

## VIANNEY TOUR BLESSINGS

Dear Friends in Christ,

On August 4, 2009, after overcoming many obstacles, our new drama VIANNEY opened for 2400 people at Saint John Vianney Church in Houston, Texas. Since then I have been traveling all over the U.S. in celebration of the Year for Priests, declared by Pope Benedict XVI, under the patronage of Saint John Vianney. I can honestly say that in 30 years of performing I have never received such an overwhelming reception. Let me share with you some of my wonderful experiences:

In Spring, TX at St. Ignatius Church, before a crowd of 1300, more than 30 Knights of Columbus in full regalia formed an honor guard for the 40 priests and two bishops in attendance. The VIANNEY performance was the centerpiece of a magnificent tribute to the priesthood.

In Kentucky, Bishop Gainer attended every performance to promote vocations. He scheduled VIANNEY in Appalachian rural communities that rarely receive opportunities to see live drama, and in the only Catholic high school in the diocese. Everywhere VIANNEY was performed in conjunction with the Mass, Adoration, and Confession.

At Mount Saint Mary's Seminary in Emmetsburg, PA, VIANNEY was the centerpiece for a day-long symposium on Saint John Vianney, attended by seminarians, religious and lay people from all over the Northeast.

In Chicago, at Mundelein Seminary, a packed theater of 800 people (190 of whom were seminarians) gave a

standing ovation to VIANNEY. Francis Cardinal George, the Archbishop of Chicago who organized this event, told me later that the performance made a profound impression on these future priests. In addition, Cardinal George sponsored another performance for the convocation of 400 priests of the Chicago Archdiocese.



Never before has Saint Luke Productions had the honor to perform for so many priests.

In New Mexico and Arizona, the deep Catholic roots of the people made this tour one of the most heartwarming experiences of the entire Year for Priests. The most moving encounter occurred in Las Cruces, where Father Flores, a beloved priest of the diocese, was on the verge of death after a car accident. The pastor of the Basilica of San Albino asked me to offer this performance for this dying priest, and announced this to the audience. By the end of the show, when John Vianney dies on stage, I was in tears, as was the entire audience. The next day, Father Flores passed away.

Everywhere I went on tour, I would mention that Cardinal George

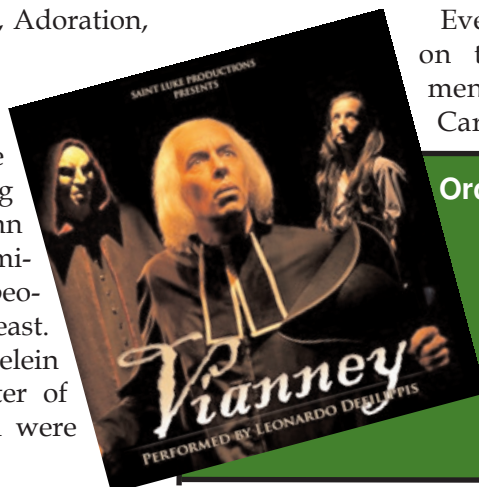
had invited us to perform VIANNEY for the U.S. bishops at their Fall Conference. The people would rise up and cheer. When I finally had the honor to present VIANNEY to the USCCB, the prayers of all these faithful people were certainly with us. It was an unbelievable climax for me to stand before all of these shepherds, and share with them their patron. Thank you to all who made this possible through your generous donations and prayers.

I beg you for your prayers and financial support. This work is expensive, but you cannot imagine the good that these live dramas do in the lives of individuals. I truly believe that the Vianney Movement will bear fruit in a new Advent for the priesthood and our Church. Please give what you can this Christmas season to keep Saint Luke Productions producing new dramas, including a DVD on our live VIANNEY drama, which so many of you are requesting.

