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Vescovo Buonarroti Art Brings Michelangelo's "La Pieta" Masterpiece to Millions in U.S.

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ALEXANDRIA, Va., Sept. 21, 2010 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- A full-sized replica of Michelangelo's La Pieta—the stunning sculpture depicting Mary cradling her son Jesus Christ after his crucifixion—may soon be on exhibit near you as part of a newly launched nationwide U.S. tour of the piece by Vescovo Buonarroti Art, L.L.C ("Vescovo"). St. Mary Catholic Church in Alexandria, Virginia, was chosen as the second tour stop in part due to its historic significance and beauty. It will remain on display there through November 2010. Subsequent stops are now being booked. Vescovo was granted the exclusive worldwide license by the Vatican Observatory Foundation to create and distribute the official replica of Michelangelo's masterpiece.

"We are excited to have La Pieta at St. Mary's," says Rev. Fr. Dennis Kleinmann, pastor of St. Mary's parish. "We hope that this inspired piece of sacred art will elicit greater devotion to the Blessed Mother, patroness of our parish, and to her Son."

In the heartfelt words of a parishioner: "I went by the church and saw the La Pieta...I have never seen one so beautiful or magnificent. You could actually feel Mary's pain while viewing this sculpture. It was the first time in a long time that a religious piece has made me cry...I do not believe I have seen that many people before any of the other statues in all my years of attending church there..."

The U.S. tour is one of several Vescovo-sponsored worldwide tours of the sculpture, which began at the Cathedral of Saint Paul in Minnesota—the National Shrine of the Apostle Paul—in February 2010.

While at St. Paul, thousands came to view this magnificent piece. Many attended special talks sponsored by the Cathedral. Others made a private visit on their own or after Mass. Ultimately, the Cathedral couldn't part with the sculpture and purchased it outright, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor.

"This is one of the greatest sculptures ever created and it has inspired countless visitors who see it at St. Peter's Basilica each year," says the Very Reverend Joseph R. Johnson, Rector of the beautiful Cathedral of Saint Paul. "To have the first replica during the Lenten season has a special significance."

"Since it was first unveiled on Ash Wednesday 2010, many hundreds of people came to view it each day," recounts Tim Schindler, [director](#) of operations at the Cathedral of Saint Paul. "Since then thousands of tourists and pilgrims have visited the statue."

"The Pieta has a profound impact on those who come to see it," continues Mr. Schindler. "The awe and reverence in the faces of our visitors when they look upon this work of sacred art tells of the power of the sacrifice represented so magnificently in marble."

Each full-sized La Pieta replica is cast using a proprietary marble blend, the results of which are said to be faithful in both detail and subtlety to Michelangelo's original. After casting, it is painstakingly hand-finished by master artisans, ensuring faithful intricate details of the original, including the nuanced folds in Mary's garments, limp muscles in Jesus' body, and Michelangelo's personal signature on the delicate sash that runs across Mary's body.

"One of my greatest joys is to quietly witness the awe and spiritual impact that this piece has on people—no matter what their faith or circumstances," says Steven Bishop, founder of Vescovo. "I still remember the first time my [family](#) experienced La Pieta in Rome. We were speechless, just taking it in, surprised by its size, and captivated by its detail and by the enormous tenderness of the scene it depicts."

"Due to [security measures](#)," adds Mr. Bishop, "visitors can't get close to Michelangelo's original sculpture. The contemplation of its grandeur and meaning takes place approximately 30 feet away and through bullet-proof glass. Our exhibit is different; accessible and intimate. For some, it's a life-changing moment... To bring this moment to people from all walks of life—people who may never be able to get to Rome—this is a true honor and joy for me!"

Each public exhibit lasts for 30 to 60 days, sometimes extending up to 120 days, and is free of charge. An exhibit location must cover only the average \$1,400 cost for one-way transportation.

"The mission of Vescovo," explains Mr. Bishop, "is to bring this most perfect and poignant sculptural treasure ever created to churches, [academic](#) settings and other organizations worldwide, and thereby to improve the human condition through a masterpiece that has the power to truly touch our souls."

Tour stops are added weekly. For more information on Michelangelo's La Pieta, or to book a location, contact Vescovo (www.LaPieta.com) at 888-62-PIETA or via steve@LaPieta.com.