

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

The Weight of the Empty Cross

George Xanthis, Vanessa Benavente, and Noah James on The Chosen Season 6

On the Texas set, the actors who play John, Mother Mary, and Andrew talk about organic connection, the limits of understanding, and the moments that will stay with them forever.

Interview by Paul Salfen and Ronald Paul Salfen · AMFM Magazine



Jonathan Roumie as Jesus in The Chosen Season 6. The season streams on Prime Video beginning November 15, 2026; the theatrical film The Chosen Crucifixion opens March 12, 2027. Photo courtesy of 5&2 Studios / Prime Video.

The heat advisory is real. Texas in the middle of a production day for The Chosen Season 6 does not care that the cameras are rolling or that the story being told is two thousand years old. Inside, on a set that has been rebuilt so many times the seams have disappeared, George Xanthis, Vanessa Benavente, and Noah James sit in what turns out to be Caiaphas's office. None of their characters have needed to be here before. The desk looks suitably scheming. The feeling, they say, never gets old.

"It's still such fun to be here every single day," Xanthis notes, "for the most part. Even though we're in the middle of a heat advisory in Texas, it's still fun, right?"

The three are the faces audiences have spent five seasons learning to recognize as John the Apostle, Mother Mary, and Andrew. Season 6 is the one the series has been building toward: the final twenty-four hours of Jesus of Nazareth. Streaming begins November 15, 2026 on Prime Video with a three-episode premiere; the season culminates in a standalone theatrical film, The Chosen Crucifixion, on March 12, 2027. The hour has come.

THE DISCIPLE OF LOVE



George Xanthis as John the Apostle. Photo courtesy of The Chosen / 5&2 Studios.

Salfen asked the man who plays John about the proprietary attitude that sometimes flickers when the character is with Jesus—the sense that this is the apostle Jesus loved. Xanthis is careful with it.

“I’m very fortunate that from season one, Jonathan and I had a really close relationship,” he says. “I’m not sure exactly how that title comes into it. And I think it’s important that I kind of don’t ever consider that because that could maybe force the performance to try and match the title.”

He points out that even in the Gospels, James and John seek titles, seeking to sit at the left and right hand. “So I kind of put that out of my mind. Instead, there’s this organic movement towards becoming this disciple of love.”

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— George Xanthis

The friendship is real. In Los Angeles they lived a few blocks apart. They watched movies, grabbed dinner, did karaoke. “All those things come into it. Connection is natural.” What audiences see, he says, is John starting as a Son of Thunder and growing into the compassionate disciple of love. The constant between them is Jesus’s teachings and friendship.

HOW MUCH DID SHE UNDERSTAND?



Vanessa Benavente as Mother Mary. Photo courtesy of The Chosen / 5&2 Studios.

The question for Benavente is quieter and harder. When did Mary understand who Jesus really was?

“Well, I mean, it’s hard not to think that she had it from the beginning,” she answers, “especially considering how the news was about her. An angel appeared to her.” She pauses on the practical side of the work: simple decisions in a scene depend on how much the character knows. “But the question really is how much did she understand? Not how much did she know.”

Did she understand all the consequences? That people would still be talking about her journey two thousand years later? That her son was going to change the world? “I don’t know that she had that understanding, but definitely she has to have known that this was not just... maybe I dreamt it. Maybe this didn’t happen. You know, like, it’s hard not to think that way.”

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— Vanessa Benavente

HOLDING THE CHARACTER LIGHTLY

Out in the world, people sometimes approach the actors as their characters. Noah James, who plays Andrew, speaks to the responsibility and the necessary release.



Noah James as Andrew. Photo courtesy of The Chosen / 5&2 Studios.

“There’s definitely this sense out in the world that, yes, people do sometimes sort of bring that with them when they see us. But you sort of have to let that go, not just because obviously I am just Noah, the human being out in the world.” He recalls moments of confusion when someone looks at him as if he is only the character. “But I think also in the making of the show, because it’s sort of getting ahead of yourself and people are thinking about these characters at the very end of their lives. And we’re not there yet.”

They have to be the people before the history books. James mentions a small speech in Season 2 in which Andrew looks at himself from the outside: how could I be a hero of our people’s history? I’m a normal person. “I think a lot of people, famous people from history, probably felt that same way. And so you don’t want to portray them at the end when they have reached the zenith of our understanding of them. If you don’t let that go, you can’t ever really be present in the moment that they’re in doing the things that they’re doing. Then it’s just too much weight. It’s unhelpful. But we do want to be as respectful as possible in the coming to the characters.”

THE MOMENTS THAT STAY

Before they wrap, Salfen asks each for a standout moment from this season—the one they will always remember.

For Xanthis, it is the crucifixion. “You know, I even talk about an instance where because of Jonathan’s makeup, he’s in makeup three hours at the beginning, three hours at the end, ten-hour shoot day. We’ve got him for four hours. So a lot of times we don’t have him. And so we had an empty cross that we were performing to. And even that is an image that hits, you know, hard. So yeah, definitely the crucifixion for me.”

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— George Xanthis

James points to the disciples left in utter shambles. “Honestly, very in a state of disorientation is putting it mildly. And there are some of those without going too into it yet—there are some moments that when we’re shooting that kind of scene all day long, and you really are looking into the eyes of your friends and family members, really, that you’ve been filming this for so long and realizing that we are coming to the end of the journey, it’s something that I definitely will never forget.”

Benavente also lands on the crucifixion, but more specifically on what happens when the cameras stop. “Just when the cameras would stop rolling and somebody would be struggling to kind of get over the scene that we just shot and we had to be there for them. Like, those are the moments for me that are just very special and that just give me goosebumps to this day because it was almost like we were all there for one, you know, just someone needed help and everyone just flocked. Those are the type of moments that I just think my lucky stars because it’s very rare to find that in a TV show.”

It sounds spiritual, someone offers. “Yes. Yes, absolutely.”

They thank the interviewers for coming to the set. It has been an honor. Outside, the Texas heat continues. Inside the story, the hour is already underway.

FIND THE CHOSEN

Season 6 streams on Prime Video beginning November 15, 2026 (Episodes 601–603), with weekly episodes through December 6. The Chosen Crucifixion, the two-hour theatrical film, opens globally in theaters March 12, 2027. Seasons 1–5 available now on Prime Video and The Chosen app. Learn more at thechosen.tv.

Interview conducted by Paul Salfen and Ronald Paul Salfen for AMFM Magazine, October 2026.

Paul Salfen is Managing Editor of AMFM Magazine and a veteran interviewer of film, television, music, and sports figures. He is the author of Going For It!, a collection of Hail Mary moments from the artists and athletes he has spent two decades putting on the record. Ronald Paul Salfen joins him on this set interview.