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Redemptorist Chaplains in World War II: At Home & Abroad, A Battle For Souls

By Patrick J. Hayes, Ph.D., Archivist, Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province

When Aeschylus famously said that the first casualty of war is the truth, he challenged future historians to restore the principle by making it their ultimate pursuit. But to what sources can the historian turn? In a set of steel cabinet drawers in the vault of the Baltimore Province Archives are the records of those chaplains who served God and country during all the wars from the 1860s to Korea. The majority of these records deal with chaplain officers of the Second World War. Files contain vital statistics of each man—birth date, ordination date, their Redemptorist community, date of commission, rank and units to which they were attached. Additionally, their decorations are listed, along with their dates of discharge and photographs. The files also hold a wide variety of chaplains' reports, correspondence, newsletters from the Military Ordinariate, various editions of the Chaplains' *Vademecum*, and other media. The portraits of the chaplains were assembled in two albums by the seminarians of the St. Louis Province at Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. Their "Our Mother of Perpetual Help Yank Club" had assistance from Fathers Thomas and William Chapman, Francis Moriarty, Andrew Rush, and James Galvin. Father Thomas Chapman was secretary to Bishop William T. McCarty, C.Ss.R., of the Military Ordinariate. Their labors produced one of the most complete collections of World War II chaplains' records anywhere in America.

Chaplains were always in short supply, even in the final months of the war. The War Department routinely increased the quota for Catholic chaplains and many priests were pulled from parish assignments by their bishops or superiors. In April 1944, for instance, the War Department requested 619 more Catholic chaplains by July 1, on top of the 2,795 chaplains already commissioned. Redemptorists—second only to Jesuits in the numbers of chaplains who volunteered for duty—sent at least 188 into the military. At one point, the Baltimore Province had about a quarter of its personnel in uniform. Their ministry began with "chaplain school," an eight-week training course to make chaplains battle ready. These schools were often located at important academic institutions around the nation, including Duke University and Harvard University. For many, this was the worst part of their service. Nearly every moment was circumscribed and regimented. Instructors could be deathly dull. However, an occasional letter appears from a confrere to his provincial praising his experience.

Chaplain's School
William and Mary
April 17, 1944

Very Reverend and dear Father Provincial:
I am taking a few minutes out to write you as I should have written you a week ago. I arrived here Easter Sunday night and started right in on Navy terminology. I boarded ship (the regular college buildings) and went to the quarter deck (second floor). I met the Duty Chaplain and was logged in. Then I was assigned a bunk in Old Dominion. By that time I had enough bunk for one day. The roadway in front of the house is called the "Ramp." By the end of my eight weeks I do hope to have the idea that I am aboard ship. But outside imagination drills this place is a dream. The cherry trees are bursting with color. Wisteria vines hang all over the country south of here. And on our three mile hike-and-run through the woods I spotted some beautiful dogwoods that made me think of that road in Esopus that passes beside the Sister's Convent. … The one real gent here is Father Sullivan, SJ—a member of the faculty. I have seven priests with me in a class of 16. We do well: Mass every morning even with morning watch from 4-6. … This place is tops with me. It's a great start for the missionary work to come. P.R. is standing me in good stead for this life of saying Mass from a Mass kit, etc. Love to all; God bless you.
Your devoted confrere,
Father Leo Rice

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The newsletter for Redemptorist chaplains printed at Oconomowoc ran this short episode from Father E. Miller in its issue of September 25, 1942. Miller was then in the chaplain's school at Harvard: "This afternoon we went out to a large field under the direction of our instructor, marching, of course, in columns of twos. In the field we halted and the Captain addressed us. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'right here in this spot you have buried a man. You are to draw a map of the grave, etc., so that 6 months from now the Graves Registration Command can come, and by means of your map go directly to the grave. Fall out!' We fell out and went to work… The professor said that the map was fine, but that I had forgotten the most essential thing—who was buried in the grave."

Redemptorists of other provinces

According to issue 89 (1946) of the Redemptorist Chaplains Newsletter, the "C.SS.R. Chaplain Score" stated that a "grand total of 179 confreres have entered the armed forces of the United States and Canada. The Baltimore Province supplied 103 men. St. Louis 42, Toronto 27, St. Anne 7." This total, however, does not correspond to the lists supplied by the Military Ordinariate. The total was more.

By volunteering for service as a military chaplain, one could not determine where one might be stationed. Members of the old St. Louis Province could find themselves crossing into other parts of the United States beyond the borders of their province just as members of the Baltimore Province could be found on the West Coast. Concerns among superiors in Kirkwood and Oakland, as well as Oconomowoc, that the government would make their students eligible for the draft were ever present. In April 1944, Colonel Dumphries of the Washington Draft Board stated that any seminarian had to be taking courses full-time and anyone not so enrolled was "at the mercy of his local draft board and he can make no further appeal to Washington." Students did make some contribution to the war effort. In Oconomowoc, for instance, students harvested peas as members of the Victory

Crops Corps. These peas traveled in cans to American soldiers overseas. One American soldier in England wrote to his brother at Oconomowoc about the first meal served to him in the United Kingdom. The menu included peas canned at Oconomowoc. [See News Report of the St. Louis Province (April 28, 1944), in RABP, Chaplains Files, Provincial letters].

Where they went

Members of the Baltimore Province served at bases in the homeland, prison-of-war camps, and in the various invasion campaigns in Europe, North Africa, and the Pacific. One report in 1944 admitted that tracking their whereabouts was difficult but chaplains could be found in the Hawaiian Islands, New Guinea, New Caledonia, Alaska, Iceland, Iran, Britain, the Mediterranean, the Canal Zone, and the Caribbean. Twenty-five of the Army chaplains could be found at bases in the United States, as well as ten of the Navy chaplains. About two dozen were hospital chaplains at forward bases, six were among the infantry divisions, eleven were with the Air Forces and the rest were scattered throughout the world.

In the post-war period, many chaplains continued to serve until their commissions expired. Father Edward Coyne, for instance, found himself in Tokyo in December 1945, several months after Japan's surrender. Writing to Provincial Father Gearin, he offered a Christmas blessing. He noted that though he had been in the city for a month, he had only recently learned that Father Thomas "Bud" Reilly—the future bishop of San Juan de la Maguana in the Dominican Republic—was in the vicinity. The Church in Japan had been hit hard and Coyne believed it would have to begin "from scratch again." He described a recent encounter with the Apostolic Delegate, Paolo Marella (whom he refers to as Mollina). "He was evidently quite a friend of Father Barron's when he was serving at Washington under Fumasoni-Biondi; and he remembered one of our Philly houses because of the vast number of clocks in the corridors. In appearance he reminded me a lot of Fr. Cornie Hoffman."

Father John Wallace celebrated VE Day somewhere along the Mediterranean. But soon he found himself in Asia. "I came with the infantry replacements to India. We were supposed to go to China as occupation…but in India our orders were cancelled. Am assigned here in Calcutta…with the care of three camps. I will be stuck until well into next year (i.e., 1946).

What they did

Depending upon the assignment, Redemptorists could be found preaching missions, giving counsel, administering sacraments, and comforting the wounded. Some were able to cultivate devotions to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, whose cult was very prominent in the United States at the time. Chaplain Thomas Fallon began the OLPH novena on board the Battleship Arkansas in 1943. "The boys take to it very well," he wrote. "Of course I do not have the crowds that Boston [referring to Mission Church] has; but we have the same spirit. I wonder am I the first Redemptorist to conduct these services aboard a battleship?"

Another Navy chaplain, Arthur Finan, was privileged to be aboard the USS Blue Ridge, which was the floating headquarters for the Seventh Fleet. Finan received his assignment to the Blue Ride in mid-October 1943, just before it was to embark to the South Pacific. Before proceeding, he dedicated the ship, which he called a "scientific miracle," to OLPH. Consequently he expected smooth sailing. Indeed, the Blue Ridge performed ably,

putting out to sea on November 1, passing through the Panama Canal and making stops at New Caledonia and the Fiji Islands before heading to Brisbane, Australia. It went northward through New Guinea and after a brief stop, sped northward where it was the flagship of Rear Admiral Daniel Barbey's attack force in the liberation of the Philippines.

Harrowing dangers

Far from the familiar streets of Roxbury, Massachusetts, where he was born in 1906, Father Gerald Whelan, later was appointed to the faculty at St. Mary's College in North East, Pennsylvania to teach Latin and Greek. He taught for five years, beginning in 1933, before he was sent for a graduate degree in those subjects at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. He spent 1940 to 1942 on the missions from the Mission Church in Boston, but entered the chaplaincy as an Army first lieutenant on January 20, 1942.

At first he was stationed at Shaw Field in Sumter, South Carolina, at a training base there. He was the first Catholic chaplain on the base and managed to build a chapel for the men there. Though he was content in the assignment, when the opportunity arose to volunteer for overseas service he did not hesitate. He received orders to report to the *USS Henry R. Mallory* for transport to Liverpool.

The *Mallory* was an older vessel that had first been commissioned in World War I. It carried about 500 and on this particular journey it was one of a convoy of 60 other ships, together with 26 escorts. Whelan was one of seven chaplains making the trip.

Everyone knew of the perils and remained on alert throughout the voyage. On February 3, at 11 o'clock at night, the *USS Dorchester*—one of the other transport ships in the convoy—was dealt a lethal blow from a German torpedo. The fame of the *Dorchester's* four chaplains who surrendered their life jackets to others as the ship went down was later immortalized on a postage stamp. Several other ships met their end as well.

At around four o'clock in the morning, February 7, 1943, southwest of the Faroe Islands, the *Mallory* and its companions in the convoy were attacked by a Kriegsmarine U-Boat group. The *Mallory's* fatal blow came from a U-boat commanded by Sigfried von Forstner (his own U-Boat would be sunk later in October 1943, with all aboard perishing). Menaced for the next three hours, the Mallory took a direct hit in its starboard side just before seven o'clock. Whelan managed to make his way outside and grasped a railing along the deck. He did this automatically, but soon became cognizant of where he was. Someone barked an order at him: "Jump Father, jump!" Huge waves made the feat difficult, and though he

managed to fall half into the sea, he was able to throw his arms into a life boat, where he was brought up by the seat of his pants.

By 7:30 the Mallory had completely sank and those on life boats had to manage 30-foot swells. Whelan was one of the few officers in the boat who was not incapacitated. He declared that this was no time to curse, but to attend to the soul. If the boat swamped, only God could help them. Courage is fear that has said its prayers.

