

# Vatican will not consider Annapolis healing case

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Vatican experts have declined to consider the case of the apparent healing of an Annapolis woman as the miracle needed for the canonization of Blessed Francis X. Seelos, a 19th century Redemptorist priest who was pastor of St. Alphonsus in Baltimore, St. Mary in Annapolis and Ss. Peter and Paul in Cumberland.

In a Nov. 21 news release, the Redemptorists announced that a Vatican review panel agreed that while Mary Ellen Heibel's disappearance of metastasized esophageal cancer in 2005 was extraordinary, it hesitated to confirm it as miraculous because Heibel died in 2009 of pneumonia – making it impossible to ascertain a “complete and definitive healing.”

Heibel became cancer-free one week after praying for Blessed Seelos' intercession. Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien convoked a diocesan inquiry into the alleged healing and a fact-finding panel investigated the case and heard sworn testimony from Heibel, her primary physician, nurse and other witnesses. The inquiry was completed in 2010 and Redemptorist Postulator General, Father Antonio Marrazzo, submitted the results to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in Rome.

Redemptorist Father Byron Miller, vice postulator for the canonization cause, wrote in a recent statement that Professor Paolo Marchetti, oncologist and medical expert of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, indicated that in order to declare the disappearance of the cancer as complete, immediate and lasting, “it would have been much more opportune to wait at least 10 years from the healing event.”

“This waiting period would have confirmed the disappearance of all the tumor cells,” Father Miller wrote, “giving certitude of a complete and definitive healing.”

Marchetti advised Father Marrazzo not to proceed with the process of the case,

Father Miller said.

Father Miller noted that since Blessed Seelos' 2000 beatification, two "healings of significance" have been compiled for review, one of which was the Heibel case.

"It seems advisable to wait for another case so extraordinary that the third time might be a charm," Father Miller said. "With that said, there are a number of cases on file to revisit in light of this development to see if they warrant further investigation."