



VOLUME 72

SEELOS CENTER NEWS

FEBRUARY 2021

from the National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R.

Dear Devotees of Blessed Seelos,

February recalls St. Valentine's Day and reminds us to tell those dear to us that we love them. For many, it is also a time when winter blues press down upon us. This holds especially true this year with the restrictions of the virus. I recently saw a letter from Blessed Seelos to an "Honored Lady" who suffered with depression. It offers his insight into the malady and the troubles often felt in our own time. He recognized that the closest people around her found it hard to understand her torment, and even when they knew what was going on, they did not know what to say. Seelos recognized that this was further complicated by the fact that depressed people often don't want to talk about their troubles but try to pretend everything is okay. He writes:

"No one readily understands the greatness of such suffering and still less can someone be found among ordinary people who can assist with advice and encouragement... and someone in such a depressed state usually does not want to say anything to anyone..."

Blessed Seelos goes on to tell the Honored Lady that she should not feel that she has done something wrong to cause her pain. There is no need for guilt. Hard as it is, he suggests that she try to be at peace with the fact that this is a terrible cross:

"Above all, you must firmly believe that everything that seems so terrible and which troubles you so much is sent not for your ruin but for your well-being ... When the fire of temptation, sadness, fear, desolation, and total abandonment stings and burns and consumes; yes when the evil spirits seem to be busy in fanning up this fire fiercely through repulsive images and arousal of the wicked flesh, then kneel down and humbly say ... 'My soul is sad near unto death. Father, if it is possible, take from me this chalice of suffering.'"

Most importantly, Seelos tells the Honored Lady to never stop praying and to receive the sacraments in the midst of her suffering. The grace of God is more important in suffering than in good times:

"Only one thing is necessary for you: that is, in all your misery, never to give up the practice of prayer, the reception of the sacrament, and the fulfillment of the duties of your state in life ... Let the storm rage until it is ragged out, even if the waves break over your head. You will merely be washed, not drowned. To be sure, if you have to swallow a few mouths full of bitter sea water, you must accept it graciously. Afterwards, God will again give you sugar."

In the days when Blessed Seelos walked among us, neither the psychological understanding of depression nor medicinal drugs to help in the struggle were available. He could not free the Honored Lady from her suffering, but he did understand and accept her. In our blues, Seelos is no less understanding and accompanying for us, urging us to trust in God.



Fr. Richard Boever, C.Ss.R.

Director, National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R.

Seelos: Part 9 – Facing troubles of the Civil War draft and with a fellow priest

This series, written by Fr. Richard Boever, C.Ss.R., is the story of Blessed Seelos' life told as though he were telling his own story. Look for additional installments in future issues of this newsletter.



I left Cumberland for my new assignment in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1862. Secretly, I was pleased when I heard of the appointment. Along with caring for our students, I was appointed the rector of the Redemptorist community there. As such, I saw to the needs of all the confreres at St. Mary's. I also taught the students Sacred Scripture and gave conferences and lectures to the assembled group about religious life and life as a Redemptorist in particular. I had regular individual colloquia with each student to discuss his progress in the life we were called to live as Redemptorists.



St. Mary's, Annapolis

For myself, I continued the practice of mortification. I urged our students to be disciplined also. If we believed that all suffering and misfortune is sent to us from God for our sanctification, every hardship is also always a blessing.

An important reality for us is the fear of being drafted into the military to fight in the Civil War. The draft was inaugurated in March of 1863 for any male ages twenty through forty-five. As such, not only the students but even I myself were eligible to be drafted. There were thirty-six students at the time. We decided to ordain twenty of the students immediately because there would be less chance of them being drafted as priests. Still, the draft worried me. One could get out of the draft by paying \$300, but we did not have that kind of money. I decided I needed to go to Washington-city to speak with President Lincoln. I went there in July with Fr. Van de Bleak. President Lincoln was very gracious to me during my visit, and though he wouldn't issue a special protection for our men from the draft, he assured me things would be okay. None of us were drafted. He invited me to return for another visit after the War ended. Unfortunately, this never happened.

My ministry brought me beyond the borders of St. Mary's Parish. In December, I was called to Fortress Monroe to minister to the soldiers injured in the war. I went there twice from Baltimore by steamer. I was able to celebrate Mass and hear confessions afterwards. An Irish Catholic man gave me supper and then I returned to the chapel to hear more confessions until midnight. My trip continued the following day with a visit to the hospital which had fifty beds. The men at Fortress Monroe were filled with gratitude for my visit. I

returned to Annapolis on December 10.

After I reached Annapolis, I found out that not all the confreres were happy about the way I exercised my office as prefect of students. In May 1862, Fr. Mueller had been the novice master at Annapolis, and I had been the prefect of students in Cumberland. The decision made by the provincial government to exchange the places of formation by sending the novices to Cumberland and to bring the professed students to Annapolis with me as prefect was not pleasing to Fr. Mueller. As time went on, he developed an antagonism toward me. He wrote to the superior general in Rome. I was condemned because I allowed the students to play music and permitted the students to study even during free time. He didn't approve that I gave them ready access to the library and secular journals, and even allowed them to put on a play, which required two weeks of practice before the performance. Rome listened to Fr. Mueller's complaints. Without consulting the local superiors, on September 13, 1862, a stricter man from Holland, Fr. Dieleman, was appointed prefect. I had served three terms as prefect of students and the new appointment was quite unexpected, but I was also relieved to surrender the burden of being prefect to another man. I officially remained at St. Mary's as pastor and rector for another year but entered ever more fully into the ministry of preaching parish missions.

To be continued...