Rescue boats took hours to arrive and many froze or drowned. The Coast Guard cutter *Bibb* was the first to show up, followed by the *Ingham*. When he was finally pulled onto the *Bibb*, Whelan was sent below for dry clothes and a shot of whiskey. He then went back on deck and, drawing the oils from his pocket, anointed many of the men. Later that day, when the rescue was complete and another attack repelled, he led the ceremonies for burials at sea.

Survivors were transported to Iceland, landing there on Valentine's Day, February 14. Chaplain Whelan remained in Iceland, tending the hospitals, until December 1944.

Only two of the seven chaplains on board survived: Father Whelan and Chaplain Ira Bentley, a Baptist minister. Two hundred nine others were rescued, along with one dog (adopted by the Navy as one of their own). Two hundred ninety-nine were lost. Seven other ships in the convoy also went down.

A more detailed write up, which uses many materials found in the Baltimore Province Archives, may be found at the following site: Whelan's account may be found here: http://freepages.military.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~cacunithistories/HR_Mallory_Army_Stories.htm#Whelan

What they saw

In their letters to their provincial, other confreres or family members, Redemptorists tried to create a picture of what they were witnessing overseas. As the Allies pushed onward toward Berlin, their chaplains combed through some of the most important sites in Christendom. From the lowliest chapel to the grandest cathedral, Redemptorists saw how war affected the place of religion in European culture and they were unabashedly moved by it.

In one letter to his confrere James Galvin, Father Costanzo "Connie" Antonellis wrote from Normandy, March 22, 1945: "The Church in this Normandy village has been badly damaged. The twin spires have been battered with bombs and artillery; the roof is almost gone; altars are smashed to bits; statues are scattered in fragments all over the floor…but there were two things unharmed. One a beautiful statue of Our Lady; and the other, a picture of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. (This picture by the way had been hung there 75 years ago, by a Redemptorist missionary). And here I was another Redemptorist come to this ruined church, and Our Lady still hung on the wall to greet me." Others repeated this story with some frequency. The icon was found hanging on a solitary wall of a razed building or above an altar of a bombarded church or chapel. Father Leonard Paprocki noted that upon entering a concentration camp in Belgium he found an OLPH novena booklet written in Polish with the name of a soldier printed on the cover. "He probably read those prayers over and over in this terrible camp," Paprocki wrote. [Letter of Leonard Paprocki to James Galvin, March 27, 1945, in RABP, Chaplain Files, OLPH]

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Concentration camps were odious places and several Redemptorists observed some of the starkest examples of human depravity when they were liberated by the Allies. Among them was Father John Schultz. He was commissioned as a captain on January 15, 1943. In one of his monthly chaplain's reports to the Military Ordinariate (November 1944), Schulz seemed upbeat: "Season's greeting to all and all the blessings of Christmas. It has been my privilege to have remembered all of you at the tomb of the Little Flower." Schultz had been part of the D-Day invasion and made his way from France to Germany with deliberate speed. There he was among the first to see the horrors of Dachau while with the 7th Army. He was separated from the army as a major on January 14, 1946. The photo below was taken by Father Schultz upon his entrance into Dachau. The reverse of the photo states that the picture was true, as if to convince anyone who saw it that what he encountered was real.

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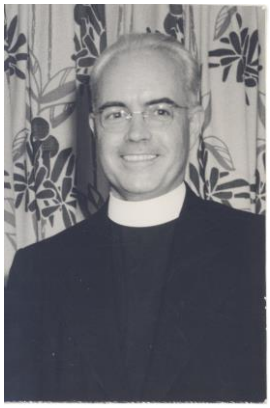
An Encounter with a Stigmatic



Father Ted (John) Power, C.Ss.R., was one of many vocations that came from Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. At Mount St. Alphonsus he excelled in languages. Ordained on June 16, 1929, he was immediately assigned to the mission band based at St. Alphonsus in Manhattan to give Italian missions. When Power served as an Army Chaplain during World War II, he traveled through nine countries during his tour of duty, covering North Africa, Sicily, Northern France and Central Europe. His unit was frequently mentioned by Ernie Pyle, the famous war correspondent. Power entered the service in March 1942 and was first stationed at Fort Eustis, Virginia. His overseas assignments included the 48th Surgical Hospital, England (October 17, 1942-May 1, 1943), 128th Evacuation Hospital (May 1, 1943-December 30, 1943), 84th Ordinance Battalion (December 30,

1943-April 27, 1944), and the 617th Clearing Company (April 27, 1944-August 26, 1945). It was during the latter assignment that he attained the rank of Captain. Father Power was issued the Bronze Star, Eight Battle Stars (for service in Algeria, Tunisia, Sicily, Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes, Rhineland, and Central Europe) and six Overseas Stripes. He was discharged on September 22, 1945.

In a letter addressed simply "Caro Mio," Power described an encounter he had with the famed stigmatic Theresa Neumann of Konnersreuth. Dated February 14, 1946 and written from the St. Alphonsus Rectory in New York, he wrote his correspondent the following:

…I first visited Konnersreuth on May 11, 1945, three days after V-E Day and found the village quite damaged by recent shell fire. The SS troops, who were billeted in town just before the end of the war, pulled out into the hills on the arrival of the US Army, and lobbed back artillery that did considerable damage. Fr. Naber's house was hit and his kitchen destroyed. Some of the houses around him were demolished or burned out. Theresa's house was apparently hit. …The population took to the cellars during the shelling and I don't believe anyone was killed, tho several were injured.

Theresa, at 47, is a charming woman to meet. She strikes you as being the most normal of human beings, neither bashful nor forward, but just herself; and that is a spectacular thing in itself in view of all the thousands who have come to stare at her and ply her with all sorts of embarrassing questions. She appears to be healthy and strong, very energetic and enthusiastic, tho the work she does is limited by her condition. The marks on her hands are too plain and too unusual to leave any doubt about their genuineness. The wounds just aren't normal, being almost perfectly square in formation, and neither festering nor healing these many years. Her bleedings take place on about half the Fridays of the year. Nothing happens during the festive seasons of the Church, as between Easter and the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Just what wounds will bleed and when, are known to both Theresa and Fr. Naber because of their long experience with the phenomena. The Pastor has an amazing set of photos, about 8, taken by Theresa's brother on one Good Friday. They are terrifying to see. On Good Fridays she bears all the marks of the Passion, the marks of the nails on hands and feet bleed freely, her heart bleeds profusely, the marks of the Crown of thorns appear on her head cloth, blood and serum from the Scourging cover the upper part of her body and she bleeds from her right shoulder. I saw her bleeding twice, from the eyes, the heart and the head and the profound impression that makes would be hard indeed to describe. …"

* * *

"No Greater Love Than This": Father Lawrence E. Lynch

Between 1939 and September 1941, Father Larry Lynch called the St. Clement Mission House home, but he was hardly ever there. A man of restless temperament, his main responsibility was to preach missions throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He had already been a missionary in Paraguay and Brazil, done work with labor organizations in Buffalo, New York, and ministered to Black Catholics in a rural parish comprised in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Yet his crowning achievement, at least the one for which he won the most fame, was as an exemplary Army chaplain during the Second World War.

Lynch had a rollicking personality. Eclectic in his tastes, as a student he exhibited a remarkable talent for poetry, painting, and baseball. He used his ability with words to cajole and befriend, and his straight-talk cut to the things that matter. He had a square jaw and a thick frame, which he carried with a gregarious swagger. He could often be found clinching a cigar between an affable grin. Father Lynch was a priest to Everyman. When he told his mother that he was going to enter the Chaplain Corps, she wondered why when he was doing such good work from St. Clement's Mission House. His reply was true to his character: "Mom, the Army is one unending mission for a Chaplain."

Born in Brooklyn on October 17, 1906, Father Lynch entered the Redemptorist preparatory seminary at North East, Pennsylvania in August 1919. He was accepted into the Redemptorist novitiate at Ilchester, Maryland, where he eventually pronounced his vows on August 2, 1927. Five years later he was ordained at Mount St. Alphonsus in Esopus, New York, by Patrick Cardinal Hayes and gave himself over to missionary life.

His commission as an Army chaplain came in September 1941 and his first posting that November was to Camp Wheeler, Georgia, where he was attached to the 8th Infantry. His next three assignments were with the 7th Armored Division which brought him to the swamps of Louisiana and training in the Mojave Desert. He shipped out to the Pacific theater in December 1943 and was stationed at the Headquarters Service Command at New

Caledonia until February 1945. His men called him "the Champ" partly due to his zeal on behalf of individual GI's and partly for his organizational ability. While in New Caledonia he brought together a mammoth twelve-priest mission that drew 15,000 from all the command posts on the island. Captain J. T. Byrne, who witnessed the spectacle, later remarked to Lynch that he was impressed by the size of the crowds despite the ill weather. "You can't beat Our Lady. She comes through every time." [Letter of Captain J. T. Byrne, HQ 27th Div. Artillery, June 9, 1945, in RABP, World War II Chaplain's files, OLPH. Byrne would later become a Redemptorist.]

Lynch inaugurated a broadcast called The Catholic Hour which was sent over the island's mosquito network. He gave each man he met a holy card depicting Our Lady of Perpetual Help and many later recalled how she protected them from harm.

From New Caledonia he joined the 165th Infantry Regiment—what had been known as the "Fighting 69th" (New York's Irish Brigade)—and was a front line chaplain on the Island of Okinawa. For his gallantry in action against the enemy at Okinawa, Shima, Nansei Shoto, between April 21 and 24, 1945, he received the Silver Star and the Purple Heart. He was mortally wounded by an exploding shell on April 24 and died on the battlefield while ministering to his men.

Father Lynch was buried hurriedly on Okinawa, almost one hundred days before the Japanese surrender on August 15. After the hostilities on Okinawa were brought to heel, fifty Catholic chaplains returned to his grave site and, on the hoods of fifty jeeps, simultaneously chanted a Mass of Requiem before a congregation of 3,000. His remains were later translated for burial from the Redemptorist parish of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Brooklyn, New York. Captain Lawrence Edward Lynch, C.Ss.R., is interred in the Redemptorist Cemetery at Mount St. Alphonsus in Esopus, New York.

On April 30, 1995, a memorial service was held at Father Lynch's graveside honoring his memory and service to the nation. Father Philip Dabney, C.Ss.R., Lynch's nephew and a member of the Baltimore Province, arranged to have representation from the New York Army National Guard and the playing of taps. This simple public act joins a chorus of private prayers.

