



# misericordiæ

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Priestly Society of Mercy  
Quarter I, 2020

## BLESSED FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS

### Society invokes Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos in Time of COVID-19

Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos was born in Füssen in the Kingdom of Bavaria on January 11, 1819, one of 12 children born to Mang Seelos and Franziska Schwarzenbach. He was baptized that same day in the Parish Church of St. Mang. In childhood he expressed a desire for priesthood and later entered the diocesan seminary on September 19, 1842.

Seelos was touched by the letters published in the Catholic newspaper, *Sion*, from the Redemptorist missionaries describing the lack of spiritual care for the thousands of German-speaking immigrants. After visiting the Redemptorists in Altötting, he decided to enter the congregation, asking to be allowed to work as a missionary in the United States. He was accepted by the Redemptorists on November 22, 1842, and sailed the following year from Le Havre, France, on March 17. He arrived in New York on April 20, 1843. On December 22, 1844, after having completed his novitiate and theological studies, Seelos was ordained a priest in the Redemptorist Church of St. James in Baltimore, Maryland.



Seelos' availability and innate kindness in understanding and responding to the needs of the faithful quickly made him well known as an expert confessor and spiritual director, so much so that people came to him even from neighboring towns. His confessional was open to all: "I hear confessions in German, English, French, of Whites and of Blacks." He practiced a simple lifestyle and a simple manner of expressing himself. The themes of his preaching, rich in Biblical content, were always understood even by the simplest people. Seelos was described as a man with a constant smile and a generous heart, especially towards the needy and the marginalized.

In 1854, he was appointed simultaneously Pastor of St. Alphonsus Parish in Baltimore; Pastor and Prefect of Students at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Cumberland, Maryland, in 1857; and Pastor and Prefect of Students at St. Mary's Parish in Annapolis (1862). During this time, he expressed deep interest and concern in young people and their faith formation. In 1860 Seelos was proposed as a candidate for the office of Bishop of Pittsburgh. Having been excused from this responsibility by Pope Pius IX, from 1863 until

1866, he dedicated himself to the life of an itinerant missionary preaching in English and German in the states of Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Wisconsin. From there he became Curate at St. Mary's Parish in Detroit.

After a year as Curate in Detroit, Michigan, Seelos was assigned in 1866 as Pastor of the Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, New Orleans. However, his ministry in New Orleans was destined to be brief. In September of that year, exhausted from visiting and caring for victims of yellow fever, he contracted the disease. After several weeks, he died on October 4, 1867, at the age of 48 years and 9 months.

Pope St. John Paul II beatified Seelos in St. Peter's Square on April 9, 2000. In the beatification homily, it was noted "Today, Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos invites the members of the Church to deepen their union with Christ in the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Through his intercession, may all who work in the vineyard for the salvation of God's people be encouraged and strengthened in their task." Seelos is commemorated in the Martyrology on October 5.

Because Seelos' care of those suffering from yellow fever, and ultimately his own death due to the disease, he is especially meaningful to invoke during this time of pandemic. The following prayer was offered by the Superior General for this purpose:

God of Mercy, hear our prayers during this time of pandemic. Help those who are ill, their families, their caretakers, and all those affected by the virus. Be with those in economic uncertainty and guide the leaders of nations to act in the best interests of their people. Save those who have died that they may rest with you in eternal peace. Protect the healthy and heal us of our infirmities in soul and body. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

R/ Pray for us, Mother of Mercy, that we may experience the mercy of God.

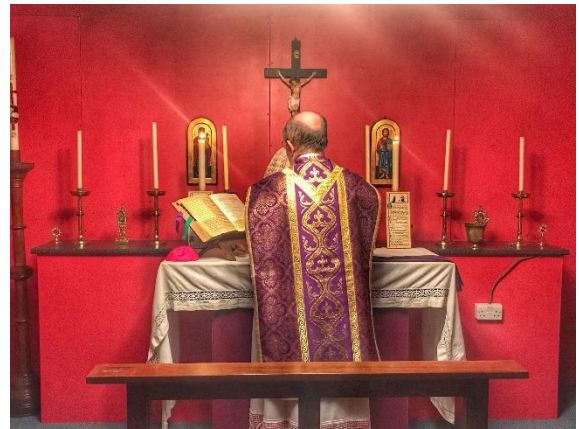
R/ Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, pray for us.

