



# Seelos Center News

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## National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos

In Saint Mary's Assumption Church

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March 2007

# When 'Good Father Seelos' Met 'Good Father Abraham'

by Byron Miller, C.Ss.R.



Three hundred dollars. In the mid-1800s, that amount could handily pay the rural physician's charge of fifty-cents per mile for house calls – a fee often reduced if the doctor's horse

was fed. It could pay the dime haircut and nickel shave to groom a man's fashionable clipped chin beard without moustache – like that worn by Abraham Lincoln. And by the time of the Civil War, it could pay the \$1.25 cost of salt in the North, and the \$60 for an exact same amount in the southern states.

With some variation, three hundred dollars is what the Union paid new recruits for enlistment in the Civil War. Three hundred dollars is also what the Union charged for exemption from it.

By early 1863, fewer men in both the North and the South were joining the cause for patriotic reasons, and the enlistment bonuses were losing appeal with the publication of war casualty lists. The Confederate congress had passed the first conscription law in American history on April 16, 1862, making every able-bodied white male citizen between 18 and 35 years of age liable for military service. The law added about 200,000 men to the Confederate army. Clergy and religious were exempted.

On March 3, 1863, President Lincoln signed the Conscription Act for the Union. All able-bodied men between the ages of 20 and 45 were liable to be drafted into military service for a period of three years. Service could be avoided by obtaining a substitute or by paying a \$300 commutation fee. Clergy and religious were not exempted.

Approximately 983,000 men received draft notices in the North, of which 200,000 failed to report for duty and an equal number deserted the ranks. So-called

bounty jumpers joined the Union army for the enlistment bonus, then deserted to sign on for another bonus elsewhere. Of the almost 100,000 who escaped to Canada during wartime, nearly a third were deserters. However, for those who had the wherewithal, there was a more convenient way to avoid combat than becoming a Canadian resident: Of those who received draft notices, 87,000 paid the \$300 commutation fee, and another 74,000 provided substitutes – many of whom were former slaves. Population was an obvious factor in helping to explain why Kansas had only two men pay to avoid military service, and Pennsylvania had 28,171.

There was widespread perception of an unfair system – exacerbated by newspaper headlines that read "\$300 or Your Life" –

(continued on page 2)



*Federal Army recruiters enlist German & Irish immigrants fresh off the boat from Europe at Castle Garden in New York City. Nearly a fifth of the North's population was foreign-born when the War began, and some 500,000 immigrants served in the Federal Army. (Source: James I. Robertson, Jr., *The Civil War: Tenting Tonight*, Alexandria VA: Time-Life Books, 1984)*

You are invited  
to the 19th Annual  
**BLESSED FRANCIS SEELOS  
DAY IN NEW ORLEANS**

SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2007  
11:00 a.m. Mass  
St. Mary's Assumption Church

1:00 p.m. Luncheon at  
Hampton Inn Convention Center  
Grand Ballroom  
1201 Convention Center Blvd.  
(between Gaienne & Calliope Street)  
New Orleans, Louisiana

(Additional Parking: Fulton Garage across Square)

Door Prizes & Parade of Prizes  
Call 504-525-2495  
for limited-seating reservations!

Note  
New Time

that seemingly permitted the affluent to buy their way out of duty. The Conscription Act had entrenched the inflammatory notion that it was a rich man's war, but a poor man's fight.

This tension escalated into violent eruptions throughout the North, with the most odious occurrence in New York City. In July 1863, riots broke out when many of the men drawn by the draft lottery were of foreign birth – mostly poor Irish immigrants who could ill afford the price of an exemption. Mobs took control of the city for three days. Draft offices and recruiters' homes were burned. Any well-dressed bystander was labeled a "\$300 man" and subject to attack during the rampant looting spree, but the most senseless violence was aimed at the black community. Nearly 20,000 troops, badly needed elsewhere on the battlefield, were dispatched to quell the violence and enforce the draft, but not before the melee claimed 120 lives and injured hundreds more.