God bless your family this Advent and Christmas season,

*Leonardo Defilippis*

Leonardo Defilippis



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# HOW YOU CAN HELP

You know how much we rely on your financial donations - This is your work too! I consider all of our benefactors as the "Behind the Scenes Production Crew" on all our live and film dramas. Please give whatever you can, especially your prayers. If we all join together we can accomplish so much! Here are some of our current needs:

- \* **VIANNEY TO ROME:** (\$30,000) Help us bring VIANNEY to the Holy Father as a gift from the people of the U.S. and Canada at the close of the Year for Priests in June 2010!
- \* **WEBSITE OUTREACH:** (\$5,000) Have you seen our beautiful new website? Your donations made it possible! Now we need to implement Phase II, which will allow us to make changes regularly in house, rather than through a programmer. The internet is the best way to spread the word about our ministry.
- \* **VAN:** We are driving a 1997 Dodge cargo van, and it is showing its age. Perhaps you can donate a more recent model for our touring productions.
- \* **SPONSOR VIANNEY FOR THE POOR:** (\$17,500 for a five show tour) With your financial help, we are able to offer poor communities lower fees, so that they too can enjoy live drama in their own community. Every little bit helps!

## SAINT PHILOMENA BROUGHT TO LIFE By Janice Gonzalez

*"My children, Saint Philomena has great power with God, and she has, moreover, a kind heart; let us pray to her with confidence."*

These words of Saint John Vianney's demonstrate his remarkable confidence in a young Roman girl of the 1st Century. In fact, the Curé of Ars, as he is commonly known, attributed many of the miraculous occurrences of his ministry to her intercession and friendship. The touching relationship between Saint Philomena and the Curé of Ars is a central theme of our new drama VIANNEY.

"The story revolves around three characters: John Vianney, the Devil, and Philomena," explains Leonardo. "At first, Philomena's part was small, but I gradually began to see the crucial role she played, not just in Vianney's life, but in the dramatic structure of the production. The Devil is a truly terrifying personage, and a powerful presence in the play. I felt that it was necessary to balance his influence of discouragement and despair with the gentle, encouraging innocence of this young girl, who throughout the play constantly reminds the priest to trust in God. She ended up becoming a vision of goodness contrasted with evil."

Incorporating a young female char-

acter presented a challenge for Leonardo, who, with white wig and ragged cassock, bears an uncanny resemblance to the distinctive and eccentric-looking Curé of Ars. In order to incorporate other characters into the drama, innovative technological elements were added to the production, with a rear projection screen integrated into the set. There various characters appear on film, interacting with the actor on stage.

Keeping things in the family, the role of Philomena is played by Lucy Defilippis, Leonardo and Patti's 13 year-old daughter. The young actress knew little about Saint Philomena, but grew to love her through the course of filming the role. "She's like my sister now," says Lucy. "I'm very close to her. I see her as very strong and brave. It was really fun to be in front of a camera. It was a very spiritual experience also, because the lines I said were messages for me, not just for John Vianney. I hope that other people will be able to learn from the words she speaks, as I did."

Just as Philomena encouraged John Vianney, Lucy was a support to her father, Leonardo, throughout all of the arduous rehearsal period. Ever faithful,

she spent hours going over his lines, and she never let him lose hope. "When I think about it, Lucy was a little Philomena to me in more ways than one. The entire family got involved in the heat of the production, but she was my constant help and support."

Little is actually known about Saint Philomena, but her reputation as an intercessor before God is remarkable. Early in the 19th Century, the remains of a young girl were found in the catacombs of Rome with the broken clay inscription, "pax tecum Filumena," or "Peace to you, Philomena." Devotion to this young martyr, for that is what she appeared to have been, spread like wildfire, and miracles associated with her intercession abounded. The Curé of Ars formed an intense devotion to the saint, and built a shrine in her honor.

Says Leonardo, "It is our prayer that modern audiences will realize that in the beauty, innocence and purity of Saint Philomena is a role model for our young people to imitate. Through this production, Philomena is speaking to many people and they are falling in love with her, especially the priests, seminarians and youth. We are grateful for her intercession in the production of VIANNEY. She's a powerful saint for our times."