An Exhibition in Denver

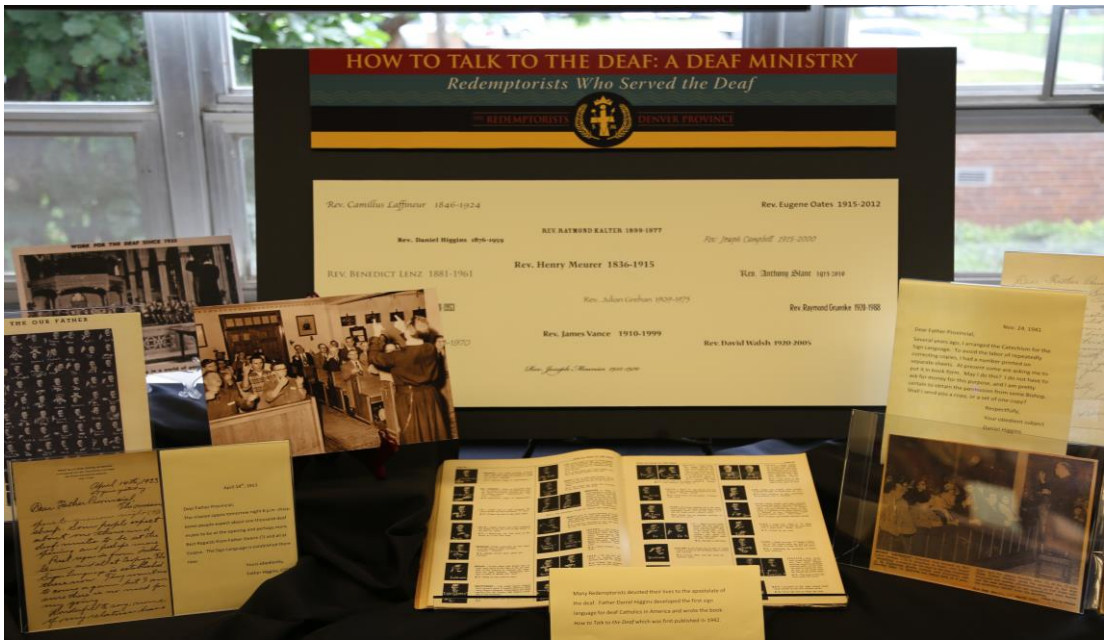
By Jennie Murphy, Archivist, Denver Province

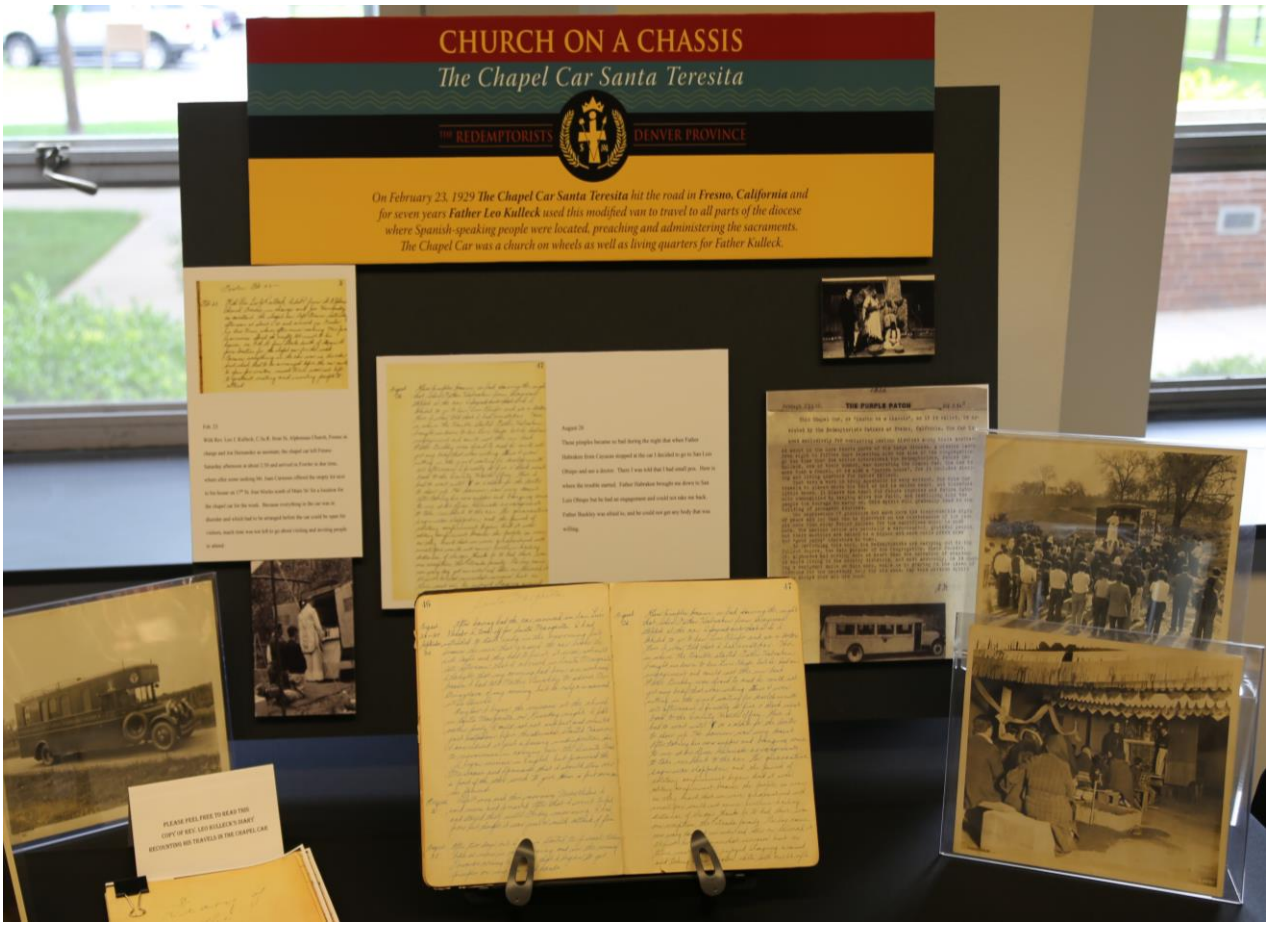
On August 21, 2014, the Redemptorists' Denver Province Archives held their first open house exhibit and reception *"Called to Serve the Most Abandoned: A History of the Redemptorists' Ministry."* I began working as the archivist for the Denver Province in September of 2013 and soon realized that their long and storied history deserved to be shared with others because, as Provincial Father Harry Grile remarked, "we Redemptorists are not good at promoting ourselves."

Redemptorist history is so extensive, it was imperative to narrow down the exhibit to encompass specific missions over a limited time period. The decision was made to concentrate on the 1940's and earlier, limiting it to seven exhibits and six pieces of artwork. In addition, a slideshow of photos, taken by Father Vincent Aggeler in Brazil between 1960 and 2006, was shown in the refreshment area and music by Rev. Joseph Dustin, Bek Brothers and The Collarmen played over the sound system. The seven exhibits included:

- *Doing His Work, a Journey to Thailand* which highlighted the four Redemptorists who in 1948 set sail for a new mission in Thailand;
- *Doing His Work, a Journey to Brazil* which featured the many Redemptorists who served, and are still serving, in Brazil;
- *The Great War, WWI Chaplains, 1917-1919* in which two accounts of harrowing experiences on the battle field were recounted in diaries by Father's Darley and Byrne;
- *The Evolution of Civil Rights in Redemptorist Parishes, 1874-1945* concentrated on the Fresno, New Orleans and St. Louis parishes that advocated for equal rights amongst African Americans; *How to Talk to the Deaf, Deaf Ministry, 1892-1944* featured the many priests who devoted their ministry to the apostolate of the deaf;
- *The Greatest Sacrifice, WWII Chaplains, 1941-1945* highlighted the many Redemptorists who served valiantly, including Father Clarence Vincent who sacrificed his life; and
- *The Church on a Chassis, The Chapel Car Santa Teresita, 1929-1936* which focused on the Mission of Father Leo Kulleck who outfitted a car to serve as a chapel and rectory on wheels.

Approximately 70 people attended the event including officials from the Archdiocese of Denver, benefactors in the Colorado Front Range area, and parishioners of the 15 parishes in which Redemptorists had, or currently have, a presence. The editor of the *Denver Catholic Register* also attended and the event was featured in the paper and on the website. In anticipation of the 150th anniversary, a beautiful mounted and framed vintage print of Our Mother of Perpetual Help was raffled off to attendees. A video of the exhibit will be distributed to Redemptorist communities and a pared-down version will travel to upcoming Denver Province events, such as Chapter meetings. The exhibit was dedicated to the outgoing OPC—Very Rev. Harry Grile, Rev. Bob Halter and Rev. John Schmidt and prayer cards were distributed in remembrance of their four years of service. It is the hope of the archives that this event will become a tradition and that they will host an exhibit in four years to honor the next OPC. Samples of the exhibits follow.





New Accession to the Baltimore Archive

In the summer of 2014, Father Gary Lauenstein was thoughtful enough to send several items to the Baltimore Province archives, including the following letter written to him while he was a seminarian. In it, he is given some fatherly advice by an acknowledged word smith on what makes for a good writer. It is written by Father Joe "Pop" Manton and dated March 29, 1964:

"Dear Gary: I don't think that what I shall say will satisfy you, but I'll at least try to answer your questions in order of their bombardment:

I never had any idea of becoming a writer. I had been consistently kidded about being a professor. I wanted to go on the foreign missions and ride a horse and prove I was a man. (Just as later I volunteered for the Armed Services and was delicately told to stay home and knit.)

When I was in First Philosophy we were asked to write letters to a confrere sick in the hospital. The prefect read my letters and ordered me to do some chapters on Bp. Neumann—they were published in Liguorian and sadly republished (with all their juvenilia) without correction, but this was not mea culpa.

I was pretty good at Latin and Greek etc., but as long as a classmate of mine, Bart Collins, was alive the English department was his beyond any doubt. He died the year before ordination and was (I think) a genuine genius—and you don't see too many of dem any moah.

I don't plead guilty to the catchy phrase accusation, but if it actually is there, I suppose it is the way I think. When I was in Rhetoric I know I never forgot the injunction, "Ask yourself, 'What is it like?'" All literature, it seems to me, is comparison, bold or subtle. I developed this in the introduction to Pennies, but said introduction appeared in only some volumes—it was headed, "For Very Young Priests Only."

During the minor seminary I belonged to an elocution academy of three or four fellows each year. (Most of the Seminary did this.) We wrote and memorized a ten minute talk each week and delivered it on Thursday morning to our little threesome or foursome in an idle classroom. But we were never allowed to take sermon topics as subjects, and I never thought of the writing as anything but as a necessity for speaking—never as anything remotely connected with publication.

In the seminary I read O. Henry, Stevenson, Macaulay, and Wendell Phillips, and practically nobody else.

