

# TOLTON Opens!

By Leonardo Defilippis

*"They'll tell you can't do it. But I tell you what. If God wants something to happen, it'll happen."*



*Saint Luke*  
PRODUCTIONS

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That's what Mama Tolton tells her son Augustus in our new drama, *Tolton: From Slave to Priest*.

God does amazing things when we trust in Him. Often, while working to produce *Tolton*, I felt like the task was impossible.

After all, Father Tolton's story is, in a certain sense, foreign to me, a White man living in the very White Pacific Northwest. Could I tell it with authenticity?

with authenticity?

Yet I knew the story of America's first Black priest needed to be told, and that for some reason, God had chosen Saint Luke Productions to do it. So we jumped in with confidence.

Augustus Tolton never gave up, and neither would we.

As we developed the show, I had a revelation: The real essence of

Father Tolton's story is the communion that we share in



**Augustus Tolton never gave up, and neither did we.**

the Body of Christ. I began the script with the prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of John: "That they may be one, as we are one." This became the key to *Tolton*. True unity, reconciliation, and forgiveness can only be found in Christ – that's what Father Tolton lived and preached.

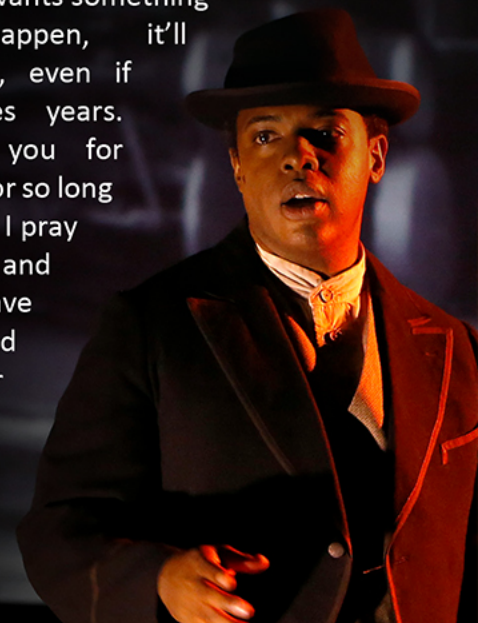
On opening night at the DuSable Museum of African American History in South Chicago, powerful performances by Andrae Goodnight on stage and the actors on the video screen brought life to the words that I

wrote. The audience rose spontaneously to give them a standing ovation, and I was amazed and touched to see how the Holy Spirit had created something beautiful and genuine. *Tolton* resonates with Black and White audiences alike.

If God wants something to happen, it'll happen, even if it takes years.

Thank you for

praying and sacrificing for so long to make *Tolton* happen. I pray you get to see this play, and that it brings a new wave of conversion and reconciliation for our families, our country, and our world.



**Praise for Tolton**

**NOW BOOKING**



***“Mama Tolton is a treat for this production.”***

“I found *Tolton* to be a wonderful statement of faith and perseverance. The script is excellent, laced with the right passages from the Scriptures to keep it grounded in Tolton's faith. Mama Tolton is a treat for this production. She is fantastic. She provides the feminine contribution to this faith saga as a pillar of stamina to inspire her son. In fact, all the actors are authentic. Andrae is marvelous. He lives the Tolton part very well. I believe he was meant for this part. The performance is so rich in telling this compelling story. People were genuinely moved – they had never seen anything like it.”

**Bishop Joseph Perry**  
**Archdiocese of Chicago**  
Postulator for the Cause of Fr. Augustus Tolton

# Tolton

## From Slave to Priest



**Want to see TOLTON?**

**You can make it happen!**

**Call us at (360) 831-4500 to reserve your date.**

**[www.toltondrama.com](http://www.toltondrama.com)**

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In 2017, you helped us reach:

**48,638**

**22**

**167**

People

in

States/Provinces

at

Live Shows

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# TOLTON Miracles

Look what God did through  
your generosity and prayers:

## The Perfect Mama Tolton

Elissa Sanders flew here from Atlanta, and on the first day of filming when she started to sing, dressed in her ragged slave costume, “Steal Away to Jesus,” many of us started to cry. God was so good to send us such a beautiful voice and such a beautiful spirit, to bring Mama Tolton to life!



## An Irish Priest Who Won't Give Up

Michael Lee, the actor who plays Augustus Tolton's mentor and friend, Father Peter McGirr, auditioned via Skype, and traveled from Branson, Missouri to play this important role. He had us all laughing and crying with his performance as this feisty Irish priest.



## The Heavenly Musical Soundtrack

Tony Manfredonia, a gifted young composer in Michigan, poured his heart and soul into this project, giving us a fully orchestrated musical soundtrack based on four Gospel spirituals that run as themes throughout the play. So beautiful!



## Father Tolton Brought to Life

An actor, a convert to Catholicism, and the father of six beautiful kids, Andrae Goodnight knows Father Tolton's heart. In a tour-de-force role that would overwhelm many actors, he brings great depth and prayerfulness to his portrayal of Father Tolton.



**These are only the miracles  
you, the audience, can see.**

Behind the scenes, there were countless hours of work by the Saint Luke Productions team that made *Tolton* possible. We are eternally grateful for their sacrifice and dedication.

**By Patti Defilippis**

Well, it finally happened. Our youngest went away to college in August, and the nest is, theoretically, empty.

I say theoretically, because as soon as our daughter left, our home filled up with actors who lived with us during filming and rehearsals for *Tolton*. Every day we had the entire cast and crew eating lunch in our kitchen, and even now we have Saint Luke people staying with us off and on between tours. So the house isn't actually empty.

But it's really different. Leonardo and I have had some evenings to ourselves, and when he's on the road, sometimes I'm all alone. I find myself asking,

*As soon as our daughter left, our home filled up with actors.*



"What does this next phase of life look like?" Of course, I'm still busy with our work, but I also have some free time, now that *Tolton* is launched. Yet, with so many things I want to do around the house, I feel like I'm often wasting time in the evenings.

I have been writing this *Family Reflections* column for 25 years, and as I reread some old newsletters, I am struck by how I am still dealing with many of the same spiritual struggles. Maybe now that things are quiet, I can actually devote myself not just to accomplishing more around the house (although that would be nice) but to silence and prayer. After all, I no longer have as many distractions. Help me, Lord, to spend my time with You.



Our office manager/chef Dorothy Gill fed the entire cast and crew in my kitchen.

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**\$60\***

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**Meet Our Stage Managers**



Sean Hanus and Elizabeth Broeder are vital members of our touring teams. They took some time out of their busy travel and performance schedules to talk about how these shows have impacted them.

**Elizabeth:** Thérèse experienced profound feelings of doubt, helplessness and inadequacy. She has given me consolation, since her words remind me that I always have the option to operate from a place of love for the glory of God.

**Sean:** It is often difficult to stand up for our beliefs in today's society. Father Tolton teaches me that although we may be persecuted for our faith, through peaceful perseverance, we can still have a powerful impact on the world.

Meet Sean and Elizabeth at upcoming shows near you! Check out our calendar online to see where our touring teams are headed this season.

# Playing *Faustina* Changed Me

After four years on tour and 313 performances as Saint Faustina, actress Maria Vargo has retired from the role. Here are her reflections on portraying this saint:

*Faustina* was more than a show for me; it was a living, breathing prayer! With each performance, I got to fall more deeply in love with Our Lord and offer him my desires and struggles, my joy and anger.

In my life and in this performance, I've learned that Divine Mercy is life-changing, life-giving, and soul-saving. I've seen it, I've heard about it, and I've lived it.

You see, almost 10 years ago I had a deep conversion in my life. I've always been strong-willed and I had been living life according to what I thought was best for me. After heartache, physical and emotional issues, and a series of beautiful encounters with the Blessed Mother and the mercy of God, in 2008 I renewed my abstinence in the baths at Lourdes.