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# FAMILY REFLECTIONS by Patti Defilippis

In my early years as a mother, I poured over books on parenting, hoping to glean, not perhaps a whole philosophy, but a few useful hints on how to handle the challenges of raising young children.

But all these books never prepared me for my role as the mother of adult children. Don't get me wrong - I have wonderful, faithful, resourceful and independent grown-up kids and I love moving into the stage of adult friendship with them. But I would have thought that once they were launched, I would have detached, and I suppose I have to a certain extent, for I know that I can do no more than listen, advise and pray. I really don't know all the answers, and I can't control the situation. Because of this, I find myself stumped and worried and

anxious about their issues, with no power to change the situation. They are on my mind so much of the time, for I love them and care about them so much. Finally, though, in the midst of a sleepless night of reworking the issues over and over, I remember the obvious solution. "Oh, that's right! There is God! He will have to handle it all for me." After so much wasted energy, I turn to prayer. And then I can sleep.

I look upon this new stage as a blessing. Because I have been graced with such a happy family life, it is easy to take God for granted. With my worries about my children's lives out in the world, their momentous decisions about colleges, careers, relationships, and vocations, my

prayer life has changed, and taken on a new urgency and made me see how completely dependent I am on God's mercy.

And when my prayers for these dear ones are answered, I am reminded over and over again of Who is responsible for these graces - It is certainly not me.

So I ask God's merciful intercession for all of our children. In the end, all the parenting methods we so carefully try to adopt, and

so often fail to implement, are not really the point. We all have failed to a certain degree, and the prayers and sacrifices we offer for the ones we love so much are the most powerful way that we can help them on their journeys. May God grant us the grace to never give up on our children's salvation.



## MEET THE LIVE DRAMA COORDINATOR

*Karissa Burt came to Saint Luke Productions originally as the technical assistant, touring the country with our live Thérèse production. Since then she has become an invaluable member of the Saint Luke team as the tour coordinator for our live dramas. Many of you have spoken to her on the phone, but here she is to tell you a little about why she finds this work so fulfilling, and how young people can make a difference in our world.*

**Why do you think our mission of evangelizing the culture through theater and the media is important?** It is incredibly important to meet people where they are. These days, most people aren't able to pay \$50 to go see a professional play in a theater, so we bring the theater to them. Most of our productions take place directly in the church with all of the elements of the expensive play, without the high expense. They get to experience an intimate encounter with Christ and His saints, right in their own parish.

**As a young person, what do you feel about the future of the Church?** I see an uprising about to happen.

Teenagers these days want to change the world; they just don't know how to right now. It is important for us to express to them how it can be just as exciting to be a priest, a nun, a mother or a father as it would be to become a rock star, and much more fulfilling! If teens and young people only recognized how much they could change the world just



by being part of Christ's army, they wouldn't be searching for other ways to be known.

**What is the most important influence in young peoples' lives**

**today?** I have always felt that parents have the most influence on their children's lives, no matter how old they are. Parents have such an awesome opportunity to witness to their children how Christ loves them, and how they will never ever go wrong if they do everything for God's glory. Before young people are even introduced to other kids, teens, or young adults, their parents are the first ones to make an impression on their lives.

**What do you find the most rewarding aspect of your work?**

I love working with people from all across the country and every walk of life. They each have their own stories to tell about what St. John Vianney or our other plays have meant to them. I've also been incredibly blessed to have worked with several bishops and vocations directors from about 40 dioceses to help them bring the amazing story of VIANNEY to their flock.

**Why do you think that young people are finding VIANNEY, the story of an eccentric looking old man who lived 150 years ago, inspiring?** I think it is understandable that young boys would find Saint John Vianney an exciting role model, because he presents the priesthood as an exciting adventure. But young girls are drawn to making a radical commitment to Christ, as well. He shows us all a different kind of life than the materialistic one our culture presents - one that demands sacrifice. There is a hunger in my generation for meaning and purpose. We don't want compromise; we want to experience the true joy that only a life completely given to Christ can provide.