I never consciously imitated any author, but I certainly endorse Father Donnelly's Art of Imitation—the book that insists on paragraph models. I am not sure of the title. At least there should be some year or so spent thus in a student's course in rhetoric.

When I was in the major Seminary, our compulsive (?) writing—perhaps obligatory is a kinder term with fewer echoes of psychiatry—was about a thousand words a year for five years. At least I personally appeared in public before the Elocution Class only five times during six years. I was in one play at North East (our juvenate)—a play involving those who had never been in a play. I was in one play in the Seminary—ditto.

Personally I think I am a lousy speaker and only a fraction less obnoxious as a writer. But I heartily endorse any attempts by young fellows like yourself at writing. The curious thing is that though I am beyond the age of fasting I still do not regard myself as old. This, I realize, is a huge illusion, but someday you will admit this is the way it is.

Do you know what I have scheduled for this afternoon? I have to go to the hospital in Cambridge to bless a woman whom I blessed thirteen years ago before a similar heart operation. The implication makes one profoundly humble. Then I have to go to the Shattuck Hospital to see a girl who is twenty one but who for one year now has been paralyzed from the neck down…a car accident. On my desk is an ashtray that she painted with the brush in her teeth…

How trivial and picayune all the dodges and tricks of style become when contrasted with the stark realities of life and suffering!

In conclusion—and I'm sorry I rambled this long—keep up your devotion to writing. I never had any thought of it at your age. But above all, be good, my child, and let who will be clever…

Your devoted confrere,

Joseph E. Manton, C.Ss.R.

MEMOIRS OF A MISSIONARY TO PARAGUAY: FATHER CHARLES HERGET, C.SS.R.

Introduction by Rev. Jack Kennington, C.Ss.R.

Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province first arrived in Paraguay on August 15, 1930. On a Sunday morning, Fathers William Fee and Rudolph Reiss crossed the Apa River on a flimsy raft from the state of Mato Grosso, Brazil, to celebrate Mass for the soul-starved Paraguayan inhabitants of the minute village of Bella Vista, Paraguay. Father Pedro S. Gennaro C.Ss.R., in a historical essay found in the Baltimore Province archives, "History of the Redemptorists of the Baltimore Province in Paraguay," writes that the two, stationed in Bela Vista [sic], Brazil, did not know that their first Mass on Paraguayan soil in the little church of Our Lady Help of Christians was the beginning of the Redemptorist involvement in Paraguay and that 50 years later that territory would be part of the prosperous Vice Province of Asuncion, Paraguay.

Father Gennaro mentions that the Redemptorist superiors had requested and received permission from the sole Bishop of Paraguay at the time, Mons. Juan Sinforiano Bogarin, to be allowed to cross the border into Paraguay to minister to the Bella Vistans. Later the first canonically erected parish of Mary Help of Christians in Bella Vista was established by the first Bishop of Concepcion, Paraguay, Mons. Emilio Sosa Gaona, SDB, on August 26, 1933. On January 28, 1934, he handed it over to the Redemptorists under Father Edward Reinagle, aided by Father George Wichland. The new community was completed when Father Charles Herget, a recently ordained Redemptorist, arrived from the United States on March 26, 1934. He had been traveling for more than a month over thousands of miles of sea and jungle, by ship, rail and auto, on almost impassible roads to get to his first mission assignment.

With the arrival of Fr. Herget, or Padre Antonio as he was called, came his Paraguayan *Memoirs*, in which he jotted all the happenings of the fledgling community, especially the campo trips into the vast parish so long deprived of priestly attention. These began from the letters he wrote to his interested stateside family. His sister, Sister Mary Rose, a member of the Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, collected all his letters and culled from them all the interesting observations her brother had noted during his extended time on the missions from 1934 to 1952. She typed 260 single-spaced pages from his letters, a monumental work that she completed in November of 1979.

Herget's ministries were highly diverse and he spares no small detail in recounting how they

were executed. One can tell that normal trials register but are quickly dismissed as trifles. From them we get a sense of missionary work in the 1930s in a sparsely populated area in a relatively new diocese. At one point he could be found giving instruction in preparation for first communion, or celebrating the accomplishment of some of his older charges when they graduated from the parish school. In these and other instances he supplies a vivid narrative.

What follows is an excerpt from these letters that combine to form the two-volume memoir in the Baltimore Province Archives. Padre Antonio Herget goes by auto from Bella Vista to Pedro Juan Caballero and then by horseback to and from the town of Capitan Bado. Both places were far outside the limits of the Bella Vista parish. The trip was requested by Monsignor Gaona. Both Pedro Juan Caballero and Capitan Bado were without clergy.

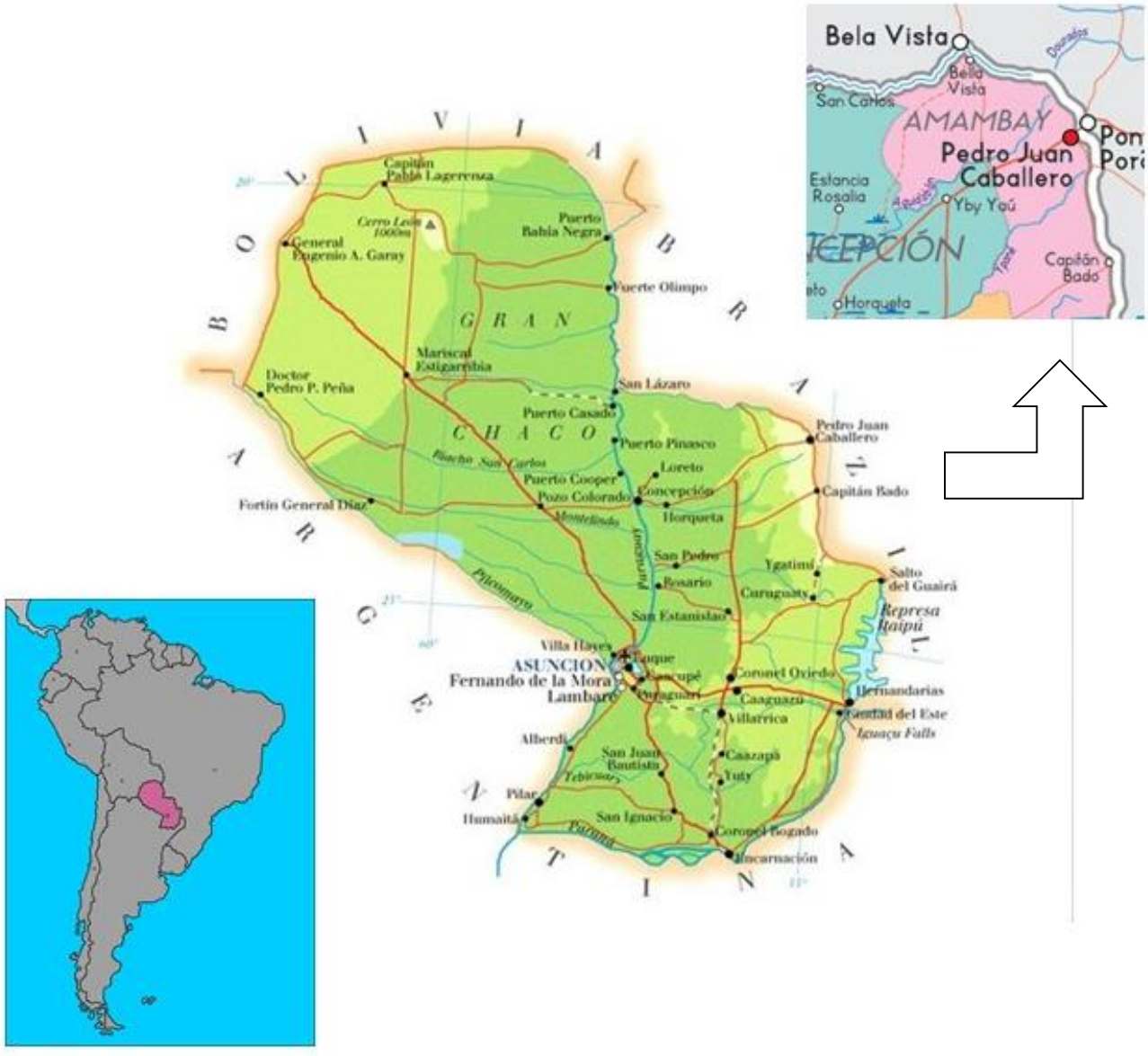
The excerpt begins on April 8, 1938, but at least some of the text appears to have been given in hindsight.

April 8, 1938

The parish in the town of Pedro Juan Caballero and the out-mission of Capitan Bado, have been without the assistance of a priest for some time. The Bishop had asked us to visit the parish from time to time.

On Monday, April 8, at two in the afternoon, Fr. Fred Fochtman and I left Bela Vista, Brazil, by car, on a road toward the town of Ita in Mato Grosso. Fr. Fred, who is stationed in Bela Vista, Brazil, had to go about thirty miles and I was to continue on by car to Ponta Pora, Brazil, where I would cross over the border into Pedro Juan Caballero, Paraguay.

The auto trip was slow enough. It was an old Ford that we were driving. The mechanic had worked on it for several days; when it was deemed fit to travel. We had started out, loaded with saddles, saddle bags, Mass equipment, etc. The road was not too bad; it had not rained for several days and it was dry. But we had trouble with our tires. They were old. By four o'clock we had gotten three flats. We had five before we reached Ita, Father's destination.



Finally we lost the road. At five o'clock it was growing dark and began to rain. We reached Ita at nine o'clock that night. Here we ate the Brazilian fare of rice and beans; then were bedded down for the evening in a sort of barn. The chauffeur slept on the floor; Fr. Fochtman had a hammock and I slept in an old cow-hide bed. I used my horse blanket for a mattress. The next morning we said Mass in the house. Father continued his journey by horse and after we had fixed the car a bit, the chauffeur and I set out at nine, reaching Pedro Juan Caballero with another flat at one thirty in the afternoon.

My arrival had been unannounced, so no one in Pedro Juan was expecting me. This town is larger than Bella Vista and more populated. It is a border town with just an avenue dividing it from Brazil and the town of Ponta Pora. The thoroughfare is called "La Calle Internacional." On arriving I went to the house of the Mayordoma – the woman who takes care of the church in the absence of the priest. She was surprised to see me, since she was not expecting anyone.

We spent most of the afternoon trying to find a place for me to stay. No one seemed to have room, so I finally went to a hotel – such as they have at these "far- western-like" towns.

I had dinner at seven: soup with cheese in it, rice with some tough dried beef, a pancake, two bananas and coffee. I was tired and went to bed early at 8:30 p.m. What mosquitoes! And no mosquito netting! I did not sleep much. At 5:00 a.m. I arose and went to the church for Mass. After the Mass I visited the Mayordoma again, making arrangements to move into the church. This hotel was too far away from the church and I frowned at the idea of separating my luggage – half in the church and half in the hotel. Besides, I wanted to be near the church in order to attend the people at any time. So I decided to move at once. Unfortunately the church had no sacristy; that is, no enclosed one. The sacristy is extended and hidden from the body of the church by two side altars. There was room on one side for a bed and on the other, for a table and a chair. After all the arrangements had been made, it was a fine set-up. It did seem strange, though, sleeping and eating right there in the church with the Blessed Sacrament. But it was the best we could do and there was no irreverence.

I stayed in Pedro Juan Caballero from Tuesday until the following Tuesday; just one week. I had intended going immediately to Capitan Bado and stay another week in P.J.C. on the return. But I could not get a horse for the trip. So there was nothing else to do, but do my work in Pedro Juan first, making the trip to Capitan Bado at a later time.

On Wednesday afternoon I had a funeral. On my way to the house of the deceased person, I was impressed by the number of people paying their respects, so I decided to give a little Mission during my week's stay. I stopped in to see the Comisario of Pedro Juan, to ask him to send some of his soldiers around to the houses to advise the people of my plans for the Mission. He was very accommodating to my request. So on Thursday morning I opened the Mission. I did the preaching in Guaraní. The schedule for the talks was the following: Thursday evening – Salvation; Friday – Mortal Sin; Saturday – Confession; and Sunday – the Blessed Mother.

The people attended very well. Each morning the church was packed for Mass and I gave a short instruction after the gospel. The services in the evening were at 7: 30. There were so many, that they could not get into the church, which I must admit, was rather small. Afternoons, at three o'clock, I had catechism for the children and a kind of little mission for those who had made their First Communion. I heard Confessions each night after the sermon and benediction and again on Saturday afternoon. On Sunday we had two Masses and General Communion for the whole parish. The results of the little Mission were satisfactory and consoling. There were over 400 Communions, 108 Baptisms and 4 Marriages.

I am reminded of one of the Marriages that took place. The couple were in their eighties. It took me some time to convince the groom to be married, but finally he said yes. I was performing the ceremony and asked him the question: "Do you wish so and so for your legitimate wife?" He looked at me rather puzzled and responded, why do you ask me again? I have already told you." Then there was another elderly couple and when I asked the groom the same question, he too hesitated, finally coming up with: "Yes, I wish it a little." I suppose that was sufficient consent.

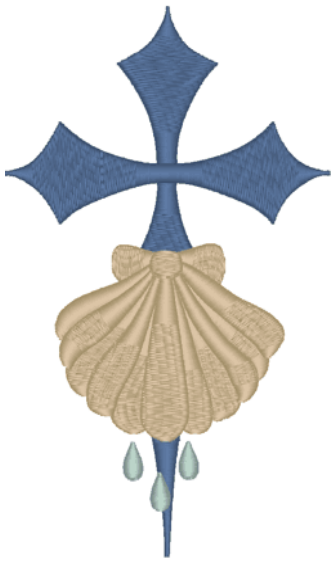
On Monday, I spoke to the Comisario again and he agreed to give me a horse and a soldier to accompany me to Capitan Bado. On Tuesday, at seven o'clock we started out.

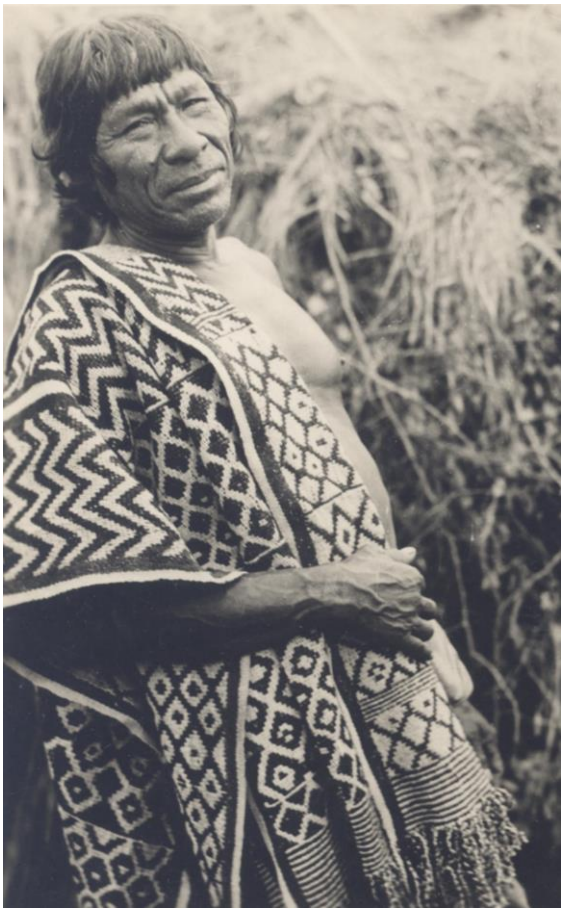
This trip was to be the hardest and the wildest that I had ever experienced – or want to experience again! The soldier had a mule, while I had a horse that looked and acted as though it had undergone forty days of fasting. Eight leagues, or twenty four miles on the way, it was limping badly. We came to a little settlement, Sanja Pyta, where there were quite a few inhabitants. So I visited several houses, telling the people that on my return, the following Tuesday, I would stay for a day, say Mass for them and baptize their children. About nine miles farther on, we came to another little settlement, Rincon de Julio. As I was thirsty, I stopped at a house where I spotted a grove of orange trees. While there, I discovered seven of the household not baptized; one was a girl of nineteen years of age with two children; another girl of seventeen and other children of eleven, seven, four and two years old. So, while I was eating oranges, I instructed the older ones. It started to rain heavily and we had to enter the hut.

By the light of a candle, I baptized all of them. The father and mother of the nineteen year old girl had never been married, having lived together for over twenty years. They were willing, though, so I promised to marry them on the way back. By this time it had stopped raining, so we saddled up our mounts and started on our way. As we rode, I kept telling the people, that on my return I would baptize those that were not yet baptized.

Up to now we had been traveling along the border. Sanja Pyta and Rincon de Julio were half in Paraguay and half in Brazil, with just the road dividing the two countries. At a little past noon we left the border line and entered the woods on the Paraguayan side. Soon we were in the thick of the woods. Although it was only two o'clock in the afternoon, it was so dark that it seemed like dusk. There was only a small, narrow Indian trail, covered at times with dense underbrush and now and then a fallen tree trunk or bamboo. It was hilly, so we were either ascending or descending. At times it was so steep that we had to dismount and lead our mounts. At other times we had to unsaddle them, so that they could pass under a fallen tree. The soldier's mule was stubborn and refused to lead any more so I had to go first and clear the path. Both animals were dead tired, so we had to keep spurring and hitting them to keep them going. I thought that we would never come out of this jungle! We were progressing so slowly, that we could have made better time walking. In fact, I was glad when we had to dismount and walk; it was a rest not only for the horse and mule, but for ourselves too.

It was getting darker by the moment, so I told the soldier that if we did not come to a place to stay, we would have to sleep in these woods. Finally, after four more hours, we did come to an opening. The soldier knew of an Indian hut about two miles away, so we made for it. We reached it about five o'clock. We had hoped to have gone much farther this first day, but there was nothing else to do but stoop here as there was only a half hour more of sunlight and the soldier did not know the way too well.





The Indian treated us as well as his conditions allowed. He had a big hut of straw and thatch. There were two families living in it. Inside there were two fires, with openings in the roof to let out the smoke. The Indian said that he did not have any food, so we ate nothing that night. I asked him for a hammock and he gave me an old home-made affair, dirty and greasy. He tied it up for me outside between two posts and I turned in for the night. The soldier slept on the ground by my side. There was a beautiful moon, but what bugs! There were mosquitoes, baragui, polverin, fleas and moths. I did not sleep very much.

We decided to start very early the next morning, so we arose at about half past four. However the horse and the mule had wandered far during the night. It was past six before they could be found. In the meanwhile, we had breakfast, a piece of mandioca and mate. I played the harmonica, to the delight of the Indians and their children, while the soldier was searching for the horse and the mule. At seven o'clock, we were again on the road. We rode steadily through the hot sun until close to noon, at times through open fields with high grass; at other intervals, hacking our way through dense jungle.

At one o'clock, we encountered the first Paraguayan habitation. I told the woman of the house that we would like to rest our mounts a bit and have something to eat, if she had anything. She went to the fire and prepared one plate with four fried eggs, with a bit of mandioca. Fortunately there were two spoons. Both the soldier and I ate from the same dish. In payment for her hospitality, I baptized her four children; ages nine, seven, five and two years old. She was very grateful and insisted on my taking one milreis, six hundred reis, (in U.S. money, nine cents).

They wanted us to stay the night, because there was a long stretch ahead of us, with hard riding through thick woods, with only four hours of daylight left. But I did not want to spend too many days on the road, insisting on going ahead. It was two o'clock when we left this place. For about an hour and a half we rose through open country with high grass; then we entered the jungle again; same as before, thick jungle. It was the middle of the afternoon, but it felt like night time. We were riding on a thin path; at times, no path at all. The trees were so high and thick, that much of the time we could not see the sky at all. Again, it was all mountainous; we kept climbing and descending. There were fallen trees and rocks all along our path and at times we would ride for half an hour in high grass completely buried, or in thickets that we had to cut our way through.

I ripped my habit to shreds, wearing out my hat, brushing against trees and thorn bushes. Besides, it had rained heavily that

morning, with the moisture still on all the vegetation. We were soaked after ten minutes in this jungle. Sometimes we dismounted, climbed on hands and knees; it was that steep and slippery. Then too, we had an awful time with our horse and mule, which were exhausted and bruised from falling. Our going was very slow and darkness was coming upon us. Half past five and the sun had set, with us still in the thick of the brush.

We could not halt, because there was no place to rest: just trees, rocks and very wet brush. So, with the aid of the moon, which had risen shortly and my flash-light, we kept crawling onward, hardly sure of the way we were going. I will never forget that ride! Tired, wet and sore, we had been mounted since seven in the morning, with only one hour for rest. I started to think of all sorts of things, wondering whether we would ever come out of that jungle again and how the opening would look when we finally did escape. Finally, after two and a half hours of this night of jungle riding, the thick brush started to thin out and we emerged.

What a relief! I felt like throwing myself on the ground and falling asleep!

