



VOLUME 133

SEELOS CENTER NEWS

MARCH 2026

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

Dear Devotees of Blessed Seelos:

This past summer, I went on a pilgrimage with a small group of friends to several Catholic shrines in the Dairy State of Wisconsin. Along the way, we visited beautiful shrines, sampled our fair share of Wisconsin cheese curds, and while I am not a Green Bay Packers fan (Go Saints!), we even stopped at what many Wisconsinites consider sacred ground, Lambeau Field. While each place had its own character, the deepest joy of the pilgrimage was not any single destination. It was the companions along the way. Laughter, shared joy, hope, and even getting lost on winding county roads created something holy. In the community that formed, Christ was present.

One of my favorite New Orleans traditions is the Walk of the Nine Churches on Good Friday. Throughout the day, pilgrims move from church to church, rain or shine. Some pause only briefly, while others linger in prayer. Many kneel before the wood of the cross. Along the way, strangers become companions. Community is formed, and faith binds hearts together.

The Year of Hope has come to a close, but the call to pilgrimage is still with us. We are invited to walk together and to pray side by side. We do not have to travel far. Sometimes, the pilgrimage is as simple as reaching out to a friend who feels alone. Sometimes, it is the long walk toward forgiveness after a season of division.

This Lent, I invite you to make the National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos part of your pilgrimage. Come and pray. Walk with Seelos. Send us your prayer intentions. Whether near or far, entrust your hopes and burdens to Blessed Seelos, who knew well the power of faith lived together.



Aaron L. Meszaros, C.Ss.R.

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

MARCH DAY OF PRAYER

~ THE ANNUNCIATION ~

**Wednesday,
March 25, 2026**

St. Mary's Assumption Church

10:30 am - Confessions

11:00 am - Rosary

11:30 am - Mass



APRIL SEELOS HEALING MASSES

Sunday, April 12, 2026

English ~ 10:30 am

Tom Donaldson, C.Ss.R., Presider

St. Mary's Assumption Church

& live on facebook.com/SeelosShrine

Spanish ~ 12:30 pm

Manuel Chávez, C.Ss.R., Presider

St. Mary's Assumption Church

★ To learn how you can volunteer from home or at the Shrine, call (504) 525-2495. ★

“I Will Hold Your People in My Heart”: A Pilgrimage to Füssen

“I will hold your people in my heart.” On January 10, 2026, the eve of Blessed Seelos’ 207th birthday, these words from the familiar Catholic hymn “Here I Am, Lord” echoed through the walls of his home parish, St. Mang in Füssen, Bavaria. In a quiet but powerful way, the hymn gave voice to Seelos’ own life and love, and named the deeper reason a small group of pilgrims had come to this church: not only to present a relic of Blessed Seelos, but also to connect with the community and people that first shaped his faith.

You cannot understand Blessed Seelos without knowing his love for home, a place and a people he often wrote about with deep homesickness. Born in Füssen on January 11, 1819, he entered a world far more intimate than the one his name would one day reach. At the time of his birth, Füssen counted just 190 houses and a population of roughly 1,500 people, a town shaped by farmers, tradespeople, and a deeply Catholic imagination. The surrounding region was known as the Pfaffenwinkel, or “priest’s corner,” a landscape marked by shrines, saints, and an everyday faith woven into ordinary life.

According to tradition, Saint Magnus, patron of the region, arrived in the area around 750 to evangelize the pagans along

the upper Lech River. His legacy endured in St. Mang Church, the parish church where Seelos was baptized and raised. It was here that his family and his parish life laid the foundations of his vocation.

That love for home ran deep. Later witnesses would recall how much his family and homeland meant to him. As one confrere noted, the sacrifice of leaving was real and costly. Seelos himself often took solitary walks in the mountains near Füssen, places where prayer and longing intertwined. When the call came to join the Redemptorists and leave for America, it did not come without struggle. On one hand, he desired to remain close to his family and homeland. On the other hand, he felt drawn by a missionary call that would take him far beyond the Alps.

In early January, more than 180 years after Seelos left home, a small group of Redemptorists and lay companions returned to Füssen to honor his beginning. Their purpose was not simply to present a first-class relic of Blessed Seelos to St. Mang, but to return him to his people in Füssen, honoring the parish that formed his earliest steps of discipleship.

The group included **Fr. Kevin Zubel, C.Ss.R.**, Provincial of the Denver

Province; **Fr. Michael Hoang, C.Ss.R.**; Redemptorist seminarian **Scott Partin**; and **Fr. Aaron Meszaros, C.Ss.R.**, Director of the National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos. **Monica and Mark Surprenant** of New Orleans joined them. The relic entrusted to St. Mang belonged to Monica, who received it during a time of illness and healing, an experience she has publicly shared and attributes in part to Seelos’ intercession. **Ken Messina**, a former Redemptorist seminarian and New Orleans native, and his wife, **Julia**, accompanied the group and provided guidance throughout the pilgrimage.

The journey included a visit to Augsburg, located nearly 90 miles north of his hometown. There, Seelos lived and studied at St. Stephen’s Institute. The abbey church was destroyed during Allied bombing in 1944 and is an example of post-war reconstruction, rebuilt in deliberate simplicity. **Abbot Theodore Hausmann, OSB**, welcomed the pilgrims and guided them inside. On one wall hung an image of Blessed Seelos. Its placement invited a quiet imagination: the young Seelos seated nearby, gazing toward the sanctuary, unaware of the journey ahead.

