



**Thomas Niel** has served as Organist of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Lafayette since the First Sunday of Lent in 1992, succeeding Garry Savoie after Mr. Savoie's untimely death. On the feast of Christ the King in the fall of 1995 he succeeded Michael Goudeau as Director of Music upon Mr. Goudeau's retirement. A Lake Charles native, Mr. Niel began his study of music there with Jerry Crews and later with Fred Sahlmann of McNeese State University. He graduated as Valedictorian from LaGrange High School before pursuing the Bachelor of Music degree on scholarship at Southern Methodist University in Dallas where he graduated with honors, an organ student of Robert Anderson. While in Texas Mr. Niel won the Dallas Chapter American

Guild of Organists competition and placed second in the Fort Wayne, Indiana National Organ Playing Competition. From there he received a scholarship to attend Yale University's Institute of Sacred Music, an interdisciplinary program between the School of Music and the Divinity School. He graduated from Yale with the Master of Music degree in the spring of 1983, a student of Robert Baker and Thomas Murray.

After graduate school Mr. Niel served for eight years as Director of Music at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on the campus of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island and taught on the music faculty of Providence College. While in the Northeast Mr. Niel was a recitalist at several notable churches including the Church of the Advent in Boston, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, St. Thomas Church, Fifth Avenue, and the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, all in New York City. He was also a recitalist at St. John's Church, Lafayette Square, "The Church of the Presidents," across from the White House in Washington D.C.

Upon returning to Louisiana he has been a featured soloist with the Acadian Wind Symphony and the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra in performances of Camille Saint-Saëns' "Organ Symphony" and has appeared frequently as a recitalist at several local churches, including recent dedications of three new organs in as many years. He has also been invited to appear on the recital series at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches and several times at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Lake Charles. In addition he sponsored a series of organ recitals for many years here at St. John Cathedral.

As Director of Music and Organist, Mr. Niel is responsible for nearly all the music that occurs at the Cathedral, including four weekend masses, high holy days, and all weddings and funerals. As director of the Cathedral Choir he has produced two compact disc recordings, "Cantique," and "Christmas Night" which are available for sale in the Cathedral Gift Shop. During his tenure music has been added at the Sunday early morning mass as well as the 6 pm mass on Sunday evenings, which is currently under the direction of Ms. Sara Rabalais. Under his leadership the Cathedral Children's Choir has recently been re-formed to bring music to the children of the parish.

Mr. Niel is also a composer and in recent years has been fortunate to have two of his compositions, "Gloria de Noël," a setting of the Gloria for Christmas, and his setting of the Latin text "Ecce Sacerdos Magnus" published by G.I.A. Music in Chicago, a leading publisher of Catholic church music. He is grateful to God for the privilege of serving such a vibrant, loving community as the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist.