



Make space  
by letting go

VOLUME 132

## SEELOS CENTER NEWS

FEBRUARY 2026

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

Dear Devotees of Blessed Seelos:

I will be the first to admit that I have not always been good at change. Like many of us, I can grow comfortable with what is familiar, even when I sense that God may be inviting me somewhere new. Comfort has a way of convincing us that growth is finished, that we are already formed enough, faithful enough, or settled enough.

As we approach the season of Lent, the Church calls us back into a posture of openness. This openness can be unsettling, because it reminds us that discipleship is not a destination but a lifelong journey of being shaped by God's love.

*Lent is not only about giving things up. At its heart, it is about making space, creating room for God to work in us in ways that may surprise us and gently lead us forward on our pilgrim path.*

In the Alphonsian tradition, we speak of *distacco*, or detachment. This is not a rejection of the world or of the good things in our lives. Rather, it is a freedom from clinging too tightly to our habits, our preferences, or even our familiar ways of understanding ourselves and God. Detachment is not about loss, but rather it is about availability. It allows us to listen more deeply, to love more generously, and to respond more freely to God's call in our lives.

This spirit of openness marked the life of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos. Seelos allowed himself to be formed again and again through community life, through the people he served, and through a deep and joyful trust in God's presence at work within him. At the Shrine, we continue to be inspired by Seelos's openness to God's transforming grace.

As Lent draws near, I invite you to walk with Seelos during this sacred season. Take time to learn more about his life, his spirituality, and his gentle path of holiness. May his example help each of us discover where God may still be forming us, and give us the courage to make space and say yes once more.



*Aaron L. Meszaros C.Ss.R.*

Aaron L. Meszaros, C.Ss.R.

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

### FEBRUARY DAY OF PRAYER ASH WEDNESDAY



Wednesday,  
February 18, 2026

St. Mary's Assumption Church

Join us on Ash Wednesday for  
a day of prayer, reconciliation  
and fellowship.

10:45 am - Confessions

11:30 am - Mass

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

# Ahead of his time: Blessed Seelos was a model for today's Redemptorist students

By Andrew Tran-Chung, Redemptorist Theology Student

For almost a third of his life, Father Seelos was a formator for young seminarians. While he was zealous in his faith, incredibly caring, and pastoral, he was above all a joyful Redemptorist. In fact, there's a story of how he interacted with his seminarians that often caused concern with his superiors.

Organized by three young seminarians, the "laughing society" members would take turns telling jokes, making the others laugh. When the signal is given, everyone must immediately stop laughing. Father Seelos joined the society one day out of curiosity, as any good superior would, wanting to know what his seminarians were up to. As it happens, he was great at laughing at jokes but could not stop laughing at the signaled moment. Father Seelos was penalized with saying several prayers, and after two or three rosaries, he had to leave the grinning group or else he'd rack up more prayers.

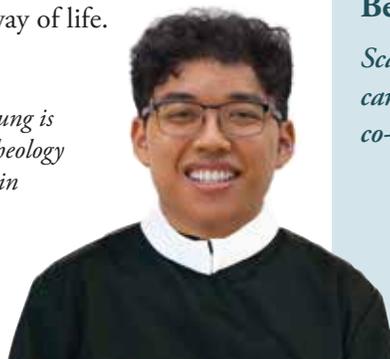
Father Seelos's way of accompanying his seminarians is no different to the way Redemptorists today form the new generation of seminarians. Redemptorist formation continues to place an emphasis on holistic, human formation. While we study philosophy

and theology, times like our Novitiate period help Redemptorist students grow in knowledge of themselves and the history of the Congregation. In fact, it was during my Novitiate that I learned of Seelos's "laughing society" incident.

I remember many moments like Seelos's where joy brought my community together. They remind me that my formation as a Redemptorist isn't just reading books, reaching out to the poor and abandoned, or praying. It's also about being a better person to my brother Redemptorists, and through that, a better minister to the people we serve.

While Seelos's methods didn't align with the European model of seminary formation at his time, his method continues to shine today as new generations of seminarians enter and discover the joy that exists in our Redemptorist way of life.

*Andrew Tran-Chung is a Redemptorist Theology Student studying in San Antonio, TX.*



## You Can Sponsor a Redemptorist Student!

*Become a Co-Redemptorist*



Co-Redemptorists are lay men and women who take an active role in supporting young men who choose to pursue religious life as Redemptorist priests and brothers.

By making a one-time or recurring donation, you become a member of the Co-Redemptorists Association. Your prayers will be joined to those offered up by Redemptorists around the world as they keep you and your intentions in their daily prayers and Masses.

### Become an active partner today!

*Scan the code below with your phone's camera or visit [RedemptoristsDenver.org/co-redemptorists](https://www.RedemptoristsDenver.org/co-redemptorists) to learn more.*



## Mourning the loss of a Seelos Shrine stalwart

In December 2025, our Shrine community experienced a quiet but profound loss with the passing of our colleague and friend, Shelly Raynal. We grieve her death and give thanks for the gift she was to this ministry and to all who worked with her.