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# THE MAKING OF VIANNEY

by Leonardo Defilippis

This past year, Saint Luke Productions' office and studio were filled with a whirlwind of activity as we prepared to launch our new production, VIANNEY. So many elements to

coordinate! First and foremost was the script - I spent countless months researching everything I could get my hands on about the Curé of Ars, and immersing myself in his own writings.

What kept emerging was the battle over the soul of John Vianney - he was constantly and physically attacked by the devil, and the temptations to despair that he experienced seemed to me to be particularly dramatic and relevant to today's audiences.

The most challenging aspect of this production was how to perform the story as a one-man show. Since John Vianney has such a distinctive eccentric and recognizable look, I knew that I would be unable to switch characters as I have done in all my other live productions. Faced with this dilemma, I came up with the idea of creating a multi-media

piece, with characters appearing on the screen and interacting with the saint.

So this summer we engaged a cameraman, a costumer, a make-up artist, a wig specialist, a photographer, and more than forty

local actors and volunteer extras, who descended upon our studio for 4 four days of intense filming. Lindsay Younce, the young actress who played Thérèse in the film and who now is

married with three children, played the narrator of the play. We invested in the best professional editing system, and for the first time the entire project was accomplished in house, for we edited the music, voices and video all on our own computers. For the music, composed by

Randall DeBruyn and my daughter Clara,

who wrote the Philomena theme, we engaged a couple of music orchestrators, who electronically, with the use of instrument samples, created the effect of a complete orchestral score.

The process of creating the look of John Vianney was particularly interesting. I tapped into my theater contacts to hire Sue Sittko, the best wig maker in the Northwest, to hand-tie a white long haired wig. Rather than

use

human white hair, which is naturally old and brittle, she made the entire wig out of yak belly hair from China! The costumes for the play were built by Alisha Engle, a designer from the Metropolitan Opera, who came and stayed with our family for two weeks to complete the

sewing. My wife Patti spread Vianney's cape out on the front lawn, spraying it with brown and gray paint, to create a worn and aged effect.

Then there was the set - we needed to build not just one, but two sets to travel the country at the same time, in order to reduce shipping costs. This structure needed to be extremely portable and relatively lightweight, and it needed to incorporate the projection system. By the grace of God, we learned of a state-of-the-art rear projector, which, because of a system of mirrors, only needed to be 18 inches behind the screen. This was essential, since many of our performance spaces are very limited in the depth of the stage area. Our set consists of three aluminum tubing structures, covered with black fabric attached with Velcro.



**Wig & Make-Up Specialist, Sue Sittko with Leonardo as Vianney**



**Narrator Lindsay Younce and Director of Photography, Carl Vandervoort**



**The Girls of La Providence Vianney's School for Abandoned Children**

For three weeks, Monica Mountain, seamstress extraordinaire, bent over her machine sewing Velcro on huge black panels. My concept included creating a sense of the rooftop of the church at Ars, which John Vianney restored. Again by God's grace we came upon an accomplished set painter, Loren Hillman, who spent an entire week painting the three canvas tops of the structures in a perfect recreation of the Ars skyline.

We finally got to Houston, and when the audience laughed and cried and stood up at the end of our first

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# THE MAKING OF VIANNEY Continued



**Recording voices for VIANNEY**

miraculous creative power. Everywhere I go I see the faith of the people deepened and renewed. I can't really convey to you how many miracles happened in the course of this production. It has been, and continues to be an incredible journey, and I want to thank all of you who have contributed, because your prayers and financial support are really touching souls - especially mine!



