



Bringing Home the Word

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

August 16, 2026

Build Love, Not Walls

Fr. Joseph Juknialis

In Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall," he tells how each spring he meets with his farming neighbor, and the two of them walk along on either side of the stone wall that marks their property to replace the stones toppled by the ice of winter. His neighbor loves the idea of a wall, inspired by his father's advice that "good fences make good neighbors." Frost, however, is not convinced and keeps suggesting that "something there is that doesn't love a wall," as if walls are not intrinsic to God's creation.

We humans seem to like our boundaries. As children, we divide

ourselves between girl germs and boy germs and draw imaginary lines in the back seats of cars. Later, we build walls everywhere—the Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall, the structures at Mexico's border, backyard fences, and gated communities. We set up national boundaries, build emotional walls, relegate people to ghettos and the "other side of the tracks." We differentiate among religions, arguing over which is God's preference. We seem to use walls rather than love to give us our identity.

Some Scripture scholars suggest that this Sunday's gospel event was a turning point where it became clear that Jesus came to save not only the Jewish people, but all people—believers and unbelievers alike. Seeing the Canaanite woman's faith, Jesus willingly cured her daughter. With God, there are no boundaries or walls—not those of nations, not those imposed by languages and customs, not those we use to divide people of faith. †



***With God, there are
no boundaries or walls.***

A Word from Pope Leo XIV

[T]he pain that moves us to compassion is not the pain of a stranger; it is the pain of a member of our own Body, to whom Christ our Head commands us attend, for the good of all. In this sense, our service is identified with Christ's own suffering and, when offered in a Christian spirit, hastens the fulfillment of the Savior's prayer for the unity of all.

MESSAGE ON WORLD DAY OF THE SICK, ROME, FEBRUARY 11, 2026



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- Have you ever felt isolated by a wall?
- Who built it—you or someone else?

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 56:1, 6–7

Them I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

Romans 11:13–15, 29–32

For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.

Matthew 15:21–28

[Jesus said to the Canaanite woman], "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."



Shrine of Blessed Francis Seelos: A Place of Peace

Fr. Byron J. Miller, CSsR

Francis Seelos was twenty-four when he left his primarily Catholic hometown in Bavaria to minister among German-speaking immigrants in America. He dedicated himself to the life of an itinerant parish missionary preacher in English and German and served in the formation of Redemptorist seminarians. His apostolic labors never permitted him the opportunity to return to his homeland or see his beloved family again. Yet, when Fr. Seelos was assigned to New Orleans, he may have found the closest resemblance to what he left behind in Europe. Perhaps he was able to enjoy nostalgic memories of home when he wrote prophetically about his short time in the Crescent City, "It's good to be here in the sunny and warm South.... Here is my home.... Here I'll rest my bones in the grave, for I think I have wandered enough."

Father Seelos' sacred remains rest in St. Mary's Assumption Church, where he ministered as pastor for the last year of his life. Artifacts at the Seelos Shrine, Museum, and Welcome Center include his cast iron casket, a locket of hair taken

on the day of his death, and his original fifteen-decade Redemptorist habit rosary. Visitors can also experience a spiritual journey with the saint-in-waiting in a specially designed exhibit space called the "Seelos Walk of Life."

Visitors to the Seelos Shrine overwhelmingly sense our Lord's peace even when healings for themselves or for loved ones are not in God's divine plan. One young woman was asked if she was there to give thanks for healing. She replied, "Actually, Father, the doctors have told me there is no more that can be done. I know that my time here is coming to an end. But, yes, I'm here to give thanks because I know now that I'm not alone or afraid anymore. I have the gift of peace through the love and prayers I've experienced here at the Seelos Shrine." ‡

Visitors to the Seelos Shrine sense our Lord's peace.

From "The National Shrine of Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos," *Liguorian*, July/August 2025. For more information, call 800-325-9521 or visit Liguori.org.

Wisdom from Catholic Update

From "Seven Lessons of Mary" by Chris Padgett

Veneration of Mary is a natural consequence of Christology, so how much do we allow this reality to be fully realized in our personal faith journey? You can never exhaust the fullness of what God has done in and through Mary. The more we learn about who she is, about what her yes means throughout history, the more we should be able to reflect a deep devotion. Mary applies to us now in what it means to be a spiritual person. She is present today, waiting for us to go deeper in our relationship with her Son. The more we study and reflect on Mary, the more we understand that she is teaching us how to love Jesus.

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church tradition and teaching on contemporary topics. For more information, call 800-325-9521 or visit Liguori.org.



God of all nations, hear the prayers of your people this day and unite our prayers to those of believers everywhere. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

August 17–22

Monday, Weekday: Ez 24:15–23
/ Mt 19:16–22

Tuesday, Weekday: Ez 28:1–10
/ Mt 19:23–30

Wednesday, Weekday: Ez 34:1–11
/ Mt 20:1–16

Thursday, St. Bernard: Ez 36:23–28
/ Mt 22:1–14

Friday, St. Pius X: Ez 37:1–14
/ Mt 22:34–40

Saturday, Queenship of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Ez 43:1–7ab / Mt 23:1–12



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