Shelly served the Shrine for more than five years as an employee, after volunteering her time long before that. Many may not have

known her name, but countless readers knew her work. She was the creative force behind this newsletter, shaping its voice and helping readers grow closer to Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos.

Shelly will be deeply missed for her talents, her kindness, and her dedication. We commend her to God's loving care. May she now rest in peace, in that happy home, a land of love and a land of joy.

## Blessings for the Sick

*Hospital visits with a Seelos Crucifix*

*(Only family members may request)*

### JEFFERSON / ORLEANS

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Lauren Johnson (281) 851-1321

## GRACES RECEIVED & PRAYERS ANSWERED

### LOS ANGELES, CA

I can honestly say that without the intercession and quiet strength of Fr. Francis Xavier Seelos, I may not be standing here today as a Salesian Brother. There were moments — real, difficult moments — when I seriously considered leaving. The challenges of religious life, like for many, tested my resolve and clarity of purpose.

But in those times, I turned to Fr. Seelos. I found in him not just a model of apostolic zeal and gentleness, but a real friend in prayer. His life of tireless

service, humility, and joyful sacrifice inspired me. Through his intercession, I found renewed strength, peace, and a deeper love for my vocation.

He helped me remember that my vocation is not about being perfect, but about being faithful — faithful to the young, faithful to Christ, and faithful to the spirit of Don Bosco. I am still a Salesian Brother today because Fr. Seelos prayed for me, walked with me, and helped me see the grace in perseverance.

### INVERNESS, FL

My first husband was dying of lung cancer. He refused to receive the sacrament of reconciliation for as long as we were married, which was 35 years. I had been praying for his healing and a return to the sacrament for 10 years.

In late November of 2009, his condition became critical and he was admitted to the hospital. Quite some time before this, I had received a first class relic of Blessed Seelos, which I kept at home.

Three days before his death, I was with him in the hospital, and I brought Fr.

Seelos relic with me. I laid it on his forehead, and asked for healing through his intercession and left to go home.

When I arrived home about half an hour later, he left me a message saying to come back and bring a priest, which I did. He made his confession and received Communion. He died three days later during the hour of mercy surrounded by our whole family.

I believe God, through the intercession of Fr. Seelos, gave him the greatest gift of eternal life.

### SLAUGHTER, LA

My mother and I made a mini pilgrimage to the shrine of Fr. Seelos for my birthday on July 26, 2024. We attended daily Mass with one of the priests, who also gave us a wonderful tour of the grounds and church buildings. I asked Fr. Seelos to intercede for me to be healed of my

infertility. Just two months later, I found out I was pregnant after 11 years of infertility. I truly believe it was his intercession that prompted this blessing for me and my husband. We are eternally grateful to everyone at the Shrine who were so kind.

## SHRINE, MUSEUM & WELCOME CENTER HOURS

Monday-Saturday 10am-2pm



## SAVE THE DATE

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

**FEBRUARY 18:** Day of Prayer - Ash Wednesday

**MARCH 19:** St. Joseph Altar

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

## FEBRUARY SHRINE CLOSURES

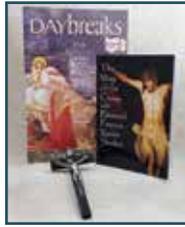
The Shrine is closed on the following days for Mardi Gras.

**Saturday, February 7**

**Saturday, February 14**

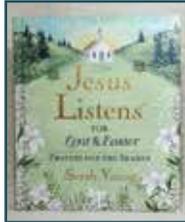
**Monday-Tuesday, February 16-17**

## HOT IN THE SHOP ~ LENT & EASTER



### WAY OF THE CROSS GIFT SET – \$21

Includes two publications by Fr. Byron Miller, C.Ss.R. – “Daybreaks: Daily Reflections for Lent and Easter” book and “The Way of the Cross with Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos” pamphlet – and a 4” tall Seelos relic crucifix that was touched to Fr. Seelos’ original Mission Cross.



### “JESUS LISTENS FOR LENT & EASTER” BOOK – \$27

Features prayers, reflections, and Bible verses based on Jesus’ life and sacrifice for us.



### EASTER STORY FINGER PUPPETS – \$15

Includes 8 colorful characters and an Easter Story play script suitable for early readers.



### LENT & EASTER PAMPHLET SET – \$15

“Lent for Busy Catholics”  
“What is the Triduum?”  
“Quick Recipes for Meat-Free Fridays”  
“Meditations for Lent”



### EASTER LILY CROSS TEA TOWEL & RING SET – \$27

Illustrated by New Orleans artist Kristin Malone and printed in Louisiana. Brass towel ring included.

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](http://seelos.org/light-a-votive-candle).



**REQUEST A RELIC:** Relics are available for an offering of \$2.50 each at [SEELOS.org/gift-shop](http://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](http://seelos.org/charitable-giving) to learn more about charitable giving.

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



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## 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 (\$15)

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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