## MEETING AND RETREAT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

### Superior General and Primate Meet

Archbishop Douglas Lewins and the Superior General William Myers met in the United Kingdom at the beginning of March after Archbishop Myers' return from a retreat trip to Italy. During their time together they

came together for the liturgy as well as discussed the needs and future of the Society.



Archbishop Lewins on Ash Wednesday in the Chapel of St. Lucy

## SUPERIOR GENERAL ON RETREAT IN ITALY

### Archbishop Myers Prays for the Society and Members

Superior General William Myers traveled to Rome and Florence at the end of February and the beginning of March. During his trip he visited the Vatican and numerous churches, including many of the Stational Churches of Rome. He sent his reflections to members of the Society, part of which are noted here:

What strikes me after being here the first day is how much Romans rely on mercy. Everywhere I looked there was a niche in a wall dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. Even in the area where I am staying there is one dedicated to the Madonna of Divine Love "the salvation of Rome in 1944." The reliance on Our Lord and His Holy Mother for every aspect of our lives is tangible here.

Even amidst the hustle and bustle of tourists, scurrying about, I stopped at numerous locations to pray for you, for our Society, and for those around me. I watched as people young and old stopped by to light a candle. Through their prayers, for themselves or others, their faith remains tangible even if (this is conjecture on my part) their trust of institutions has waned. I

thought about our good work together and how we have such a simple mission of sacramental mercy whenever and wherever needed.

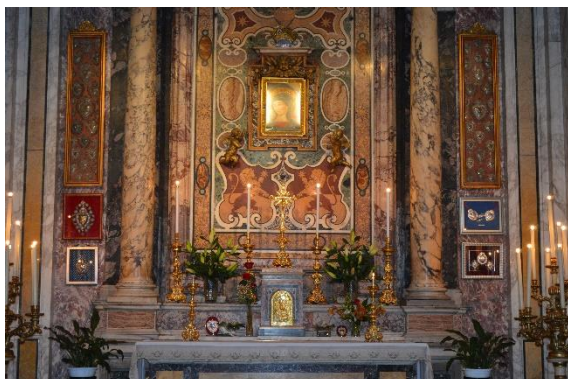
While the Church Militant often causes injury to the Church (in all of its lungs) because of lack of welcome, the many sins of its clergy, and sometimes sheer ineptitude, I am grateful to serve with you at trying to rekindle people's faith through mercy and charity in our own little niche.



The Skull of St. Valentine



The Church of St. Alphonsus Ligori and the icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help



Santa Maria in Via

## IN MEMORIAM

### Father James Phillips Dies



Father James Phillips, SC died on March 23, 2020. Father Phillips was ordained by Archbishop Lewins on July 23, 1994. Thereafter he established the Sitio Community, a Benedictine-inspired group which ministered to people with HIV/AIDS. Notably, during his time of service in the Old Roman Catholic Church he acted as Administrator when Archbishop Lewins submitted to the Holy See. When Archbishop Lewins returned to again lead the Church Fr. Phillips assisted in the transition. In addition to serving as a priest, Father Phillips was an accomplished musician acting as a choirmaster and organist for private hire as well as for numerous churches. He is remembered by Archbishop Lewins below:

Fr. James was more in touch when he moved to Grantham, Lincolnshire. He came over to our chapel for Mass when he could. I was privileged to be able to visit him very late on the night of his passing to give him the Last Rites and Viaticum. He was put into isolation the following morning with a chest infection and died in the afternoon. I will be conducting his funeral on Wednesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at Grantham Crematorium. We have had a Requiem Mass for him here in our chapel and there is likely to be a memorial following the lockdown.



Pictured: Fr. James Phillips SC, Archbishop J.J. Humphreys, and Canon John Marochi.