

Leonardo Defilippis Will Perform VIANNEY in April Dramatic Presentation of St. John Vianney in New Ulm

On Thursday, April 29, 2010 7:00 PM at the Church of Saint Mary in New Ulm, renowned stage and film actor Leonardo Defilippis will present his performance of VIANNEY. VIANNEY tells the story of St. John Vianney, a parish priest who served the people of Ars, France. This year, the Church celebrates the Year for the Priest, and this is one of the ways our diocese will celebrate.

The play tells the story of St. John Vianney (1786 – 1859) whose exemplary life was so remarkable that the Pope has named him the patron of this Year for the Priest, and will declare him the patron of all the priests of the world in June of this year.

“I think we are ready for a breath of fresh air, a celebration of all the good, faithful priests who give their lives for their flock,” says Defilippis. Francis Cardinal George, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and archbishop of Chicago met recently with Defilippis, and supports Defilippis and his tour. “The Year for Priests was proclaimed by the Pope,” says Cardinal George, “in order to help all of us revisit what the faith tells us a priest is and to encourage ordained priests in their lives of service and dedication.” Defilippis believes that through VIANNEY audiences will be inspired to a deeper holiness and appreciation of the mystery of the priesthood.

Leonardo Defilippis, who not only performs the role of Vianney is best known for his direction and starring role in the feature film *Thérèse*. VIANNEY, his latest production, incorporates lights, sets, costumes and an original musical score and utilizes state-of-the-art multimedia technology, which projects characters and images on screens behind the sole actor on stage.

Since August, Defilippis has toured places like Houston, Seattle, Philadelphia, Sante Fe, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison. Dioceses, seminaries, parishes, and Catholic schools have already sponsored VIANNEY. The enthusiasm is not just contained nationally, with requests pouring in from as far away as Singapore.

“John Vianney is without doubt one of the greatest shepherds in Church history,” states Defilippis. VIANNEY focuses on the Curé of Ars, as he is commonly called, as he begins his life as a priest in 1815, following the chaotic time of secularization and anti-religious sentiment during the French Revolution. He perseveres against tremendous resistance. Vianney succeeds not only in reforming the lives of his parishioners, but also in drawing hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to the tiny parish in Ars. He is well known as a great confessor reading the souls of his penitents.

There is no cost for this performance, but a free will offering will be collected to defray the cost of this production. Seating at the Church of Saint Mary will be at a first come first serve basis. The Church is accessible to those with disabilities. A social sponsored by the parish’s CCW will follow the performance.