I think that I would have done so, but the soldier boy – he was only seventeen years old – told me that his sister's house was nearby. At nine o'clock, we reached the house of his sister. What a house! It was dirty, with its inhabitants of the lowest type. Had I known the conditions, I would have slept in the woods. They did try to be hospitable to me, offering me a room, completely window-less. It was dirty, stinking and musty. They arranged a bed for me, with my sweaty stinking horse blanket and gave me an old poncho to use as a cover.

In a few minutes I was covered with bed-bugs. Where they came from, I do not know; it may have been from the poncho or probably from the old cow-skin bed. I got up three or four times with the intention of telling them I would rather sleep outside, but each time, not wanting to offend them, I returned to bed with the determination of going through with it. I did fall asleep for maybe an hour and a half. I had told them the night before that I would say Mass in the morning and baptize any children that were nearby. But when I got up at half past four, I was so disgusted that I called for my horse and started out, at once, fasting, hoping to reach Capitan Bado in time to say Mass there.

There was no more jungle and Capitan Bado was only twelve or fifteen miles away.

After two and a half hours of riding, we came into Capitan Bado. I went to the house of the Majordomo, got the key to the church and said Mass at once, with four old ladies in attendance.

The town is small. I guess that there are only forty houses in it, but there are many people scattered around, in the Colonies, as the people call them. I interviewed the Comisario, spoke to the Judge and principal man of the town, sent out invitations to the several Colonies and that night opened the Mission. Very few attended the first night;

the second evening was better; Saturday night was very good; with the best attendance on Sunday morning at both Masses. I had 50 Communions here, with 65 Baptisms, but no Marriages.

The people in Capitan Bado were more ignorant of their religion and were not accustomed to church. Then, too, the moon was rising too late. They had to come to church at night with lanterns and many could not come because of small children, etc. The name of the church is San Jose (St. Joseph). Saturday, March 19th, was the Feast of St. Joseph, so I announced a procession for Sunday afternoon. The people were delighted. We had a fine procession through the town, singing hymns and reciting the rosary. Then, I closed the Mission with a talk on Our Blessed Mother in Guaraní.

Later, I did my best to get new horses and a guide for the return to Pedro Juan Caballero, by way of Brazil. They had told me that the road through Brazil was better and the distance shorter and more direct. However, I had no luck. I hated to think of the return by way of Paraguay and that jungle. I spoke to the Comisario about this, but the best he could do for me was to give the soldier a horse. The mule that the soldier had used going to Capitan Bado was too spent and could not be ridden again for some weeks. The soldier that the Comisario had placed at my service was a little older than the other. I wanted him to take me by way of Brazil, but he could not, because he was armed with a rifle and a revolver. So there was nothing else to do, but go back through the same path through the mountainous jungle. On Monday morning, March 21st, we started out at six o'clock. I was surprised at the speed we made; our horses were rested and we were rested, plus we had eaten some good food.

The first stretch of jungle was not as bad by day as it had been by night. We made our first stop at the house of the Paraguayan at 12:30. Here we ate the chicken and hard tack given to us for lunch in Capitan Bado. We started for the next place after we had rested a bit. This was the house of an Indian about ten miles farther on. We reached it at four o'clock. It was still early, but we did not dare to go farther, because it looked like rain again and the next Indian house was a long way off. The house of this Indian was like the one at which we had stopped on the way to Capitan Bado. It was a long house with a sloping roof of straw; the sides were of small tree trunks or branches placed closely together, but not covered with mud or anything. The wind and the rain came right through. Inside, they had the usual large fire in the center, the opening in the roof at the top to let out the smoke; with hammocks swung around the sides of the house.

The head Indian treated us nicely. He

strung a hammock for me outside; then while I was resting, he showed me a paper naming him Captain of the Indians of that vicinity. I congratulated him on his exalted position, telling him that I too, was a captain – in my own right. I took a few photos and then regaled the house hold with my ever-ready harmonica. This Indian wanted me to baptize his children. Most of them were over seven years of age. I tried to instruct them, but the task was hopeless; they would not listen to me and they kept running away. So I told him that I would baptize them in the morning.

When it came time to eat, they brought something out to me by my hammock. It was already dark and I was glad. Because the food they brought was dirty; and there were bugs and mosquitoes all over the place and I felt nauseated, I pretended to eat, slipping the food to the dogs and smoking cigarettes instead. After they had eaten, they went inside the tent, while I stayed outside in my hammock, with the soldier at my side. I was just beginning to fall asleep, when it began to thunder and lightning and rain. We grabbed up all our things, rushing into the tapyii (Indian tent). It was quite dark in there; the only light came from the dying embers of the fire in the center. Over in one of the corners of the tent, someone was singing – or rather chanting in a weird tone of voice. He had started this chanting when the thunder and lightning had begun.

No one said anything nor even stirred. By the dim light of the embers I could see that they were all sprawled out, asleep over the floor. The soldier curled up in a corner and said "Good night." So I wrapped myself in my cloak, lying down in the middle of the floor, near the door. I was a bit concerned, because we had not been invited inside. All the while this weird chant was in progress and I was straining my eyes to see who was doing it. I lay there, flat on the ground, when suddenly stretching out my arm, I found that I was lying in a puddle of water; the rain was coming in like a river. I got up, searching for a dryer place. I went over to where the singing was coming from and near the fire for warmth. It was really damp.

My curiosity was at the breaking point. Now I could see more clearly. There was an old Indian – he must have been the patriarch – sitting in a hammock. In his hand, he had a poronga (a gourd, dried, containing seeds) which he shook like a baby's rattle, to keep time with his chanting. Every now and then, he would arise and make some strange noises and motions in the air. I timed him with my watch; for two hours he kept up the chant and gestures, only pausing for a few seconds to spit. I was lying there, right at the side of his hammock, taking it all in. Finally, the thunder and lightning began to fade away. He arose, mumbled an incantation, made signs toward the four corners of the tent, put his instrument away in an old box, then lying down in his hammock. I was glad that it was over; but I was tired, not having wished to have missed any part of the strange ritual. Now I could sleep, as best that I could, half wet, stretched out on the soggy earthen floor.

It was getting colder and damper by this time. I rolled myself in my capa (cloak) and tried to sleep. I must have slept until two or three in the morning. When I awoke the fire was almost out. More rain had entered, putting me once again in a puddle. I moved over, closer the fire, to a dryer spot, lying awake, awaiting day-break and watching. In a short time I saw one of the Indians get up, walk slowly to the fire, put a little more wood on it, squatting there for a while, watching the fire. When he went back to his sleeping place, another Indian got up, doing the same thing. Each put a little more wood on the fire, watched it for a while and then went back to sleep. I suppose that they wanted to keep the fire ignited, so as not to

have to rub sticks together to start another fire.

At about 4:30, they arose, one by one and squatted around the fire, which was now blazing. I arose and squatted with them. Someone went outside, bringing in branches with leave on it. It was Yerba for making mate. One of the Indians kept passing these branches through the fire until they were dried and toasted. Then he put them into a mortar, pounding them into powder. He filled the mate-cup (a "guampa" – a hollowed cow's horn), added hot water and started the mate making the rounds. Up to this time hardly a word was spoken. The mate was the freshest I had ever tasted, but it had a strange flavor. I took two helpings when my turn came, then saying: "aestima ndeve," which is the sign when you have had enough. I smoked a cigarette while they continued to have their mate. Then again, out came the harmonica. They liked it, becoming friendlier and happy. I thought that this would be a good opportunity to discover the meaning of the strange chanting during the night. I asked one of them why the old man sang so much during the storm. He smiled and said: "Jheta onemboe pujhare co tuya" (the old medicine man prayed a lot last night.) I asked why. "Ipochy Nandeyara jhe oplaca vaera ichupe." (God was angry and he had to placate him to drive away the evil spirits.) So, that was the explanation.

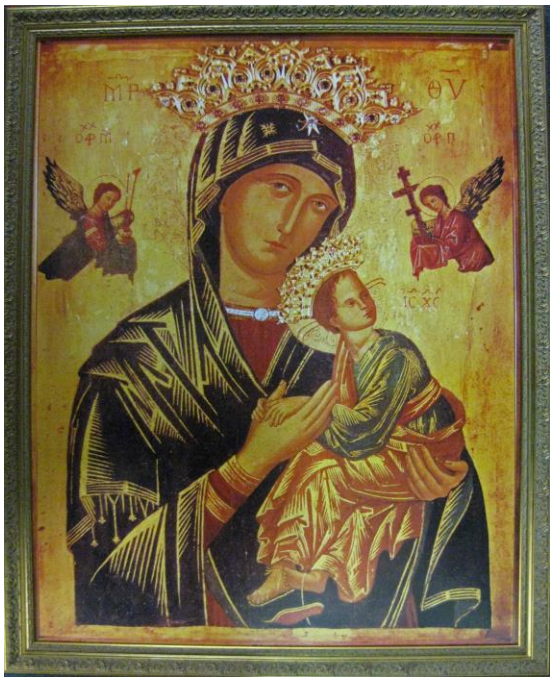
We kept talking; afterwards, I played the harmonica for quite a while. I did not have any notion of the time, as my watch had stopped during the night. Some water or sand must have gotten into the works. I played "Indian Love Call," telling them that it was one of the Indian songs of my country. They seemed interested in that. Then I played "Old Black Joe," explaining to them that it was the favorite song of the Negroes (to them, Brazilians). Then I played "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Mariscal Lopez" (a Guaraní song). They seemed to enjoy them. Finally, I decided that it was time to leave, rain or not. We still had two days of travel before us and I did not want to lose another day, entertaining Indians.

The soldier went out to get the horses, saddled them and we were on our way in the rain. After about two hours, the rain stopped, the sun came out and we dried off again. We rode without stopping until we came to the next Indian house at about four o'clock. It was too late to go any farther, because there was still thick jungle and mountains to traverse. So, we stopped at the same Indian house where we had stopped before on the way to Capitan Bado. They did not offer us anything to eat, so we ate the rest of our hard tack and some brown sugar. When it got to twilight, I requested a hammock, also asking to sleep inside, because it looked like rain. The Indian did not want me to sleep inside, but he finally agreed and let us in. They strung a hammock for me close by to the door.

The next day, we started out again at sunrise. We made good time. When we got to Sanja Pyta and Rincon de Julio, I had to tell the people that I could not stay to say Mass for them, as I had promised. I was already two days late. I had sent a telegram to Bella Vista before setting out for Capitan Bado requesting that a car be sent on Monday. It was already Thursday and I was not yet in Pedro Juan Caballero, where I figured the car would be waiting. So at twelve o'clock, we stopped at a house, asking for something to eat, took a little rest and then continued our journey. It began to rain hard now. The rest of the trip to PJC was made in the pouring rain, reaching there at about 4:30 p.m.

