

Please read or memorize for audition video for Saint Luke Productions

## **TOLTON AUDITION PIECES**

Please read or memorize for audition video for Saint Luke Productions. (Either is acceptable, but memorization is very helpful.)

Below you will find four audition selections, which cover some of the qualities we are looking for in an actor who could take on this challenging role.

Please prepare 1. Tolton Audition Narrative, and at least one of the other pieces. It would be great if you could prepare these with the camera being only one of many “audience members” to whom you direct your words. We would like to get the feel for your ability to talk to a room full of people, so direct your attention to several different points in the room where you perform. Treat it as a theatrical (if intimate) performance, rather than a film one. A one person show is unique in that the audience really does play a role in the drama, and much of your performance is directed to them, since there are no other characters on stage. Show us how you connect with people in telling a story.

Thanks again for taking the time to prepare these pieces. We pray that it will be a contemplative spiritual experience for you to perform them for this audition.

### **1. Tolton Audition Narrative**

*The purpose of this particular piece is to see how you work with a dramatic scene involving movement, changing characters, and building of tension towards a climax.*

Every hour in the day we could hear the whip going. The day before we escaped was the last straw. The overseer tied Eleezy up – and whipped him with a hickory switch. He used to get great bunches of these switches and hang them up in his house to dry, and then take five or six at a time and wear them out, and send for more. He would whip till he was tired and then sit down on a stump, and when rested begin again. His son-in-law came over from his plantation to help him whip Eleezy. He was very strong, and could strike harder than the old man.

My mama was with me when this happened, and she started to cry. “Augustus,” she said to me, “I don’t care what happens, nothing is worse than this. Charley and you and Baby Ann and me, have to escape.”

Lots of people felt this way. But things were different for us – we were Catholic, and we knew that the Blessed Virgin would be with us, and that God would not abandon us.

Late that night we stole away from the farm and headed for the Mississippi River. Mama carried the baby -actually we took turns, but I was only 8 and I couldn’t hold her too long - and we had a long way to go. During the day, Mama worked in the fields with other slaves we met along the

way, while we slept. At night we trudged through Ralls and Marion County, living on potatoes that we dug up from the fields. We finally reached Hannibal on the 3<sup>rd</sup> night.

There we sat, on a log by the side of the river. We was dead tired, but Mama said, “You know it’s not us that got us this far, and if we make it across that big river it’ll be a miracle.”

“Hail Mary, full of Grace, the Lord is with thee,” we started to pray. Suddenly we heard the sound of gunshots – and worse – dogs!

“Mama, mama, I’m scared!”

“Hush child, pray!”

We stayed hidden in the bushes, afraid to breathe. Then Baby Ann let out a wail!

“What’s this? Lookee here boys!”

They dragged us out, and it looked like the end.

But then, like angels coming down from heaven, we saw Union soldiers approaching.

“Take your hands off them! You’re in federal territory now. We’ll take care of these runaways.”

They smuggled us onto a little dilapidated rowboat, and pushed us into the mighty Mississippi. Mama had never rowed a boat before, but row she did, and as we zigzagged across in the dark, we heard the angry voices of those Confederate soldiers yelling on the shore.

Bullets whizzed by our heads. Charley and I crawled into the bottom the boat. That’s when our mama showed what she was made of. Courageously she rowed, and with each stroke she repeated her prayer, “Hail..Mary...full... of Grace, ... the Lord... is with thee.” Over and over again.

“Jesus... I ... love.. you... save... your ...children.”

When we made it to the other shore, she finally broke down and cried. We slept by the side of the river, in Illinois, the promised land. We were free.

That night, I knew I was called to something special by the Lord. I didn’t know then what it was, but soon I figured out that I was called to be a priest. This was impossible, but no more impossible than my mama, a black woman and a slave, carrying her children to freedom. It’s not the strong who prevail; it’s the weak who give everything to the Lord. That’s why I stand before you today, a priest of God, and that’s why I will never stop pouring myself out to bring people from slavery of sin to the true freedom of the children of God.

**2. Speaking at the very first Catholic Colored Congress in Washington DC in 1889, Father Tolton told his audience:**

The Catholic Church deplores double slavery – that of the mind and that of the body. She endeavors to free us of both. I was a poor slave boy but the priests of the Church did not disdain me. It was through the influence of one of them that I became what I am tonight. I must now give praise to that son of the Emerald Isle, Father Peter McGirr, who promised me that I would be educated and he kept his word. It was the priests of the Church who taught me to pray and to forgive my persecutors. When I was admitted to the College of Propaganda I found out that I was not the only black man there. There were students from Africa, China, Japan and other parts of the world. The Church which knows and makes no distinction in race and color had called them all. When the Church does this, is she not a true liberator of the race? She has colored saints – St. Augustine, St. Benedict, St. Monica. She is the Church for our people.”

**3. Father Tolton addressed the gathering of the First Negro Catholic Congress 1890:**

Many years had passed and we seemed to care for nothing. After we heard of many things being done in other lands we asked, why can we not have one of our people to say mass and to administer the sacraments? I heard the words of St. John “prepare the way of the Lord” and God gave me strength to persevere, for Rome had heard that no one of us could be found here to preach the gospel. I rejoiced when I heard that I was to be sent to America. God is over us all, and he has many blessings for men of every race. When on the eve of going to St. John Lateran to be ordained, the word came expressing doubt whether I would be sent here. It was said that I would be the only priest of my race in America and would not be likely to succeed. All at once Cardinal Simeoni said “America has been called the most enlightened nation; we will see if it deserves that honor. If America has never seen a black priest, it has to see one now. Come and take an oath to spend your whole days in your own country. If you do not send me a candidate in two years, I will come and condemn you.” I am glad that several were sent before the expiration of two years. If I could spend my life among you, I would be glad, but then you might get tired of me, for priests are compelled to tell men of their faults, and sometimes people say, ‘I wish they would go away.’”

**4. Quoting again the June 5, 1891, letter he wrote to Mother Katherine Drexel:**

“One thing I do know and that is that it took the Catholic Church 100 years here in America to show up such a person as a black priest. That is why there are so many now extending their hand to get a lift. In the whole history of the Church in America I can’t find one person who has sworn to lay out their treasury for the sole benefit of the colored or the Indians. The South looks on with an angry eye and the North is criticizing every act I make. They watch me the same as the Pharisees did our Lord. Despite the stir there will be in this country as I

begin my church, I shall work and pull at it as long as God gives me life for I am beginning to see that I have powers and principalities to resist anywhere and everywhere I go. The world is indeed a great book and I have read many of its pages. When I have anything to give I will give it right off but God has destined my life to be this way and I must be contented.”