new husband died each wedding night; she too prayed that death would relieve her of her plight (and thus spare her potential eighth husband a similar fate). "At that very time, the prayer of these two suppliants was heard in the glorious presence of Almighty God. So Raphael was sent to heal them both: to remove the cataracts from Tobit's eyes, ... and to marry Raguel's daughter Sarah to Tobit's son, Tobiah ...." (Tb. 3:16-17). It was the Archangel Raphael who traveled with the young Tobias to a distant land to take Sarah for his wife, and to allay his fears of a death warrant in doing so. It is for this reason that Saint Raphael is a patron of travelers. As Rev. Lawrence Lovasik, SVD, points out: "Even the stay-at-homes are travelers, too, in need of Raphael's protection and guidance, for as members of the Pilgrim Church we are all wayfarers with our feet set upon the path to Eternity.... What pilgrim would spurn the companionship of one who knows the route so perfectly, is alert to all dangers, has power to restrain the devil and wisdom to solve all difficulties?"

In both the Jewish & Christian tradition, of the seven archangels that are venerated as standing before the throne of God, only three are named in the Bible: Michael, Gabriel, & Raphael. Saint Raphael with walking staff, as depicted here on the mid-19th century High Altar in St. Mary's Assumption Church, New Orleans.

O day surely singular in all of earthly life;
You alone still the holy yearning of pure souls;
You give courage to say an eternal farewell to the world,
When God has given an invitation for a beautiful sacrifice:
Immediately to stay only in the peaceful house of God,
And to strive only for the exalted virtue of the angels.
O eternally sweet day of joy!
Day of jubilation desired by the soul:
On you alone is my gaze always fixed,
On you alone is found all my joy.                           F.X. Seelos, 1863

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Early in married life, Mang Seelos suffered from an almost-fatal fever, and his wife vowed in prayer that she would go on a pilgrimage of gratitude to the Marian Shrine at Einsiedeln in Switzerland if her husband’s life was spared. Mrs. Seelos kept her promise and Mang wrote in his journal, “God be praised! The prayer of my dear wife was heard.” Many years later, Mang would join his son, Francis Xavier, on a pilgrimage to this famous monastery in Switzerland.

One of the principal characteristics of medieval European religion was that it bred fatalism at a popular level. Jonathan Sumption in The Age of Pilgrimage writes, “The salvation of an individual person was nothing less than a miracle, to be sought of God through the intercession of the saints. In a powerful sermon on damnation, Berthold of Regensburg asserted that the salvation of a sinner was ‘one of the greatest miracles that God ever does.’ That is why we sing in the Mass ‘Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis,’ God is wonderful in his saints.” The relics of the saints, repeated a theologian of the twelfth century, were the means whereby the faithful might resist the power of evil in the world. They gave health to the bodies of men and absolution to their souls....” Thus, the saints and their shrines provided hope to those who found despair all too inevitable.

Pilgrims were a familiar sight on the roads of Europe from the beginnings of Christianity to the early modern age. The pious walked barefoot for health to the bodies of men and absolution to their souls.... The pious walked barefoot for Pictorialists / National Shrine of Bl. F.X. Seelos

Message from the Editor

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Pilgrims were a familiar sight on the roads of Europe from the beginnings of Christianity to the early modern age. The pious walked barefoot for months and years, while some in Chaucer’s day joined the first “package tours” -- but the purpose for spiritual travel in our faith tradition remains timeless: “Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the life of the faithful, assuming different cultural forms in different ages. A pilgrimage evokes the believer’s personal journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer: it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weaknesses, of constant vigilance over one’s own frailty, of interior preparation for a change of heart. Through vigils, fasting and prayer, the pilgrim progresses along the path of Christian perfection....” (Pope John Paul II, Incarnationis Mysterium, #7).

Are you keeping a personal promise to God for favors granted? If so, please consider a pilgrimage of gratitude to the Seelos Shrine as part of your spiritual itinerary. His intercession provides hope for those most in need.

Byron Miller, C.Ss.R.
DID YOU KNOW?

In August, Pope Benedict appointed Father Joseph Tobin, C.Ss.R. to be an Archbishop & Secretary for the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life. He is a member of the Denver Province of Redemptorists and the former Superior General. Tobin is shown here with the Honorable Ambassador ‘Lindy’ Boggs, when he was the principal celebrant of the Seelos Memorial Mass in October 2001.

