

Liberace bio films at Palm Springs parish

PALM SPRINGS—Art imitated life last month when a Hollywood film crew came to Our Lady of Solitude parish in Palm Springs to recreate the funeral Mass of the late entertainer Liberace.

A lifelong Catholic, Liberace maintained a residence across the street from the parish and producers of the forthcoming HBO movie “Behind the Candelabra” said they had wanted to film in the church because a funeral Mass for Liberace had taken place there after his death in 1987.

“From the inception of this project, we’ve had two priorities: getting it right creatively and getting as many people as possible to see it,” said Academy Award winning director Steven Soderbergh (“Traffic,” “Ocean’s Eleven” and “Contagion,” among others).

The movie stars Michael Douglas as Liberace, who pioneered a musical amalgam of classical, show tunes and pop and was known for his extravagant wardrobe,



BEHIND THE CANDELABRA A film crew led by Academy Award-winning director Steven Soderbergh (standing center) recreates the funeral Mass of the late entertainer Liberace at Our Lady of Solitude Church in Palm Springs. Liberace, a lifelong Catholic, maintained a home across the street from the church. “Behind the Candelabra” costars Matt Damon, Dan Aykroyd, Debbie Reynolds, Scott Bakula and Rob Lowe. Damon, Aykroyd

and Bakula were in the scene filmed inside Our Lady of Solitude on Aug. 21.

Father John Kavcak, M.S.C., pastor of Our Lady of Solitude, appears briefly in the scene as the priest celebrating the funeral Mass. It was Fr. Kavcak’s first exposure to the world of movie making.

“It was very enlightening as to how many people are involved,” he said. “It’s like an orchestra coming together.”

The cast and crew had to contend with customary triple digit temperatures and unusually high humidity during the shoot, particularly in the second scene, set outside the church. More than 150 “extras” packed Alejo Road to recreate the crowd that had gathered outside Our Lady of Solitude in the wake of Liberace’s death. The street was lined with 1980s era TV vans and police cars. Some curious onlookers braved the summer swelter in hopes of catching a glimpse of the actors.