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who donated so generously to the Seelos Birthday Campaign. It was a great success! Your support helps to promote Blessed Seelos' canonization cause and to provide a place of prayer and peace for our pilgrims and visitors to the Shrine. We are continually inspired by the dedication and generosity of our donors. We truly appreciate your gift.

Fr. Rich Boever & The Seelos Shrine Staff

Blessings for the Sick

Hospital visits with a Seelos Crucifix

(Only family members may request)

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GRACES RECEIVED & PRAYERS ANSWERED

WELLINGTON, FL

I tested positive for the second time for COVID-19. While quarantined in my room, sadden and scared, I watched a Blessed Seelos documentary. I was touched and moved to pray to him to

heal me. Today I received the results from my third test. It was negative. Thank you Blessed Seelos. I am forever grateful and will sign up for a Perpetual Mass in thanksgiving! He is a true blessing.

NEW HOPE, PA

I have encountered a number of "difficult issues" during the troublesome year of "2020". However, those deemed by many to be nothing short of "impossible" were successfully addressed, on time, under

budget and beyond any of my hopes and expectations. I owe it all to "Divine Intervention" and of course, the prayers answered by Blessed Seelos.

Lenten Season begins Wednesday, February 17, 2021



A Meditation on Lenten Fasting

By Jimmy Samuel Hanahunu, Solomon Star Newspaper

Fast from judging others; feast on Christ dwelling in them
Fast from emphasis of differences; feast on the unity of all life
Fast from apparent darkness; feast on the reality of the light
Fast from thoughts of illness; feast on the healing power of God
Fast from words that pollute; feast on phrases that purify
Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude
Fast from anger; feast on patience
Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism
Fast from worry; feast on God's providence
Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation
Fast from negativity; feast on the positive side of things
Fast from unrelenting pressure; feast on unceasing prayer
Fast from hostility; feast on non-resistance
Fast from revenge; feast on forgiveness
Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion
Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal truth
Fast from discouragement; feast on hope
Fast from facts that depress; feast on verities that uplift
Fast from lethargy; feast on enthusiasm
Fast from suspicion; feast on truth
Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire
Fast from shadows of sorrow; feast on the sunlight of serenity
Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence
Fast from problems that overwhelm; feast on prayer that sustains

SHRINE, MUSEUM & WELCOME CENTER HOURS

Monday-Saturday 10am-2pm | Please see SEELOS.org for visiting guidelines.

HOT IN THE SHOP ~ HEALING, COMFORT & PEACE

Visit SEELOS.org to view all of the items available for sale in the Gift Shop.



**THE SURRENDER
NOVENA** – \$6 LG. PRINT
\$3.50 SM. PRINT

Give yourself up totally to God's will, just as Jesus did. Perfect for the Lenten season.



**DEPRESSION
PAMPHLETS** – \$3.50 EA.

"Depression & Men" and "Depression & Teens" explore the illness, its effects and its symptoms.



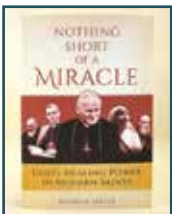
**ST. DYMPHNA STATUE
& PRAYER CARD** – \$28

8¾" statue and laminated relic prayer card of the patron saint of mental illness and anxiety.



"SINCERELY, SEELOS"
– \$34

Hardcover book featuring 201 letters written by Seelos, providing insight into the very core of who he was.



**"NOTHING SHORT OF
A MIRACLE"** – \$23.50

Paperback with miraculous healings including that of Angela Boudreaux through the intercession of Seelos.



**ST. VALENTINE
PRAYER CARD** – \$1.50

Pray to the patron saint of love with this beautiful laminated prayer card.

Prices listed above **include** shipping / handling. Prices online and in the Welcome Center Gift Shop may vary.

SUPPORT THE MISSION OF THE SHRINE



LIGHT A CANDLE: A vigil candle will burn near Seelos' sacred resting place for an offering of \$3-\$4. Please visit SEELOS.org/light-a-votive-candle.



REQUEST A RELIC: 3rd Class Relics are available in either laminated prayer cards or as a crocheted memento for an offering of \$2 each.



SHOP ONLINE: Many items in the Gift Shop are available for purchase at SEELOS.org/gift-shop. Visit today!

VISIT SEELOS.ORG OR CALL (504) 525-2495 TO ORDER

DONATION & CONTACT INFORMATION FORM

I would like to support the Seelos cause by donating \$_____ to be used for:

- The ministry and maintenance of the Shrine
- My 1-year newsletter subscription renewal (\$12)
- Other items: _____

Make checks payable to "National Shrine of Blessed Francis Seelos".

Please remove change my name and address as follows:

Name: _____

Address: _____

A daily practice that can transform your Lent



For each of the 40 days of Lent, on a calendar write down the name of one person. It can be family, friend, coworker, neighbor, acquaintance, or even someone you are not too fond of. Then when that day arrives, offer all your prayers and petitions, joys and frustrations for that person's intentions.

This practice can be transformative. It encourages us to take the Lenten practice of prayer more seriously. It allows us to become a sort of spiritual companion for others. It provides an opportunity for us to catch up on all of those "I'll pray for you" promises. It's easy to tell people that we are praying for them, but sometimes our prayer for them isn't as frequent or as deep as we would like it to be, or we may forget to pray altogether!

This activity changes that. We devote an entire day to focus on one person's struggles, hopes, spiritual life, family relations, health, and whatever else that soul needs from us and our intercession.

Try this special prayer journey during Lent. It can help us feel very connected with others. And it can remind us that, especially during this penitential season, we are all one body, helping to bear one another's cross so that at the end of these 40 days, we can rejoice in the glory of Easter as brothers and sisters through the Risen Christ.

*By Father Gerard H. Chylko, C.Ss.R.,
courtesy of Katie Warner*

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