
This Week's Edition of Joy and Wonder

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
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I went to church this past Sunday, but I went to services where I was not preaching or leading. In fact, I had already done those things in the morning. I had preached that morning at 8:45 and 11:15 on the beautiful 19th psalm, "the heavens declare the glory of God." (see www.stphilipscathedral.org/sermons) I also blessed and recognized all sorts of beautiful lay ministers of the Cathedral. It was a fun morning!

But later on Sunday, I simply went to church. At 4:00, I joined our tremendous Cathedral Schola at Evensong, one of the jewels of the Anglican tradition. It was our first Evensong of the new season, and it was our first with our new Canon For Music, Dale Adelman. The music, and his direction, was gorgeous. Canon Beth Knowlton's voice was also in fine form; and Canon Todd Smelser delivered a delightful homily, while also managing to observe the Feast of the Holy Cross (a great maneuver!). I worshipped sincerely and gratefully.

Later on Sunday, I joined our tremendous youth program for their annual Fall Worship service at the Chastain Horse Park. Over 150 people were there! Our Youth Director, Brandon Peete, does a fantastic job of coordinating faithful persons of all ages—from youth, to youth advisors, to youth parents, to youth siblings—into a fun and faith-filled event. With my wife, I simply sat in the back worshipping and enjoying the event. And what an event it was! I heard excellent reflections, songs, prayers, and the sermon—all from members of our Cathedral youth program. I really had a good time!

The celebrant at that Youth Eucharist was actually a priest, our new Associate for Pastoral Care, the Reverend Buddy Crawford. He remarked that the evening was another instance of "joy and wonder" for him, the same "joy and wonder" I mentioned a few weeks ago. He was right. I loved watching people be themselves at that service, structured but less formal than our Cathedral morning services. I heard real testimony, and I heard the gospel, too. Thank you, youth! (and thank you, youth advisors and leaders!)

This Fall, "joy and wonder" will be a theme for all of us at the Cathedral of St. Philip. In a time of continuing uncertainty and anxiety, the world needs the church, more than ever. Sometimes the more we declare our ability and sureness about things, the more we also deny our uncertainty and anxiety; we end up misbehaving in some embarrassing ways. It is then that we need the church more than ever! I believe it is in this faithful community of joy and wonder that we learn things the rest of society cannot teach us. The church teaches us true joy and wonder, true grace and respect, true beauty and virtue.

Let me give some recent examples. Later last Sunday evening, I reviewed three rude and ill-considered outbursts from people who were not getting their way, who in some way were not in control. I had already heard the impulsive and startling remark from a congressman during the speech of the President of the United States. I had already seen replays of a great tennis star losing her cool, her civility, and therefore the entire match at the U.S. Open. Then, on last Sunday night, I saw replays of the obnoxious interrupter at a video music awards show, who stole the sweet moment of victory from a young star (later, the event was rescued by the grace of Beyonce).

I realize that all of us like to be in control at some point in our lives. That's human nature. But it is grace, divine grace, which enables us to enjoy life without needing to be in charge of it.

I am grateful that I did not have to be in control, preaching or leading, to enjoy the great moments of worship at the Cathedral of St. Philip this past Sunday. God can speak quite well without me, and usually God can speak better without me! It is good for my spirit to worship in this community of joy and wonder, and I thank each of you for the grace you provide to our life together.

Yes, this Fall, "joy and wonder" will be the theme for all of us at the Cathedral of St. Philip. Join us. Learn about true grace and true respect, true beauty and true virtue; see joy and wonder in action!

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler