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## *It's Much Easier If You Give Up Trying to Have it Your Way*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

I admit that I enjoy doing things my way. Moreover, it seems that the older I get, the more customs and habits and routines I have also acquired. I like my breakfast eggs cooked a certain way. I like my coffee a certain way. I make chicken salad a certain way. I take showers a certain way. I have a customary way of driving down familiar streets in my neighborhood. I know how to manage familiar subway stations and airports.

I perform most of those daily requirements without thinking much about them. They are routines, and I do not need to re-consider why I do them, or whether there is a better way.

However, all this changes when I travel. And it changes a lot when I am traveling meagerly, perhaps on a mission trip. I remember a few years ago when I rode on a bus with eleven other Christians, twelve Jews, and twelve Muslims, all from Atlanta, on an incredibly long drive across Turkey. Every single one of us had our routines interrupted. And it opened us up to one another. We had to be real with one another in a way that did not depend upon our regular customs and habits.

The re-adjustment of our routines can be a spiritual exercise. The incident I recall the best was some time ago when I was on an Episcopal Church trip to France. We ended up staying in a sparse, out-of-the-way place where English was not spoken easily by the local shopkeepers. I know enough French to get by, but usually it is helped by someone knowing a lot of English, too!

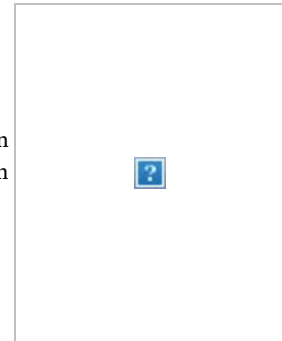
Anyway, as soon as I got there, a friend and I launched out from our little place in search of some coffee and something simple to eat for a late lunch. We had no idea where we were going, and we ended up in a bakery that seemed to have some cold sandwiches and pizza slices for us. I decided to sample one of the little mini-bottles of local wine, too.

But we could not make the conversation work. Apparently, they had coffee, but it was in a little machine behind us. The only pizza they had were the two slices in the counter. They only had three little mini-bottles of wine, and it was only red; no white. They had no glasses, only large coffee cups.

All this took an amazingly long time to discern. At every discovery, I relinquished a little more of what I actually wanted to order. It turns out that I did not need what I actually wanted. Item by item, I bought only what the little shop had; and that was that.

At one point in the erratic conversation, my friend looked at me and said, "It's much easier if you give up trying to have it your way." That was a marvelous turning point. This man travels a lot in missionary endeavors, and his comment applied to those conversations, too. Our religious conversations go better when we can relinquish the need to always have it our way. We discover different things about God, certainly a spiritual experience; but we also discover different things about ourselves.

"It's much easier if you give up trying to have it your way." It's true for any two people speaking different languages. Maybe



like two people who are married to each other, too.

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler

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