



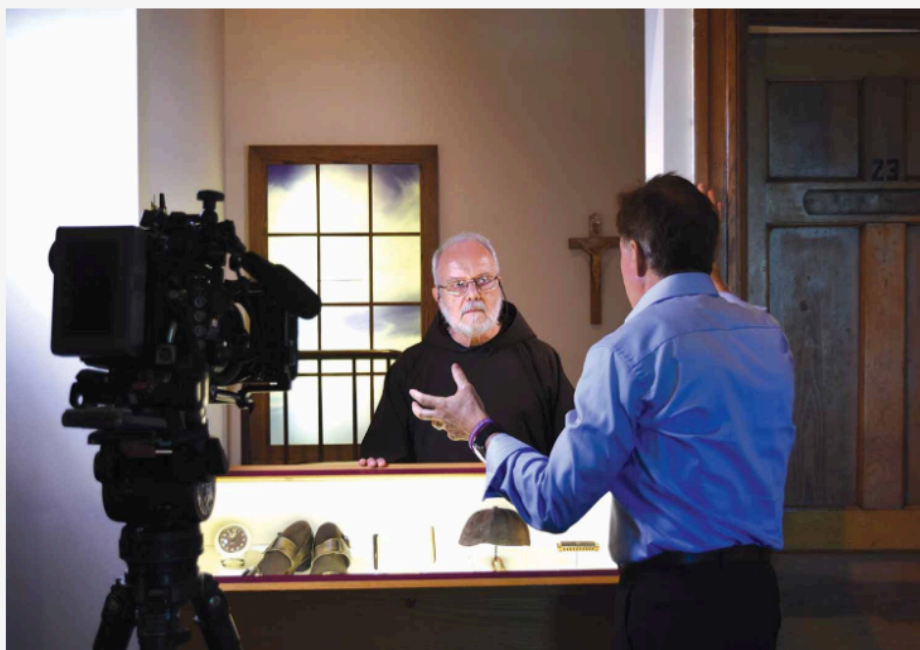
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FATHER SOLANUS CASEY, LOCAL NEWS

Local filmmaker shooting documentary on Blessed Solanus for PBS

by Daniel Meloy • June 29, 2018



Bro. Richard Merling, OFM Cap., stands in a recreation of Blessed Solanus Casey's room at St. Bonaventure Monastery during a film shoot for Keith Famie's documentary, "Blessed Solanus Casey's Journey to Sainthood," to be aired on PBS in 2019. Dan Meloy | The Michigan Catholic

Wixom – Lights. Camera. Solanus.

Approaching the first commemoration of Blessed Solanus Casey's feast day, a local filmmaker is setting out to shoot a documentary on the beatified friar with hopes of airing it on PBS. Keith Famie of Wixom, a chef-turned-documentarian, is in the process of shooting "Blessed Solanus Casey's Journey to Sainthood," a comprehensive look at the life of Bernard 'Solanus' Casey and his path to holiness.

"The goal is to tell Solanus Casey's journey to sainthood, examining the path one takes to get to sainthood through the lens of this Detroiter," Famie said. "We'll not only be telling the story of Fr. Solanus Casey, but also the Capuchin friars, what kind of life Bernard Casey led, and how it was that he came to Detroit."

The story of Blessed Solanus' life has already been told through numerous personal accounts, newspaper stories, short films and books. But Famie wants his documentary to approach Fr. Solanus' story in a new way, creating a narrative that is accessible to Catholics and non-Catholics alike.

"The final message of the film will be a reflection of how we as humans treat each other," Famie said. "What can we learn from Solanus' life as a human being and how he treated other people? He was not only a spiritual brother and priest of the Capuchin order, but a person. In today's world, we can use that kind of messaging and story more than ever."

Famie is the executive producer and director of Visionalist Entertainment Productions, a Wixom-based operation established in 1997 that has won nine Emmy Awards. He is currently working on “Those on the Front Lines of Alzheimer’s” in addition to his newest production the life of Blessed Solanus.

Famie’s interest in creating a documentary on the porter of St. Bonaventure started with his interaction with another famous Detroiter – Art Van Elslander.

“It was Art who called me, wanting me to work on his (Van Elslander’s) life story and shoot a documentary,” Famie said. “I was at his house, talking about his life, and he explained to me the impact Solanus Casey had on him.”

Two weeks after that meeting, Van Elslander passed away, halting the documentary in its tracks.

“For two days I was obviously frustrated. I had this great vision for a film, but I woke up one morning and said, ‘We weren’t supposed to tell his story; we were supposed to tell Solanus Casey’s story,’” Famie said. “I never would have thought of telling Solanus Casey’s story if it wasn’t for Art Van, who took me down this path of doing research on Solanus’ life.”

After doing research, Famie drew an outline of what he wanted the documentary to cover, everything from Blessed Solanus’ life and miracles to the story of the Capuchins to what it means for the Roman Catholic Church to recognize a miracle necessary for beatification.

Famie and his team plan to shoot material in Wisconsin, New York, Minnesota, Detroit and Rome.

“Our goal is to retrace the footsteps of his life,” Famie said. “We want to go to as many places as possible, talk to as many people as possible. We’re even looking into getting an actor to act as Solanus.”

Famie so far has interviewed Bro. Richard Merling, OFM Cap., co-vice postulator of Blessed Solanus’ canonization cause, at St. Bonaventure Monastery, shooting scenes from Fr. Solanus’ tomb and items the beatified friar had during his time in Detroit.

“There is a peacefulness about Bro. Richard,” Famie said. “We were so busy about setting things up and focusing. But as the day wore on, we had some really nice, quiet moments. There is a certain calmness about him, and I became more calm the more time I spent around him.”

Famie and his team have already completed the trailer for the documentary and hope to have the entire film shot and produced in 2019, to be aired on Detroit Public TV.

Visit solanusjourney.com to view the trailer to the documentary.



Famie



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