Just ten days after Lincoln signed the Conscription Act, the worried provincial of the Redemptorists hurried to Annapolis to discuss an alarming dilemma: What to do about the Redemptorist priests, brothers, and seminarians who were subject to the draft? Father Francis Xavier Seelos, the seminary director at Annapolis, fully agreed with the prevailing ecclesiastical opinion that clergy, religious, and seminarians allowed to finish their training, could be of far greater service to their country as chaplains to the troops. The fact that Father Seelos and the other Redemptorists ministered at nearby Camp Parole strengthened the credibility of their argument. Nevertheless, because the consulting Redemptorists feared that seminarians would more likely be pressed into military service than ordained priests, they decided to hasten the ordination of twenty theology students in a ceremony that many believed was the first in American history in which so many had been ordained collectively.

In June 1863 the provincial returned to Annapolis for further deliberations on the draft issue. Father Seelos explained the menacing situation in a letter to his sister in Germany: "If one is chosen in the draft, he has either to go, or to pay \$300.00. Because we have so many young members, that would have amounted for us to the gigantic sum of \$25,000 or more. I decided then, with the permission of the provincial, to go to Washington with another father and to present personally to the President and other officials our situation." He also wrote, "If I do not succeed in obtaining a release from that unjust injunction, we will rather go to prison than to take up

arms." It was hoped that a direct appeal in Washington would be more effective than sending all the students to Canada – the desperate suggestion made by the provincial.

On July 22-24, 1863 – one week after the New York City riots – Fathers Francis Xavier Seelos and Adrian Van de Braak were in Washington to meet with President Lincoln about the draft. "I liked President Lincoln very much when I went to see him," Father Seelos said, "He spoke to us in a sincere, free, and friendly manner." The president promised to do everything in his power, and told the two priests that he would give them a private audience if they should return. Still, President Lincoln gave no explicit assurance that clergy, religious and seminarians would be exempt from the draft without providing the fee or securing a substitute.

Their next visits were to Postmaster General Montgomery Blair and William H. Seward, the son of the Secretary of State, who welcomed them cordially and placated their concerns with a promise to help. Seelos and Van de Braak would have been remiss had they not also paid a visit to the Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, but they were hardly prepared for the reception he gave them.

The vitriolic Mr. Stanton reveled in the enmity he created in becoming the most reviled man in Washington. He stood behind an imposing desk precisely one hour a day to greet the public, where he was described as an irritable schoolmaster whose piercing eyes darted behind steel-rimmed spectacles. As the line proceeded, he rendered his decision to each of the petitioners in a low, soft voice.

When Seelos and Van de Braak sought the advice of the Secretary of War, the irascible Mr. Stanton was still seething with anger at the New York City draft riots and the role Irish Catholics played in them. Unable to contain his wrath, Stanton told his two visitors, "Keep your people from rioting! Keep your people from rioting! That's your duty, that's all you have to do." Seelos, with characteristic humor, later remarked, "Should the Church ever decide to celebrate the feast of a rude rascal, Stanton would qualify easily, even with an octave."

The singular moment when 'Good Father Seelos' met 'Good



"The vitriolic Mr. Stanton"

(continued on page 3)

## The Seelos Center offers the following services:

◆ **Pilgrimages** to St. Mary's Assumption Church, Seelos Shrine & Museum. For details & appointments, call the Center at 504-525-2495 or 525-2499.

◆ **Daily Spiritual Message**  
Call 504-586-1803.

◆ **Blessings of the Sick** with a Mission Crucifix of Blessed F. Seelos in New Orleans & other area hospitals. Please call:

### East Jefferson

Gerry Heigle: 504-554-1912  
Teresa LaCour: 504-887-0214

### Ochsner

Mark/Monica Surprenant 504-895-5371

### Uptown/Innecity

Jack Pitkin: 504-524-6591

### Westbank

Elaine Freeman: 504-341-2213  
Rosary Stoltman: 504-393-9423

### Baton Rouge

Gloria Bacque: 225-767-8432  
Marie Giorlando: 225-615-7888

### Covington

Dr. Ann Logarbo, MD: 985-886-0218

### Houma/Thibodaux

Dan Montz, L.P.C.: 985-446-1805

### Lafayette/Abbeville

Rita King: 337-984-4607

### Mandeville

Bill & Sunny Schulz: 985-792-5394  
Pam Crutchfield: 985-966-0358

### New Iberia/Berwick/Baldwin

Rachel Gonsoulin 337-224-7855  
Fred Roy 337-380-0646

### Reserve/LaPlace

Deacon Percy Vicknair: 985-652-0039

### Slidell

Carmelie Mancuso: 985-502-7325  
Mary Jo Stewart: 985-502-9033

### St. Bernard/Arabi

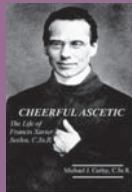
Patricia Noote: 504-756-4163

◆ **Veneration of Bl. F. Seelos' Mission Crucifix** in historic St. Mary's Assumption Church (Josephine & Constance streets).

◆ **Weekly Mass** celebrated for the intentions of the Seelos benefactors. Please list Special Intentions in the space provided on the enclosed envelope.

Please consider the **National Shrine of Blessed Francis Seelos for your employer matching gift program.**  
Fed. Tax ID #72-0576253

The Seelos Center offers the following devotionals:



**Cheerful Ascetic: Life of F.X. Seelos**, a 480-page hardbound biography by Fr. M. Curley that captures Seelos' piety & personality. Index/photos. (Donation: \$23.00 + 6.95 p/h)



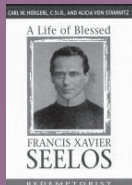
**.999 Fine Silver Seelos Medal** Round, 3/4" dia., with loop; brushed image with polished reverse and edge. Marked with .999 FS on reverse top. (Donation: \$52 - includes p/h).



**Willy Finds Victory: A Blessed Francis Seelos Story**, Introduce youth, ages 7 - 12, to Fr. Seelos in this 110-page illustrated book by Joan Stromberg (Donation: \$11, incl. p/h)



**Apparitions of Modern Saints**, a 293-page abridged & updated paperback version of the book formerly entitled *Messengers* by Patricia Treece on the authentic appearances of the holy dead sent as God's messengers. Chapters on Fr. Seelos. (Donation: \$17 - includes p/h)



**A Life of Blessed Francis X. Seelos**, a 108-page paperback biography by Fr. Carl Hoegerl & Alicia von Stamwitz. (Donation: \$11 - includes p/h)



**Seelos Medals:** Made of nickel silver, round 3/4" dia. with loop, antique finish, finely crafted in the U.S. (Donation: \$3 each or 2/\$5 + \$1 p/h)

◆ **Pamphlets & Prayer Cards** of Bl. F. Seelos, available in English, Spanish & Vietnamese.

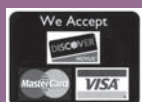
◆ **A Bl. F. Seelos vigil candle** will burn near his sacred resting place in St. Mary's Assumption Church, New Orleans, for an offering of \$3.

◆ **First, Second & Third-Class Relics** of Bl. F. Seelos. Call Seelos Center, 504-525-2495 or 2499.



**Seelos Perpetual Mass League:** A one-of-a-kind lasting remembrance for you or for someone dear, living or deceased. (Donation: \$25, contact Seelos Center for enrollment)

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



(continued from page 2)

Father Abraham' should not be discounted. The president, while sympathetic, felt bound by his oath of office to uphold the terms of the Conscription Act. While their meeting did not change an act of Congress, it did change the course of action for Redemptorist students on a provincial level. In the end, it was a Redemptorist other than Father Seelos who devised a method of averting seminarians from the draft by having them register at a location where the draft board had a reputation for fairness. But it was Father Seelos who first proposed an idea that averted the seminarians from relocating to Canada! Moreover, less than ten Redemptorist priests and brothers stationed in various parishes were ultimately drafted, but all were exempted due to health reasons, citizenship requirements, or commutation fees provided.

One month after his meeting with the president, Father Seelos wrote, "Whether we have settled anything, or will settle anything, remains God's secret and that of the Blessed Mother." Perhaps it "remains God's secret" on what impact, if any, did a man of religious conviction have in voicing his objections to the draft to the president of the United States. In any event, the purpose of Father Seelos' meeting with the president was consistent with how he lived his life - on principles higher than those to country. About the War, he wrote, "Earthly things are truly quite secondary to me and I leave all to the wise Providence of God. He only knows how to bring good out of evil."

