

Rekindling Your Spirit Retreat Team ~ St. Simon Parish ~ October 27-28, 2023



Francesca LaRosa

Francesca is a Catholic composer and singer-songwriter. She knew from a young age that she wanted to devote her life to Jesus and music. She started playing piano at Mass with her dad at age nine, where she felt a deep peace singing for the Lord. In high school, she started composing Christian music, which became an integral outlet for her emotions.

Realizing that there were not a lot of word for word Psalm responses, she decided to attempt writing her own, where she opened the sacred text and asked the Lord to play through her hands. This began her journey of the Psalm Project, where these melodies, through prayer, captivated her heart. She knew she needed to share them.

Francesca graduated from Ball State University with a degree in Music Education, desiring to use her gift of teaching to evangelize the Word of God through music. After graduating, she worked as music director at her home parish in Indianapolis, where she taught music to children's, middle school, and high school choirs. She continued to write Psalm responses at her parish and was blessed to share her Mass Setting with the parishioners as well.

After a little over three years as a music director, she felt God calling her to become a full-time composer to devote more of her time to composing music for His Church. She now lives happily with her husband and music producer/composition partner, David. She continues to write music from Scripture and sing at churches for praise and worship nights, retreats, and more, sharing her faith-filled songs with others.



Meredith Augustin

“When she sings, I feel close to God!” These words have been used to describe listening to Meredith. Love flows through her – and her voice touches hearts. A West Virginia girl who grew up in Morgantown, Meredith began playing the piano and singing at a very young age.

She describes, “My mom taught piano lessons while I was in her womb. I think it started there. When I was two, my mom and dad told me it was time to give up my pacifier, and I could sing myself to sleep.... I haven’t stopped.”

After completing her Masters of Science degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from West Virginia University, Meredith’s musical activities led her to New York City, where she eventually made her home. Currently, she is the Director of Music at the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in midtown Manhattan and is Music Consultant here at St. Simon Parish. Meredith reflects, “In the last 15 years, my job has allowed me to come face to face with so many beautiful people from so many beautiful cultures. It certainly has helped me evolve personally, as well as musically.”

Meredith has been blessed to collaborate with musicians from all over the world, in particular, in Haiti. This work with liturgical composers is featured on recordings with John Angotti, Tom Kendiza, and Chris DeSilva, to name a few. Meredith has also released four solo records entitled: “What’s Goin’ On,” “Deep River,” “Come and Go With Me,” and “Boundless Mercy.”



Jim Arena, Small Group Discussion

Jim has worked as a transformational leader and executive coach for Silicon Valley companies for most of his career and knows first-hand the excitement and difficulty in developing new breakthrough opportunities conceived by technology companies. He typically works with senior executives where change comes fast and is often unpredictable.

Jim is intrigued by the wisdom that develops when you work closely with others whether it leads to success or fails. Jim has personally seen those experiences turn into a desire to surrender to Christ and help others on an even more significant life-fulfilling journey. He's been trained as an Ignatian Spiritual Director, helping others develop a deep relationship with our Lord through prayer. He has also completed the 3-year Institute for Leadership in Ministry, a lay-leadership program for the San Jose Diocese. He and his wife, Kathy, have two young adult children who continue to teach him how to be their best dad. He loves to bicycle nearly anywhere, so you just may find him on a road near you.



Christine Moore, Small Group Discussion and Journaling

Christine, a St. Simon parishioner, parent, and poet is thrilled to connect with you and other members of this retreat community. Having grown up in rural Northern California surrounded by nature, she has a deep appreciation for God's presence in every nook and cranny of our lives and has witnessed the joy and fragility of life.

She holds an MFA in poetry from the University of San Francisco and has written professionally for more than 20 years, serving as a trusted executive speechwriter and change management consultant for corporations throughout the Bay Area. She considers words the access point to igniting life. Her work as a poet dovetails beautifully with her spirituality. Both pursuits seek to find greater meaning, develop a deeper connection with God and serve as harvester of the Holy Spirit's light. She is a mom, a wife, a creative writing instructor, a cancer survivor, a certified sommelier (co host with Fr. Brendan of the *Wine & Word*), and the facilitator of St. Simon's Women's Spirituality Group. She makes a mean Sunday Roast dinner and loves a cramped and noisy dining table.



Teresa Giovanzana, Creative Art Activity

Teresa is a St. Simon parishioner and a member of the Eucharistic Ministry team. She has a Bachelor of Fine Art in Photography from San Jose State University and her lifelong photographic career includes commercial, fine art, social documentary and editorial. Teresa is a nationally exhibiting artist and a published non-fiction writer. In addition to her professional career, Teresa taught Art Enrichment at her son's Catholic elementary school for nine years (K-8th). Teresa is excited to be a part of the ***Rekindle Your Spirit*** retreat where she will combine her love of art and her creative talents with prayer.

Thank You to the Rekindling Your Spirit Retreat Team

Teresa Giovanzana for preparing the art room and guiding people in expressing their prayer through art and painting.

Christine Moore and Jim Arena for facilitating the small group discussions and giving me input into preparing the sessions

Erika Ibarra and Denise Lassauzet for preparing, decorating and coordinating materials for the peaceful and inspiring Prayer Rooms.

Michelle Higgins, Melissa Moody and the Art & Environment Ministry Volunteers for the gorgeous flower arrangements that decorate all the statues on our St. Simon Parish campus.

Jurgen Krehnke, Tim Petersen, Attracta Lee, Fausta Ibarra, Bruce Zimmer and ALL the Tech Ministry Volunteers for ensuring that all the sound, recording and AV needs were met throughout the entire retreat.

John Kellet, Will Kellet and Tim Orsley for sharing their musical gifts.

Ann Koslovsky, Vani Aboud and Angela Schaufler for helping coordinate the use of the school facilities and materials.

Joan Mibach for coordinating our delicious meals and keeping us nourished with the help of the members from our St. Simon Community.

- Friday Dinner Team: **Scott Kusich, Lee Panec, Janet Woods, Donna Mohammadi, Elle La Russa**
- Breakfast Team: **Katie Boennighausen, Theresa Clark, Stephanie Downey, Andrea Hong**
- Lunch Team: **Moira Delumpa, Marie Crowder, Nisha Victor**
- Saturday Dinner Team: **Dennis and Patty Young, Christine and Mike Pliess,**
- **Kelly Mibach and the Helping Hands Ministry** for providing all the desserts.

Kalena Moreira for planning, coordinating and preparing the collaborative Community Mural, reflectful Meditation Walk, and peaceful Labyrinth.

Marilou Verceles, Sr. Mary-Han and Ana Bonilla for coordinating the Childcare Program with retreat activities for the children.

Clare D'Agostino for planning, coordinating and preparing materials and for decorating the Church, Library and Gym spaces into beautiful and peaceful environments.

Donna Mohammadi and Madelyn Hanel for coordinating registration, facilities and preparation of retreat materials.

Rachel Haydon for planning, coordination and promotion.

Victor Ramirez and Baldy Rosales for facility organization, setting-up and taking care of our endless maintenance requests. We appreciate you so much!