As we head into the Jubilee Year…
Our Lady of Perpetual Help's Miracles

A letter came to the province historian, Father John Byrne, from his confrere Joseph Driscoll, then stationed at Holy Redeemer College in Washington, D.C. Dated January 8, 1935, the letter is a brief notice that a miracle has been attributed to Our Lady of Perpetual Help at a nearby parish. "Dear Father Byrne: I am sending you under separate wrapper a copy of the *Washington Times* containing an account of a reported cure at the Shrine of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in St. Martin's Church, quite close by. I thought you might be interested as this shrine was erected and dedicated by Father Joseph Fitzsimmons of the Ilchester Community and the favor was secured during a Novena preached by him. The shrine is very small but the pastor hopes to make it a place of pilgrimage for those devoted to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. …"



HOME AT LAST!

By Byron Miller, C.Ss.R.

Edgar Degas had a specific place in mind when his friend and fellow painter, Paul Gauguin, was seeking an exotic location in the world, somewhere unencumbered by the strictures of modern life. It was the place where Degas himself had visited in the 1870s: New Orleans. Although Gauguin opted instead to pursue his artistic vision in the South Sea Islands, the recommendation suggests that New Orleans was the appropriate place for Degas when he had desired a change of scenery and direction.[1]

Despite the turbulent postwar conditions in New Orleans during Father Francis Xavier Seelos' time here, this most exotic of American cities was an appropriate place for him in the final year of his life. Moreover, it came in the nick of time when he was in need of a change of scenery, responsibility, and direction!

What factors contributed to Seelos' "sense of place" in New Orleans? Why was he able to be so at home here—and in so little time?

1. *Seelos had no fear of death.* He was a passenger onboard a train that rested peacefully into the New Orleans terminal on the evening of September 28, 1866. Before arriving, Seelos had

already made peace with his imminent death, having predicted that his life would terminate in New Orleans in about a year.

Seelos had actually offered himself for ministry in New Orleans in 1855, just two years after the city's worst yellow fever epidemic. Father John Duffy recounted: "The reason why Father Seelos desired to go to New Orleans in a very special way, and even was prepared to travel there on foot from Pittsburgh if the superiors had permitted it, lay not in any sensual attraction but solely in the circumstance that New Orleans, because of its unhealthy location, because of the very often recurring epidemics of yellow fever, was not particularly beloved by many fathers of the northern states; it was rather feared as an early grave. Others feared what Father Seelos loved it because of his love of mortification, and a life of sacrifice were dominant; and because for Father Seelos death had no terror."[2]

Duffy spoke from personal experience when he acknowledged this aversion to New Orleans by many Redemptorists. His own assignment from Cumberland to New Orleans in 1851 came as a "thunderbolt to him, for like most of the other Fathers who [had] been sent here, he dreaded the place almost as much as death itself. He obeyed as a true religious without murmuring, though he felt the greatest interior reluctance. . . . For a long time after his arrival here, he could not become reconciled with his lot and often expressed his desire to be removed."[3] Years later, Duffy would find it far more difficult to leave New Orleans than he ever did in dreading his arrival.

2. *Seelos had a spirit of adventure.* "This morning, there departed from the diocesan seminary here one of its most worthy members, Francis Xavier Seelos, to leave for North America and there, . . . to dedicate himself for his entire life to the important vocation as a missionary. May the Lord accompany with super-abundant blessing this truly apostolic undertaking of so worthy a follower of the great apostle of India, Francis Xavier, and at the same time, may this example of rare courage and apostolic zeal also inspire many other priests and seminarians, of the clergy of Catholic Bavaria, endowed with the same necessary spirit, to follow in his footsteps. For the words of the Savior still apply to the northern half of America in a special way. 'The harvest is great, but the laborers are few. . . .'" (Communication written at Dillingen, December 9, 1842).[4]

Seelos' primary motivation for coming to America was the urgent need for ministry to immigrants; in doing so, he responded with tremendous courage and self-sacrifice. He also revealed an adventuresome trait in answering the call to be a young missionary in a foreign land.

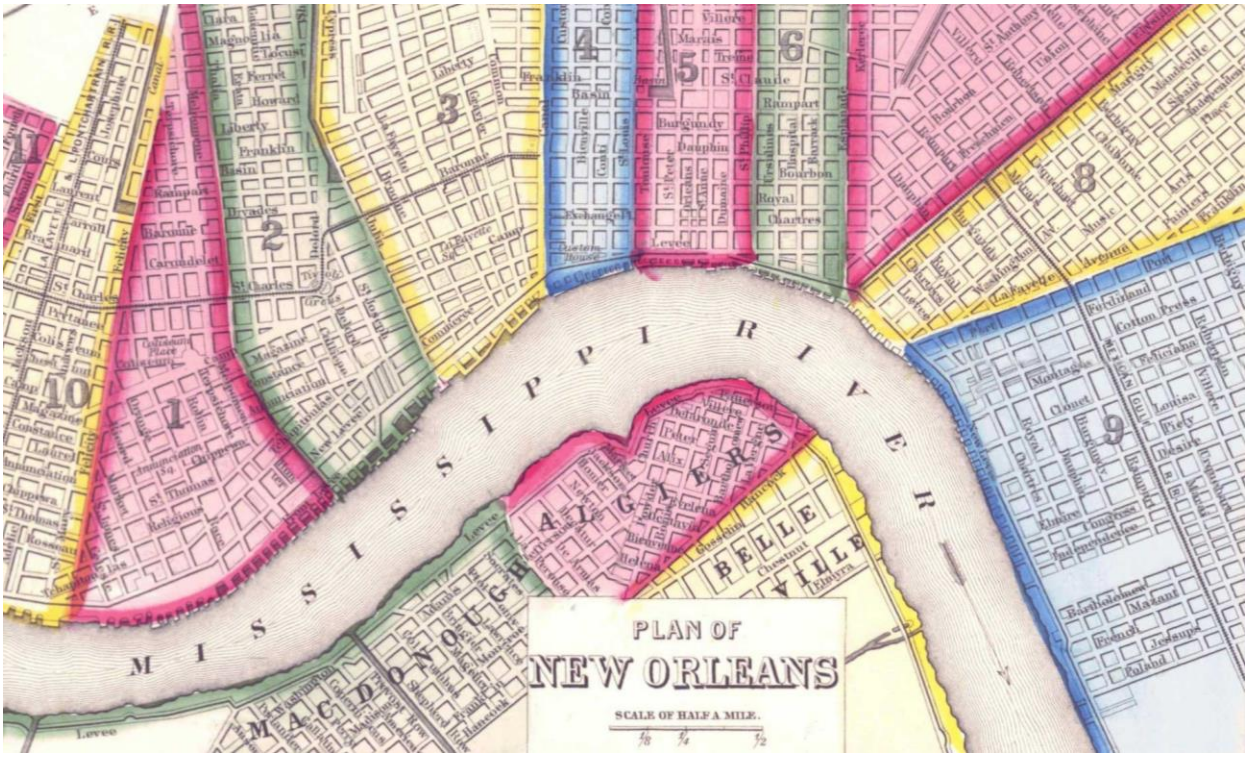
New Orleans: most exotic of foreign cities.

Likewise, self-sacrifice, mortification and fortitude are admirably cited above by Duffy as the dominant reasons why Seelos desired New Orleans. Duffy discounts "any sensual attraction" that Seelos had to the city, but Seelos' own words suggest a fondness for the exotic nature of New Orleans that may have been serendipitous to his primary motivations for being here.

For instance, as a lifelong lover of botany, Seelos was fascinated by his new subtropical environs. "Oh, what a blessed winter as that in New Orleans," wrote Seelos to a Redemptorist in Annapolis on Christmas Day, 1866. "I had no idea though you often told me. And the southern plants!!! The bananas, oh, wisdom of God. Oh, beauty of that creative power which brought into existence such a vegetation. Sometimes it happens to me as to the Queen of Saba, 'and she had no breath any more' for admiration."[5]

Seelos was delighted as a native Bavarian to behold banana plants for the first time; a similar reaction occurred when the Sisters of Mercy initially came to New Orleans from St. Louis in 1869. A Redemptorist historian wrote that upon their arrival, "they were much interested in all the new things about them, notably the food. They had never seen bananas before and one Sister asked how they should be eaten."[6]

Indeed, New Orleans possessed an exotic mystique in Seelos' day. A memoirist portrayed the city in 1859 as "difficult to understand and impossible to describe. 'No place like New Orleans' was the verdict of all who had lived there long enough to know what it was."[7] Moreover, at the time, it was the only city of the American Redemptorist Province located in the deep South; the nearest established Redemptorist foundation to New Orleans was Chicago![8]



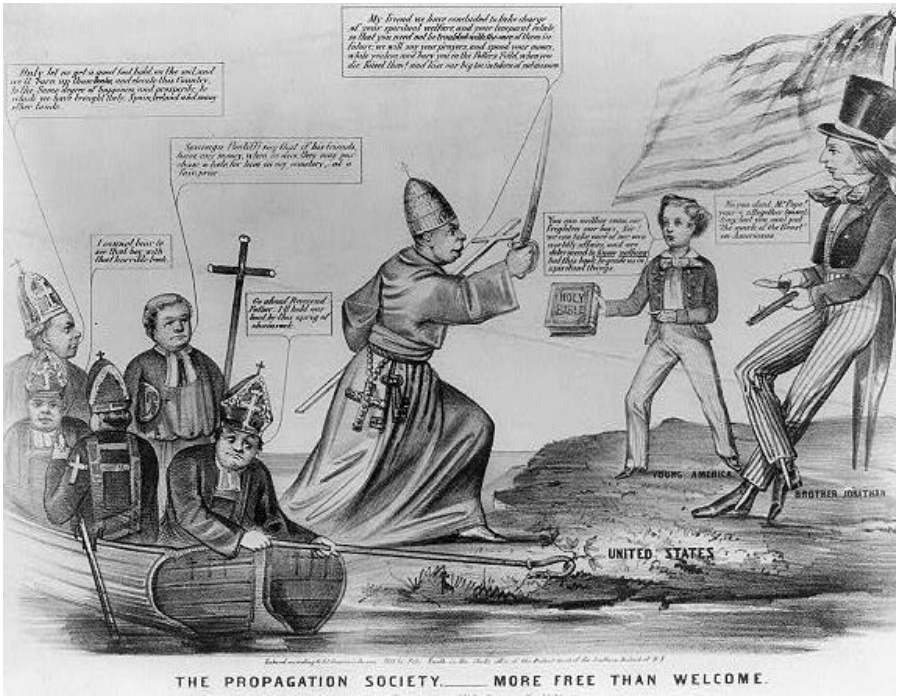
1860 Plan of the City of New Orleans. St. Mary's/St. Alphonsus churches were located just south of the number 10 (at left) at Constance and Josephine Streets.

3. *Seelos identified with the city's Catholicity.* Catholicism permeated New Orleans, but in a less concentrated way than what Seelos had experienced in Bavaria. In the early 1800s, his hometown of Füssen numbered fifteen hundred inhabitants, all but twenty of them Catholic.[9]

When Seelos departed Bavaria to minister to the emerging immigrant Church in the United States, he encountered unimagined hostility directed at him and his compatriots for being both German and Catholic. A foreign-born presence in America, and a native fear of the stranger, gave rise to the Know-Nothing party. The party's animosity was especially aimed at Catholics, of whom many were German and Irish immigrants. At their peak in 1856, the Know-Nothings had elected over a hundred Congressmen, eight governors, and mayors of several cities.[10] Know-Nothing mobs resorted to violent outbreaks and fierce rioting. In an 1855 letter to his sister in Bavaria, Seelos alluded to the nativist tinderbox in Baltimore: "Recently, very much evil has taken root, especially among the middle and lower classes. If it continues this way, I may still be a martyr—which would be a great grace."[11]

Prior to Seelos' arrival in Baltimore, he and the other Redemptorists were already familiar with anti-Catholic disdain in Pittsburgh. When a peace-loving confrere was accosted one night by rowdies, he returned to Europe, after serving just two years as pastor; Father Seelos, only thirty-two at the time, was appointed to replace him. One of his first acts was to erect a wall around the Redemptorist complex as a safeguard against the Know-Nothing rabble-rousers.[12]

While the Know-Nothing party was both anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant in New Orleans at its inception, the religious plank quickly became a thorny issue for local and state members who were required to pledge themselves to do everything in their power to withhold Catholics from political office. At its state convention in



THE PROPAGATION SOCIETY.—— MORE FREE THAN WELCOME.

1855, the Know-Nothing party of Louisiana repudiated the religious plank and reorganized itself. This strategy "brought up the whole question of the relationship between the state and parent organization," wrote Leon Soulé in *The Know Nothing Party in New Orleans*.[13] Louisiana tested its ability to alter national policy when it sent Charles Gayarre, a Creole Catholic, to the New York state convention as a delegate from New Orleans. He addressed the convention: "We are imperatively and unequivocally instructed, gentlemen, not to affiliate with you, if you retain in your constitution and in your oath *the slightest allusion to any religion whatever*. In

relation to the Catholics of Louisiana, I have endeavored to demonstrate to you that they are free from those gross superstitions which you attribute to the church of Rome. . . . We acknowledge no other power in the head of our church than one which is purely spiritual. . . . Louisianians are enlightened Catholics, who would not permit the most distant ecclesiastical interference with politics."[14] Gayarre was refused admission to the convention and the Louisiana delegation promptly withdrew.

Since the Know-Nothings disintegrated nationally around 1856, they would have been of little consequence, regardless of where Seelos ministered in the mid-1860s. Although the Know-Nothings achieved delayed success in New Orleans through the early 1860s, it is worth noting here that they were compromised in part by the city's complex foreign-born reality and Catholic identity—an irony that may not have escaped the likes of Seelos!

4. *Seelos resonated with the city's European flavor*. George Washington Cable, a resident of New Orleans in the 1850s, observed that in most American cities the foreign element were inspired to become Americanized—with the exception of New Orleans, where "the American thought was foreign, and not only foreign but unwelcome." He added, "The American found himself in the minority of a social situation which was more in sympathy with European ideas than those of the New World."[15] Similarly, when Washington Irving visited the city in the 1830s, he concluded that it was "one of the most motley and amusing places in the United States—a mixture of America and Europe."[16]

According to the author Lafcadio Hearn: "It is not an easy thing to describe one's first impression of New Orleans; for while it actually resembles no other city upon the face of the earth, yet it recalls vague memories of a hundred cities. It owns suggestions of towns in Italy, and in Spain, of cities in England and in Germany, of seaports in the Mediterranean, and of seaports in the tropics. . . . I fancy that the power of fascination which New Orleans exercises upon foreigners is due no less to this peculiar characteristic than to the tropical beauty of the city itself. Whencesoever the traveler may have come, he may find in the Crescent City some

memory of his home—some recollection of his Fatherland—some resemblance of something he loves. . . ."[17]

Seelos was twenty-four when he came to America; for the next twenty-four years, he never had the opportunity to see his beloved family again or return to his native homeland. In New Orleans, Seelos may have found the closest resemblance to what he had left behind in Europe. Perhaps he was able to enjoy pleasant feelings of nostalgia and fond memories of home in the last year of his life!

5. *Seelos was no longer a superior in New Orleans.* He wrote to his sister when he was appointed superior of the mission band in 1863, "I love the missions more than anything else. . . . But I'm sorry about one thing: that in this I am again to function as superior."[18] In August 1865, the new provincial removed Seelos as superior of the mission band a year before his arrival in New Orleans, possibly for health reasons.[19] Seelos welcomed the change in status after serving as superior in various communities since 1851.

In New Orleans he was among familiar friends; his harshest Redemptorist critics were now distant in miles and memory. "He certainly was no stranger to the seven Fathers and six laybrothers in the community," wrote Michael Curley in *Cheerful Ascetic*. "The superior, Father Duffy, had been his novice. Father Alexander had received him into the Congregation, gaining Seelos' lifelong esteem. Apart from several lay brothers, Seelos had been superior to all the rest at one time or another. . . ."[20]

"All of the fathers and brothers here who had known Father Seelos as rector and prefect of students at the North often remarked that he seemed much happier than he had ever been before," wrote Benedict Neithart.[21] "He never looked careworn; no responsibilities bore him down; no anxieties clouded his noble brow. His walk was light and elastic; his laughter hearty and ringing; his features as calm as the cloudless sky; his heart a perpetual feast." Neithart added: "At times he could not repress his interior joy, and he would then exclaim, with his hand on his heart: *'Hier ist's gut sein, im lichten warmen Suden als gemeiner Soldat.'* (It's good to be here, in the sunny and warm south, as an ordinary soldier!) I have now made the round of all the houses. Here is my home; here I'll live with a book in the nook. Here I'll rest my bones in the grave, for I think I have wandered enough."[22]

6. *Seelos found contentment in New Orleans.* Strictly speaking, Seelos was sent to New Orleans to replace a member of the community needed at the seminary in Annapolis. According to the provincial, though, Seelos was also selected "because the climate agreed so much with him." Moreover, the provincial "felt that in the confused circumstances of that house he would uphold and promote the spirit of our Institute."[23] These so-called "confused circumstances" in New Orleans were recurring issues created by distinct ethnic groups—not only in three separate church entities, but within one Redemptorist community.

For example, in the summer of 1866, several weeks before Seelos arrived, a major public dispute erupted between the Irish rector, Father Duffy, and the German Saint Mary's Assumption Mutual Beneficial Society. In February 1867 Seelos conducted a mission at Saint Mary's in an attempt to restore unity.[24] The provincial had sent Seelos to New Orleans because of his peacemaking abilities—and evidently, it was a wise decision![25]

In the final year of his life, Seelos wrote, "The work here is even more pressing than elsewhere. . . . Since I am here, I am,

as ever, in fine health and am very content. From home, I received the death notice of my dear mother, but have not yet even been able to answer."[26] And to another, he confessed: "[I]f you would know my continual labors at present, you would easily forgive me for having delayed for so long. I think not to be wrong in believing that I have more troubles now than ever before. But I am at the same time very contented with my present situation, and regret only that I cannot answer the letters even which ought to be answered."[27] Seelos' written words while in New Orleans were consistent with the ones he spoke: "It's good to be here" and "here is my home"—though it appears there was little time for him to "live with a book in the nook."

Despite busy occupations, unique parochial challenges, and news of his mother's death, Seelos seems to have ultimately attained a remarkable degree of inner peace, acceptance of fate, and contentment with life. In the end, when a yellow fever epidemic broke out in 1867, and he was too busy to stop for death, death kindly stopped the train for him. As Francis Xavier Seelos had predicted the year before, he was home . . . home at last!

NOTES

1 Christopher Benfey, *Degas in New Orleans* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), p. 18.

2 Father John Duffy, as communicated to Father Bernard Beck, 1873. (Cf. *Positio*, Part II, Ch. 16, Text 9, p. 1321).

3 *Sketch of the Life of Father John Duffy, C.SS.R. by One of His Pupils and Friends, Now a Priest in New Orleans* (New Orleans: T. Fitzwilliam & Co., 1881), p. 21.

[4] Rudolph Schaflitzel, in a poem of farewell, 1842 (Cf. *Positio,* Part II, Ch. 6, pp. 341-2).
[5] Carl Hoegerl, C.SS.R., ed., *Sincerely Seelos* (New Orleans: The Redemptorists, Seelos Center, 2008), p. 453.
[6] B. J. Krieger, C.SS.R., *Seventy-Five Years of Service* (New Orleans: Redemptorists, 1923), p. 82.
[7] Mary Cable, *Lost New Orleans* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 105.
[8] Thomas Cosgrove, C.SS.R., *Redemptorist Remembrance* (Liguori: Liguori Publications, 1982), p. 33. The Redemptorists began their residency at St. Alphonsus Church, St. Louis, Missouri, on December 1, 1868, after departing that same day from the Old Cathedral where they had held an unofficial pastorate for two years.
[9] Michael Curley, C.SS.R., *Cheerful Ascetic* (New Orleans: Redemptorists, New Orleans Vice Province, 1969), p. 2.
[10] Joshua Wolf Shenk, *Lincoln's Melancholy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2005), p. 146.
[11] Hoegerl, p. 101.
[12] Curley, pp. 73-75.
[13] Leon Cyprian Soulé, *The Know Nothing Party in New Orleans* (Baton Rouge: The Louisiana Historical Association, 1961), p. 66.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 6.
[16] Thomas Ruys Smith, *Southern Queen: New Orleans in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), p. 78.
[17] S. Frederick Starr, ed., *Inventing New Orleans: Writings of Lafcadio Hearn* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), p. 7.
[18] Hoegerl, p. 363.
[19] Curley, p. 260.
[20] *Ibid*., p. 287.
[21] B. Miller, C.SS.R., ed., *Death Where Is Your Sting?* (New Orleans: The Redemptorists, Seelos Center, 2006), pp. 51-52.
[22] *Ibid*., p. 52.
[23] Curley, p. 262.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 292.
[25] *Ibid*., p. 262.
[26] Hoegerl, p. 456.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 463.

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