Back in snow-covered Füssen, **Deacon Alfred Hofmann** led the group through



(Left to right) Fr. Aaron Meszaros, Ken Messina, Scott Partin, Mark Surprenant, Dcn. Alfred Hofmann, Monica Surprenant, Fr. Kevin Zubel, Fr. Frank Deuring, and Fr. Michael Hoang.



St. Mang Shrine to Bl. Seelos holds the donated first-class relic.



Baptismal font at St. Mang where Bl. Seelos was baptized.



Dcn. Hofmann and Frs. Hoang, Deuring, Meszaros and Zubel celebrate Mass at St. Mang Church.



Fr. Zubel offers the relic of Bl. Seelos for veneration to the faithful in Füssen.

the streets and sites of Seelos' early life, including family homes, schools, and parish landmarks. The town that once held 1,500 souls now welcomes thousands for tourism and is home to about ten times as many people, yet its historic heart remains walkable and intimate. As the group followed those familiar paths, Deacon Hofmann also shared his own personal experience of healing through Seelos' intercession, a reminder that devotion here is not confined to the past but continues to bear fruit.

On the evening of January 10, the parish gathered at St. Mang for Mass along with the small group of pilgrims. During the homily, Fr. Aaron Meszaros reflected on the meaning of the moment. "Here he was born in love and formed in faith," he said. "In this town and in this parish, his family grounded him in the joy of the Gospel that would later define his ministry. The faith of Füssen formed the heart of a missionary."

Fr. Kevin Zubel followed by placing Seelos within the broader Redemptorist story, recalling how missionaries from German-speaking lands helped the Church in America take root among immigrants and the poor. Returning to Füssen, he said, was also a homecoming

for American Redemptorists, a chance to meet their ancestors in the faith.

At the conclusion of Mass, the relic was entrusted to **Fr. Frank Deuring** and the parish. Parishioners came forward one by one to venerate it; many visibly moved. A quiet procession followed from the sanctuary to the Seelos shrine within St. Mang. In the cold and snow of a Bavarian winter, surrounded by prayer and song, Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos came home again.

Among all the moments, one stood out for many. The cantor began to sing those familiar words: "Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart." The words carried a depth that needed no explanation. It was here, in this place, that Seelos learned how to love. From here, he carried that love across an ocean.

Though he left for America in 1843, leaving behind the beautiful mountains, the people, and the family he loved, he did not leave the faith that formed him. While he answered the call to go, he would always and forever hold them close in his heart. One might say the people of Füssen always held him in their hearts, too. ■

Blessings for the Sick

*Hospital visits with a Seelos Crucifix
(Only family members may request)*

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Lauren Johnson (281) 851-1321

SHRINE, MUSEUM & WELCOME CENTER HOURS
Monday-Saturday 10am-2pm ~ Check seelos.org/calendar for closures



SAVE THE DATE

Join us at the Shrine for these events in March and April 2026!

MARCH 19: St. Joseph Altar

MARCH 25: Day of Prayer - The Annunciation of the Lord

APRIL 3: Good Friday - Walk of Nine Churches

APRIL 12: Seelos Healing Masses

MARCH/APRIL SHRINE CLOSURES

The Shrine is closed on Saturday, March 14, 2026 for the St. Patrick's Day Parade and Easter Monday, April 6, 2026.

HOT IN THE SHOP



BLESSED SEELOS NOTE CARD – \$10

This blank note card features a watercolor of Blessed Seelos and a short biography on the back. Envelope included.



“PRAY WITH ME” LAMB PLUSH – \$32

Press this soft lamb's foot to hear six sweet prayers. Takes two AA batteries, not included.



ST. JOSEPH GIFT SET – \$18

Includes a 4” statue of St. Joseph holding Jesus and a prayer card with an embedded holy medal.



ST. PATRICK PRAYER KIT – \$11

Includes a St. Patrick Prayer of Protection pamphlet, “An Hour with Saint Patrick” booklet, and a pewter St. Patrick prayer token.



CELTIC CROSS SOCKS – \$22

Green socks feature a Celtic cross and “St. Patrick's Breastplate” prayer. Adult one size fits most.



SHAMROCK AUTO ROSARY – \$11

This one-decade rosary features green beads with tiny gold shamrocks and a silver-toned crucifix.

Quantities are limited. Prices 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-\$5. Visit seelos.org/light-a-votive-candle.



REQUEST A RELIC: Relics are available for an offering of \$2.50 each at SEELOS.org/gift-shop.



INCLUDE US IN YOUR ESTATE PLAN: There are several options for including the Shrine in your estate plan. Visit seelos.org/charitable-giving to learn more about charitable giving.

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



SEELOS CENTER NEWS (USPS 4472) is published monthly at The National Shrine of Blessed Seelos, a ministry of the Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers.

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The ministry and maintenance of the Shrine My 1-year newsletter subscription renewal (\$15)

Other: _____

Make checks payable to “National Shrine of Blessed Francis Seelos”.

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