While \$300 could buy a way out of the military, the manner in which Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos went out of his way for his students and fellow confreres is priceless!

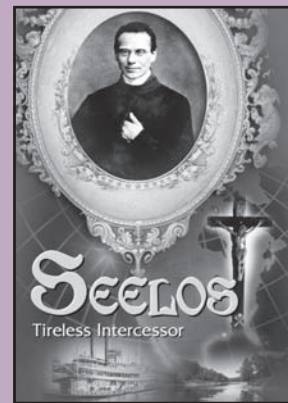
Sources:

- Donald Cartmell, *Civil War 101* (New York: Gramercy Books, 2001)
- Catherine Clinton, *Life in Civil War America* (Ft. Washington, PA: Eastern National, 1996)
- Michael J. Curley, C.Ss.R., *Cheerful Ascetic* (New Orleans: Redemptorists, 1969)
- Carl Hoegerl, C.Ss.R., *Francisci Xaverii Seelos, Positio*, Vol. II-2 (Rome, 1998)
- Marc McCutcheon, *Everyday Life in the 1800s* (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1993)

Special \$20 offering to enroll fathers, living or deceased, in Perpetual Mass League only during the month of March, dedicated to St. Joseph!

SEELOS, Tireless Intercessor

This documentary chronicles the heroic & miraculous life of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos. Father Seelos possessed great mystical gifts due to his intense prayer life. His ability to minister with cheerful holiness made him a spiritual father to tens of thousands. Despite his early death, so profound was his missionary zeal that sickness, persecution, and even the upheaval caused by the Civil War, could not stop him.



Please send request & payment to:  
Seelos Center  
2030 Constance Street  
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68 min. DVD  
(\$29.00 + \$5.50 p/h)

68 min. VHS  
~~(\$24.00 + \$5.50 p/h)~~  
**\$20**



(\$8.50 p/h for any 2 or more)

"The DVD I just ordered about Fr. Seelos is wonderful! How exciting to look into his life, and also into the miracles that come forth because of his love & intervention on behalf of suffering humanity. The miracles really bring great meaning to the film. The many priests who speak on behalf of Fr. Seelos is almost as if he were speaking to us through each of them. The monthly Seelos newsletter gives pleasure not only to me, but to the others that I share it with. I will be sharing this wonderful documentary with others, since I believe that anytime you receive something nice, & can share it, you should do so." -- Fairfax, VA

A monthly newsletter for friends of Bl. Francis X. Seelos

Seelos Center News

Denver Provincial Superior:  
Very Rev. Thomas D. Picton, C.Ss.R.  
Seelos Center Executive Director / Editor:  
Rev. Byron Miller, C.Ss.R.  
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## PATCHOGUE, NY

I am reporting a miracle received by a friend that was told her mother had a large tumor in her colon, and that she needed surgery. When she went back to the surgeon for surgery, the tumor was no longer there. I had given her a relic of Blessed Seelos for her mother to wear and she kept it on until she saw the doctor. She continues to wear the relic and pray the Seelos prayer.

## KENNER, LA

My brother-in-law suffered terrible depression after Hurricane Katrina -- depression that we thought if left untreated might lead to a tragic ending. He had lost his home in Chalmette and everything in the past was gone. He & his wife relocated to Baton Rouge. We tried to make him laugh and feel that there was a reason to live, but it seemed hopeless until that day when I attended a Blessed Seelos function. I prayed for him & put his name on a list of intentions; I knew something good would happen, I just didn't think it would happen so quickly. He has had an awakening and his attitude toward life has changed. He has now been touched through Father Seelos.

## ELCELSIOR SPRINGS, MO

[From the Pastor of St. Ann Church:] I wanted to write to tell you how Blessed Seelos protected one of my parishioners while he was in Iraq. Before this soldier in the U.S. Army left for Iraq, he was placed under the special protection of Blessed Seelos. He had several close calls, but

was protected each time. He is now home. All thanks and praise to Fr. Seelos!