OLD BUT NEW SWC ACQUISITIONS

In 1864, Father Seelos read two works by Countess Ida Hahn-Hahn (1805-1880). The story of her conversion to the Catholic Church in 1850 is presented in the celebrated novel-like book that she wrote a year later: Von Babylon nach Jerusalem [From Babylon to Jerusalem]. This popular work was also a defense of the Catholic Church. Seelos wrote to a correspondent: “If you have not yet read this little work, you must absolutely do it. You can get it everywhere.” Now on display at the Seelos Museum is a rare 1851 first edition, compliments of Uta Hein of Augsburg, Germany.
I visited the shrine around Easter. I know Fr. Seelos since my studies in Rome with the Redemptorists. Upon praying for healing of a bleeding colon, I received a blessing that eliminated all the pain and stopped all the interior bleeding. I cannot explain it, but feel certain it’s a miracle from our Lord, and graces received through Fr. Seelos’ intercession. Praise God!

NEW ORLEANS, LA
An MRI & additional test for neck pain revealed that the mass on my neck was cancerous. I slept with the Seelos relic on my neck and prayed for healing from God & Fr. Seelos. After having a CAT scan and bone scan, the doctor told me the good news: “No cancer!” The diagnosis is degenerative disc disease, which surgery can help correct.

MEMPHIS, TN
I wish to thank Fr. Seelos for his great intervention in the recovery of my cousin, and for the nice person who went to pray over her with the Seelos cross. She was diagnosed with cancer of the tongue. Although up to 30% of her tongue was removed, her speech can still be understood. We are thankful too that her lymph nodes were not malignant.

BRONX, NY
As promised, I am writing about the help I received from Bl. Seelos when a biopsy on my lower shin (left leg) revealed cancer cells. My doctor then excised the area; in the interim, I prayed daily to Bl. Seelos and cells. My doctor then excised the area; in the interim, I prayed daily to Bl. Seelos and revealed cancer I received from Bl. Seelos when a biopsy performed every 6 months as a precaution. I have begun wearing the Bl. Seelos relic.

Crowley, LA
Last year, I had my annual mammogram appointment. A spot on my left breast was detected and further testing was needed. I began to panic, cry and pray. (My first thought was my child, as I am a single mother.) I immediately phoned the Seelos Center and spoke with Joyce Bourgeois [administrator]. I asked her to put my name on the Seelos prayer list and explained why. She was very compassionate on the phone and immediately reminded me of our faith & belief. We have an adoration chapel at my local church named Blessed Seelos Chapel, where I went by myself and prayed while holding the first class relic. I had the test and was told that the spot was benign. A mammogram will be performed every 6 months as a precaution.

Blessed Seelos answered my prayers & continues to help me. I am 86 years old and wish I had started praying to Blessed Seelos much sooner.” – Gretna, LA

BRIDGEPORT, CT
My son’s alcoholism for many years grew progressively worse. He went on a binge one day after his wife’s miscarriage. Finally, the next week, he took himself to a detox facility. Prior to this, I had been praying to Bl. Seelos for a while specifically asking for my son’s health to be restored. He is still sober, and although his marriage failed, he now holds a job and feels so good about his recovery. I’m grateful to Bl. Seelos for his intervention. I know he has helped my son along this path in life.

NEW ORLEANS, LA
I wish to acknowledge Fr. Seelos in the healing of my husband, whose condition was quite grave and I feared for him. Last year, Jack Pitkin [Seelos hospital blessing] prayed with us and gave us a relic to wear. I pinned it to my husband’s hospital gown; within hours, his health had improved substantially. Not only did Fr. Seelos intercede, he did so quickly! Mr. Pitkin also deserves much praise for his devotion to the sick & to the Seelos Cause.

GREENWELL SPRINGS, LA
In 2007, my husband was diagnosed with lung cancer. I began praying for a miracle. During his chemo & radiation treatments, we met friends who told us of Fr. Seelos’ Shrine. We visited the shrine and Jack Guidry [Shrine volunteer] placed a Seelos crucifix over my husband’s place of cancer. He prayed over him, and we prayed together. We were very comforted by this, and both began carrying Fr. Seelos’ relic with us and praying his intercessory prayer daily. The oncologist had initially said 6 months without treatments or a year-and-a-half with treatments. It is now 3 years. My husband still has cancer, but it has never metastasized. He hasn’t had any treatments for the last 9 months. All along we have experienced so many big and little miracles.

ENJOY THE COMPANY OF FR. SEELOS
Make a Self-Guided Retreat with Bl. Seelos: All 6 for $13, incl. p/h

Contributions to the Seelos Shrine are income tax deductible, less items purchased.