

For Immediate Release

Benedict XVI Institute Names Award-Winning Bay-Area Composer Frank La Rocca as its First Composer-in-Residence

Commissions new "Mass of the Americas" for St. Mary's Cathedral

San Francisco, Calif – October 4, 2018 – Benedict XVI Institute, a project of the Archdiocese of San Francisco headed by Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, proudly announces the appointment of our first Composer-in-Residence: award-winning Bay-Area composer Frank La Rocca.

"In bringing in Frank La Rocca as our composer-in-residence, we are able to further our mission to offer practical resources for more beautiful and reverent liturgies and promote a Catholic culture of the arts in an extraordinary new way. We're very grateful to Frank La Rocca for his faith, his gifts, and his willingness to build sacred beauty in the Bay Area and beyond," said Maggie Gallagher, Executive Director.

La Rocca's first project, personally commissioned by Archbishop Cordileone, will be to compose the new Mass of the Americas at the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption to take place December 8, 2018. The "Mass of the Americas" will be an innovative sacred music composition: a tribute to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (the patroness of the United States) *and* Our Lady of Guadalupe (patroness of both Mexico and all the Americas) in celebration of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

"This is the first commissioned Mass composed for the cathedral since Joaquin Nin-Culmell composed a setting for the dedication of the cathedral in 1971," said Christoph Tietze, the music director for Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption. "It is a great occasion in honor of Our Lady, and a fitting tribute for the 25th anniversary of the Cruzada Guadalupana." (<http://www.cruzadaguadalupana.org/>) The Mass of the Americas embraces both Spanish and English as well as older languages – Latin and Nahuatl (the language of the Aztec people and the language in which Our Lady of Guadalupe spoke to St. Juan Diego).

"We are very honored to have a composer of his talent coming to the Benedict XVI Institute," said Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, "Frank La Rocca's Mass of the Americas will be a fitting tribute to Mary, who draws together people of diverse cultures and races and unifies us in worship of her son, Jesus Christ."

"It's an honor to work with Archbishop Cordileone and the Benedict XVI Institute," said Frank La Rocca. "The Mass of the Americas was a very challenging and stimulating project, blending Mexican folk hymns with sacred polyphony, and incorporating Spanish, Latin, English and Nahuatl (the Aztec language in which our Lady of Guadalupe spoke to St. Juan Diego)."

About Frank La Rocca

Yale and Berkeley trained, La Rocca spent years finding his niche and reconciling his desire to create from his soul and move away from the modernist style taught to him in college. His faith journey, coupled with his professional training, moved him to adopt sacred music and Gregorian chant as a key inspiration for this work. Frank La Rocca's innovative sacred music has been compared to Arvo Part in the way he creatively combines the ancient sacred music tradition of the Church with modern composition techniques. Composer Kurt Knecht describes La Rocca's work as, "exquisitely beautiful, expertly informed by tradition, unmistakably modern, lush, and gorgeous."

The recent winner of the ORTUS international choral composition competition, **Frank La Rocca** was named a 2018 American Prize winner for his "A Rose In Winter – the life of St. Rita of Cascia," a major work for chorus, orchestra and soloists commissioned by Alfred Calabrese, Director of Music at St. Rita's Catholic Community in Dallas. La Rocca has received grants, commissions and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, the Foundation for Sacred Arts, Young Women's Chorus of San Francisco, Diocese of Oakland, California State University, ASCAP Foundation, USC Thornton Chamber Singers, Vanguard Voices, London Festival of Contemporary Church Music, Cois Cladaigh, and many others. His work, [Diffusa Est Gratia](#), was toured by the renowned London Oratory School Schola Cantorum in Fall 2017 in Boston, New York and Washington, D.C. His CD [In This Place](#) (Enharmonic Records) reached the top ten in classical CD sales on Amazon and was a 2013 "Critic's Choice" at American Record Guide. His catalog includes works in all genres, with an emphasis on *a cappella* sacred choral works. He is published by Boosey and Hawkes, Walton Music, Santa Barbara Music and Lumen Verum Music.

Praise for Frank La Rocca's Work

Fanfare wrote about Frank La Rocca's work: "The California-based composer, for over 30 years professor of music at California State University, East Bay, writes music unmistakably inspired by liturgical chant and the masters of the Renaissance and Baroque but filtered through a musical sensibility informed by the works of 20th-century modernists: *beauty ever ancient, ever new* very literally." *The American Record Guide* dubbed La Rocca's work "a wholly original artistic synthesis."

"[Frank La Rocca] is someone if you don't know who he is, you need to know who he is. A contemporary, classical composer whose music is so clearly informed by renaissance polyphony but his harmonic language is so new. It's his voice -- it's a fresh voice," exclaimed Richard J. Clark, currently Director of Music of the Archdiocese of Boston and the Cathedral of the Holy Cross on Catholic TV.

"If you are wondering what is missing in the immense sea of feckless notes swimming around on all those pages, I can tell you one answer. Listen to the opening passage of Frank LaRocca's setting of *O Sacrum Convivium*, and you will immediately hear the Old World craftsmanship that you have been longing for. It's almost as if Josquin and Bruckner had a 21st century baby...It's that rare work of art that is at once modern and timeless. This is music worth singing, and it has a good chance of being around a lot longer than all of us will," said Kurt Knecht (<http://kurtknecht.com/bio/>).

About The Benedict XVI Institute For Sacred Music and Divine Worship

The brainchild of Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone (who serves as Chairman of its board), the Benedict XVI Institute's unique mission is to throw open the door of beauty to bring people closer to the healing presence of God. We do this through two great strategies: providing practical resources for more beautiful and reverent liturgies and by energizing a Catholic culture of the arts.

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