# TESTIMONIALS

## LA MESA, CA

Last month as I faced surgery, the doctors told me that they did not know what the outcome would be until after they went in and removed ovarian cysts. I had to have faith. I had read so many letters about people wearing the Father Seelos relics on their hospital gowns as they went in for surgery. My husband had one in his wallet and he gave it to me that morning. I had it with me in the pocket of my gown. I felt that Fr. Seelos was there with me, and I had a sense of peace. I wanted to write back to you as I promised to let you know my surgery was successful and nothing bad was found. My prayers had been answered. I thank God & Fr. Seelos. I often visit the website and see requests of those listed in the guestbook. I know firsthand how heartfelt their requests are, & I pray that Fr. Seelos will intervene and be there for each and everyone who needs him, especially relieving anxiety and worry, just as he was there for me last month.

## WESTWEGO, LA

I was diagnosed with colon cancer and had surgery. No treatments were necessary and I am doing well. Before surgery, I prayed to Father Seelos and Saint Anne to intercede for me. I know they were with me. I pray every day to them and give thanks to the Lord for answering my prayers. Thanks again to Father Seelos!

## LABADIEVILLE, LA

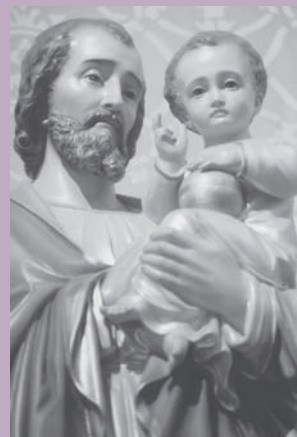
Twenty-five years ago, a dear friend gave me a little Father Seelos prayer card. She knew my husband was looking for a job. I said the prayer for only two days before my husband got the job. We were blessed with his job for 20 years. I have received countless little miracles over the years through Father Seelos' intercession. Two months ago my grandson got hit on

the side of his lower leg with a softball causing the main nerve to swell and stop the circulation. The leg was dying off. I was in our Perpetual Adoration Chapel when I was told he would be taken immediately to surgery. I wrote his name on a piece of paper & placed it on the altar and asked God to spare his leg. Then I asked Bl. Seelos to intercede. When I got home within the hour I received the news that the doctors were able to save his leg.

## CAMBRIDGE, OH

When our grandson was born he had a hole in his heart. I want to thank Father Seelos for his intercession. We used a relic on him from a friend in our parish, and on our grandson's last checkup, they could no longer find a hole. We are so thankful for this healing to God and Father Seelos' intercession.

An ancient prayer to Saint Joseph invites us to contemplate the tender image of the infant Jesus asleep in Saint Joseph's arms: "I dare not approach while He reposes near your heart. Press Him in my name and kiss His fine Head for me, and ask Him to return the kiss when I draw my dying breath." When we come to the end of our pilgrimage and enter the presence of God, let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.



May our Mother Mary, Saint Joseph, all the saints, and Blessed Francis Seelos offer your gentle kiss of peace when we draw our dying breath.

-- excerpt from *Novena in Honor of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos*

Photo Credit: Jude Theriot

## Visit Our Redesigned WWW.SEELOS.ORG

## "Seelos Window"

Inspired by the lifetime works of artisan & iconographer, Fr. Norbert Hess of Notre Dame University, this Seelos Window brings beauty, peace & spiritual power to everyday settings. A timeless treasure featuring a profound ceramic image: the tile print is not a decal -- the ink actually permeates the tile to ensure a vivid, long-lasting image. This is an expensive process but with dramatic results. Tile mounted on raised panels to create a three-dimensional effect and set in a natural wood frame that is finished front-to-back. Excellent craftsmanship! Measures 15.5 x 16.5 in.; weighs approx. 6 lbs. \$95, includes certified postage & handling. Specify black, brown or dark green wood frame color.

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Please delete me from your mailing list.

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Kindly return in the enclosed envelope with any corrections or CALL 504-525-2495 or 2499 Allow a minimum of 30 days to process your request.

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