***I've seen it, I've heard about it, and I've lived it.***

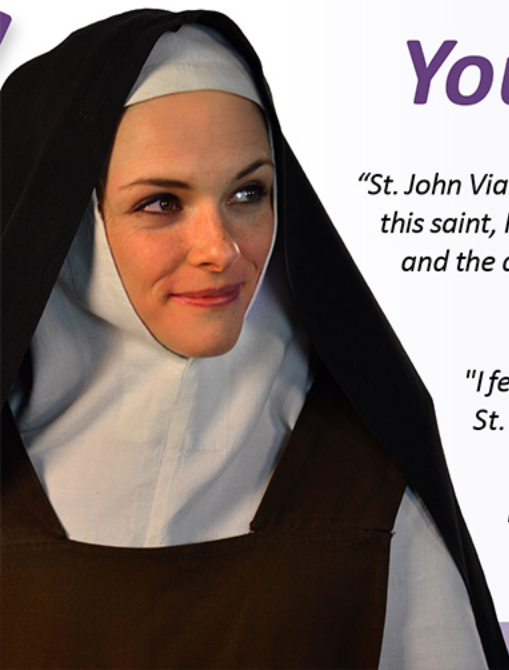


For the first time I felt truly free! I felt the beautiful mercy of God, that He loved me in spite of all my mistakes and forgave me.

That's what made playing Saint Faustina even more powerful. Because I knew the depths of God's mercy for me and had turned my life over to Him, He used my past sins in an amazing and beautiful way – I was a witness to the world of His unending love and mercy.

Now, as we get ready to release *Faustina: Messenger of Divine Mercy* on DVD, my prayer is that the love

I feel for Saint Faustina and for Our Lord and His Mercy comes shining through the screen. I pray that all those watching will discover the power of Divine Mercy and the Chaplet, and that there are many, many more conversions.



## Your Gift Brings Hope

*"St. John Vianney has been my favorite saint since high school (1956.) When I saw your production of this saint, I was hooked! I have seen Maximilian and Faustina and the impact they have had on me and the audience is extraordinary! I can't wait for your future productions."* ~ Sugarland, TX

*"I felt tonight's performance was very profound, and touched me very deeply. I appreciate St. Thérèse even more because of this performance. Thank you for offering it."* ~ Livonia, MI

*"This was just what I needed to keep going, to evangelize amidst a culture so hostile to God, to embrace the crosses."* ~ Orange, CA

# Let's do this!

We're so close – your gift will get us over the finish line.

Thank you! Because of your prayers and support, this year we've produced the *Wisdom of the Saints Rosary CD*, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine CD*, the *Thérèse Drama CD*, and our new live play, *Tolton: From Slave to Priest*.

Now I need your help more than ever.

In June we filmed *Faustina: Messenger of Divine Mercy* for DVD. Now we have to edit the movie, enhance the musical soundtrack, design the packaging, and duplicate the DVDs. All this will cost about \$25,000.

Many of you have given so much already for this project. But we've still got a ways to go. I'm praying you can spare \$100 (or more, or less, whatever you can manage) to get us through this final stage of production.

Let's do this! Together, let's complete the *Faustina* DVD so it can touch all those who don't know how much God loves them.

In Christ,

*Leonardo Defilippis*

Leonardo Defilippis

P.S. Thanks for sending whatever you can, dear friends. Your trust fills me with hope.



**"We want others to experience these dramas."**

**Why we Give**

*When I first saw Maximilian, I was immediately taken by the beauty and intensity of the performance. It was incredible to me that a one-man drama could have such a profound effect on me. Now my wife and I support Saint Luke Productions because we want others to experience these dramas. As parents, we see them as such a great opportunity to introduce our children to art and the saints, and to let these saints teach our children about God and His love for them.*

~ Andreas & Silvina Grothues  
Cypress, CA

Thank you, dear Grothues family!

Donate online at: [stlukeproductions.com/donate](http://stlukeproductions.com/donate)