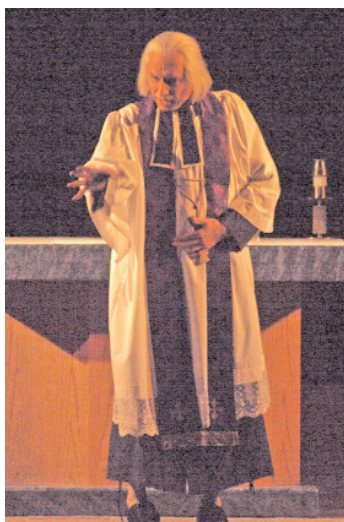
**Townpeople against Vianney**

performance, I was filled with overwhelming gratitude to God for his

## VIANNEY AT USCCB FALL ASSEMBLY

VIANNEY was a main event at the annual Fall Assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) on November 16th in Baltimore. The turn-out for the performance was remarkable - on the first night of a very busy conference schedule, VIANNEY was attended by 56 bishops and cardinals. The performance was presented as a gift to the U.S. bishops by Catholics from all over the country.

"Donations to cover the cost of the production flowed in from adults, children, nuns and priests who wanted to let their spiritual leaders know that despite all the negative publicity concerning the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, they love their bishops, their priests and the example of sacrifice that John Vianney embodied," explained Leonardo.



powers in conflict with the grace of Christ, which is the key to that battle...I think the play brings it home to priests...We have many administrative problems and we have this and that to deal with in the Church, but in the end it is about the story of sin and grace as seen in this drama."

The reaction to VIANNEY from other bishops was equally enthusiastic. Bishop Robert W. Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph remarked, "It was very inspirational, very moving. Humanity was touched by divinity in this man, and we hope it will bear fruit in this Year for Priests." Bishop Daniel E. Thomas expressed his excitement over the upcoming tour in December to his Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Several bishops remarked on the production's potential for encouraging a new appreciation for the priesthood as a

way of life. "It's a wonderful way in which people who are considering a religious vocation might pray to this saintly man and ask him to open their hearts as his heart was open to God, so that they too might serve for the people of God, as he so admirably did,"

commented Bishop James A. Tamayo of the Diocese of Laredo.

As the first ever live dramatic production offered at the USCCB Fall Assembly, VIANNEY is a vital part of a movement of renewed enthusiasm for the priesthood that is building



across the country. For many years, priestly vocations have declined, but a new

generation of young, faithful Catholic men is embracing the radical commitment to Christ that the priesthood embodies. In addition, laypeople are hungry for the sacraments, and for examples of holy commitment. This new energy and excitement are fueling the phenomenal audience response that the VIANNEY drama is receiving



all over the U.S., and it is our prayer that the performance for our bishops

will spread this new enthusiasm to every corner of the Church.

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# WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING



*"What a wonderful show Vianney is! The decency, the humility, and the charity of Saint John Vianney have been burnished to glow like jewels. I laughed, I cried, and I left deeply inspired by Leonardo Defilippis' moving portrayal of an extraordinary man. Vianney is an unforgettable combination of both the effortless genius of an actor and the ingenious effort of a saint."*

**John B. Thompson**  
**St. John Vianney, Brookfield Parish Coordinator**

*"A very moving performance of Vianney by Leonardo Defilippis - God has provided a great blessing and inspiration for this production, which I am sure will inspire young men to enter the priesthood and seminary and also strengthen and inspire priests to follow their vocation by the example of the great Curé of Ars."*

**-Most Reverend Thomas Paprocki, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago**

*"Vianney totally loved and trusted in the Lord, in the most dark and seemingly hopeless of circumstances. And the grace that flowed converted the hearts of a multitude of souls! So, I am inspired and filled with hope that in all my failures and abandoned plans, the Lord can work His miracles. What a joy to know that!"*

**-Becky Griffio, Hillsboro, Oregon**

*"The life of the parish priest of Ars moved the seminary community and inspired us to imitate his love for God and the people he served. The Church, and in particular priests, owe a debt of gratitude to Defilippis for highlighting the wonder of the priestly vocation."*

**-Very Reverend Dennis J. Lyle, Rector/President, Mundelein Seminary**



*"What an amazing production and what a heart for God! I just KNOW that he [Leonardo] is doing the 'Johnny Appleseed' thing for vocations. Dropping 'seeds' for the priesthood all over the country."*

**-Meg Mac-Rhyann, Columbia Gorge, Oregon**

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