

# SPENDING TIME WITH MARK MEIER



Photo by Karen Chin

*Meier at the piano, providing the music for Saturday night mass.*

The Easter season is a good time to reflect on the many blessings that have come to the people of St. Mary of the Annunciation over the past 14 months. Among these blessings has been the arrival of Mark Meier, St. Mary's new Director of Music and Liturgy. Recently, Meier found time to share some information about his background and his experience so far at St. Mary.

One thing Meier noted immediately was the remarkable similarity between his hometown of Belleville, Wisconsin, and Mundelein. "Belleville is a small town settled mainly by German immigrants who arrived in the 1850s. It was rich farm country and has the same look, feel, and timeline as Mundelein and St. Mary. My three brothers, all athletic and outdoor lovers, have remained in the Belleville area, while I, the musical, artistic one of the bunch, headed for the big city of Madison to pursue my dream of becoming a professional opera singer."

It was in Madison that Meier launched his career in church liturgy and music. In 1990, at the young age of 21, Meier became Director of Music and Liturgy at St. Dennis parish, a new parish in

Madison. His experience at St. Dennis included helping dedicate the new church and install a new organ. Eventually, Mark's singing career brought him to Chicago where he continued his ministry at St. Matthias. He also worked as an accompanist at Francis Xavier Warde School and Old St. Pat's in Chicago, as well as playing piano with the Chicago Children's Choir.

Meier uses the time during the long daily drive from his residence on the near north side of Chicago to Mundelein to plan and focus and consider new material that the parish might appreciate. "You know, the good news is, due to the archdiocesan space restrictions, I have been able to spend some real quality time on key areas, like working with our cantors and the contemporary choir. Meeting as small groups allows us to accomplish a lot." The people are so welcoming here and I'm grateful the circumstances have allowed me to work closely with small numbers of people. The cantors have just dived in and embraced me. The regular work together has allowed me to help nurture and hone their gifts and enabled them to understand my rhythm."

Despite his time-consuming career in music and liturgy, Meier also finds time to pursue his favorite hobby. "I collect and repair watches and clocks. My father was very mechanical minded and handed down a mantra that my brothers and I hold dear---keep it, fix it, restore it. The first time I opened a watch I was fascinated with its insides. I got into the habit of collecting interesting clocks and watches where I performed--Germany, Italy, the Canary Islands."

Meier still enjoys performing. "Here's a little-known fact: Fr. Jerry and I actually shared the stage together. Back around 2000, we were in Carmina Burana by Carl Orff, one of the most frequently performed choral works of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the Apollo Chorus of Chicago."

When asked if the people of St. Mary might see Meier and Fr. Jerry sing together in the future, he coyly replied with a smile, "It's possible. I wouldn't be surprised."



Photo Provided by Mark Meier

*Meier as the red-wigged character Basilio in Mozart's opera "The Marriage of Figaro."*

## NOTE:

Look for more feature articles from the parish Communications Ministry in future bulletins.