

**NORTH AMERICAN SECRETARIAT FOR PARTNERSHIP IN MISSION
GATHERING FOR FORMATION AND FAITH-SHARING
THEME: BLESSED FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS, C.Ss.R.**

Time Frame: 90 minutes

CENTRE OF BEAUTY:

- ☐ Mission Cross
- ☐ Prayer Cloth
- ☐ Picture of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, CSsR
- ☐ Candle
- ☐ Bible

HANDOUTS:

- ☐ Prayer of St. Alphonsus to the Holy Spirit (Attached)
- ☐ Handout: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, C.Ss.R. (attached)
- ☐ (attached)
- ☐ Any preparatory materials for the next session

MATERIALS:

- ☐ Flip Chart
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ Masking Tape
- ☐ Name Tags
- ☐ Pens/pencils
- ☐ Paper

NOTES:

SATURDAY MORNING OR WEEKDAY EVENING SESSION

GATHERING

WELCOME

OPENING PRAYER– Prayer of St. Alphonsus to the Holy Spirit

Experience: Ask the group: Have you ever known someone whose positive spirit, optimism and willingness you admire? Do you know anyone who is never above even the most menial tasks? Do you know anybody, well-educated and well-trained, who can speak to all sorts of people in a way that they can understand easily? Who are these people? As these are named, list them on chart paper. What is it about these people that you admire? List these qualities also on chart paper, if you wish.

Engage in some story-telling about the people whose names and qualities are before us.

Reflection: Have the group look over the list that has been generated. Then, ask: In your opinion, what makes someone a saint? Discuss these as they are named.

Generalization: Discuss the brief article on Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos, which participants have read in preparation for this gathering: The following are the reflection questions that were appended to the article. You might wish to use the following reflection questions as a discussion guide:

1. Francis Xavier Seelos was known for the simplicity of his preaching and teaching. It was said of him that his words could be understood by even the simplest and least educated person. What is your reaction to such simplicity? What does it say to you?
2. Seelos gave generously of his time in service to the poor, the sick and the abandoned, seeming never to put them first and himself last at all times. How do you respond to such selfless service? To what Seelos' attitude call you?
3. Seelos was perhaps best known for his joy, good humour and laughter. People were attracted by it to him as a person and, through him, to Christ. What qualities are you best known for? What is it in you that you hope attracts people to Christ?
4. Seelos was inspired by his friend and Redemptorist Superior, John Neumann. Indeed, their relationship changed Seelos' life and moved him to see the vital importance of preaching missions as a means of evangelization. Who inspired you to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ? Whose life or example drew you to the Redemptorist charism or way of life?

Action: Name one thing that you will take home with you from tonight's session.

Prayer: adapted from Terry Moran, CSsR, *In the Spirit of St. Alphonsus*

**SERVE THE LORD WITH JOY
A PRAYER IN MEMORY OF BLESSED FRANCIS XAVIER SEELOS**

Hymn: Any joyful hymn that is familiar to the group

Leader: We see illustrated in the life and experience of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos many elements of Redemptorist life today. As a Redemptorist missionary, he accepted appointments in many places—Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cumberland, Annapolis and New Orleans. He took part in the great mission of proclaiming the good news to the most abandoned through a number of ministries—formation, mission preaching and parish pastoral ministry. He lived and worked with saints, like John Neumann—and confreres who suffered mental illness—such as Gabriel Rumpler. In the midst of it all, he became known for his holiness, sincerity and joy. We pray that we might be animated by his spirit as we, like him, seek to continue Christ and proclaim His message of redeeming love to those to whom we are sent.

One confrere said of Seelos that he was “a Redemptorist in body and soul.” As we now listen to his words, we pray that we might be the same.

Reader 1: It is not your justice, but God’s mercy which is the motive of your trust. He is the God of all consolations and the Father of Mercies. He does not wish the death of sinners, but that they be converted and live. He came to heal the sick and to seek those who were lost. He spared the woman caught in adultery. He showed mercy to the thief crucified with him. He took upon himself our punishment. He prayed for murderers. He now intercedes for us at the right hand of God. None of the damned was ever lost because his sin was too great, but because his trust was too small!

Pause for silent reflection

Reader 2: A long experience has taught me the great lesson that God leads people in a human manner by other people... who should be of the same kindness as he himself was while on earth. Many a soul might be gained for faith and eternal life if sometimes a little more charity, a little more self-denial, would be evident, and if persons would be treated as their personal dispositions and human nature would require. It is true that it requires great virtue and experience to find always the right measure in these things, but we cannot fail much if our intention remains pure.

Pause for silent reflection

Word of God: Psalm 146 (recited antiphonally)

L: Praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD, O my soul!
I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

R: Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith for ever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

L: The LORD sets the prisoners free;
the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.
The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.

R: The LORD watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

L: The LORD will reign for ever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the LORD!

Intercessions

Leader: In one of his conferences, Fr. Seelos quoted St. John Chrysostom, who wrote: "Even if you do not bend the knee, nor strike your breast, nor elevate your hands to heaven, if only you bring to God an inflamed heart, nothing is wanting in your prayer." Our response to each intercession will be, "Inflame our hearts with your love."

Reader 3: For confessors and pastoral counsellors, for reconcilers and peacemakers, for those who, like Father Seelos, labour to bring rest to troubled minds and peace to a wounded world, we pray:

All: Inflame our hearts with your love.

Reader 4: For doctors and nurses, for medical researchers and scientists, for those who, like Father Seelos, try to relieve the victims of disease and bring them healing and wholeness, we pray:

All: Inflame our hearts with your love.

Reader 5: For comedians and humourists, writers and artists who, like Father Seelos, try to relieve the sadness of life by humour and good cheer, we pray:

All: Inflame our hearts with your love.

Reader 6: For teachers and youth ministers who, like Father Seelos, try to accompany young people with patience and care, we pray:

All: Inflame our hearts with your love.

Reader 7: For growth in kindness and courtesy, for the everyday virtues for which Father Seelos was famous, we pray:

All: Inflame our hearts with your love.

Reader 8: For those who are alienated from the Church because of the unkindness of believers, we pray:

All: Inflame our hearts with your love.

Leader: Let us now add our own intercessions to those to which we have already given voice.

Our Father...

Closing Prayer: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos once wrote: "... affability does no evil. One who is rough with people does injury to himself and to others, and sins-- at least in ignorance-- against charity, patience, poverty, humility, and self-denial. That one scandalizes all who see or hear. May we, guided by the example and the spirit of Francis Xavier Seelos, be beacons of welcome, joy and simplicity to all who need to hear the Good News, and to see it alive in their midst. And may Almighty God bless us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

SOCIAL TIME

PRAYER OF ST. ALPHONSUS TO THE HOLY SPIRIT



L. You are **fire**;
R. enkindle in me your love.

L. You are **light**;
R. enlighten my mind with the knowledge of eternal things.

L. You are the **Dove**;
R. give me innocence of life.

L. You are the gentle **Breeze**;
R. disperse the storms of my passions.

L. You are the **Tongue**;
R. Teach me how to bless you always.

L. You are the **Cloud**;
R. shelter me under the shadow of your protection.

L. You are the **Giver** of all heavenly gifts;
R. animate me,

L. I beseech you, with your **grace**;
R. sanctify me

L. with your **charity**;
R. enlighten me

L. with your **wisdom**;
R. adopt me by your goodness as your child, and save me in your infinite mercy;
so that I may ever **bless** you, **praise** you, and **love** you;
first during this life on earth, and then in heaven for all eternity.

Amen.

Blessed Francis X. Seelos, C.Ss.R.

Francis Xavier Seelos was born on January 11, 1819 in Füssen, Bavaria, Germany. He was baptized on the same day in the parish church of St. Mang. Having expressed a desire for the priesthood since childhood, he entered the diocesan seminary in 1842 after having completed his studies in philosophy.

Soon after meeting the missionaries of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, founded for the evangelization of the most abandoned, he decided to enter their community. He wanted to minister to the German-speaking immigrants in the United States. He was accepted by the Congregation on November 22, 1842, and sailed the following year from Le Havre, France. 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, U.S.A. After his ordination, he worked for nine years in the parish of St. Philomena in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, first as assistant pastor with St. John Neumann, who was the superior of the Religious Community, and later as Superior himself and for the last three years as pastor. During this time, he was also the Redemptorist Novice Master. With Neumann he also dedicated himself to preaching missions. Speaking of their relationship, Seelos said: "He has introduced me to the active life" and, "he has guided me as a spiritual director and confessor".

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. Such was his reputation that people came to him even from neighboring towns.

Faithful to the Redemptorist charism, he practiced a simple life style and a simple manner of expressing himself. The themes of his preaching, rich in biblical content, were always heard and understood even by the simplest people. A constant priority in his pastoral activity was instructing children in the faith. He not only favored this ministry, he held it as fundamental for the growth of the Christian community in the parish.

In 1854, Seelos was transferred from Pittsburgh, to Baltimore, and later to Cumberland in 1857, and to Annapolis in 1862. In each of these places, he was engaged in parish ministry and serving in the formation of future Redemptorists as Prefect of Students. Even in this post, he was true to his character remaining always the kind and happy pastor, always prudently attentive to the needs of his students and conscientious about their doctrinal formation. Above all, he strove to instill in these future Redemptorist missionaries the enthusiasm, the spirit of sacrifice and apostolic zeal for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the people.

In 1860 he 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.

After a brief period of parish ministry in Detroit, Michigan, he was assigned in 1866 to the Redemptorist community in New Orleans, Louisiana. Here also, as pastor of the Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, he was known as a pastor who was joyously available to his faithful and singularly concerned for the poorest and the most abandoned. In God's plan, however, his ministry in New Orleans was destined to be brief. In the month of September, exhausted from visiting and caring for the victims of Yellow Fever, he contracted the dreaded disease. After several weeks of patiently enduring his illness, he passed on to eternal life on October 4, 1867, at the age of 48 years and 9 months.

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, proclaimed Father Seelos Blessed in St. Peter's Square on April 9th of the Solemn Jubilee Year 2000.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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