

---

## *"Yes!" To All These Random Questions*

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

Maybe they are trying to be cute or clever or something, or maybe they just lose their heads when they talk to a priest or enter a church. But people end up saying silly things in church.

Two Sundays ago, our Sunday parking lots were especially packed. Indeed, they are packed on most Sundays, but that was the Sunday we were baptizing new Christians and we were welcoming our Holy Eucharist Education Class, with its fifty students and many, many, parents and grandparents of those students. And, of course, the sermons promised to be wonderful.

Apparently, one of the people in the parking lot asked a staff member, "This parking lot is so packed; is there a celebrity here or something?" When I heard about the question, I wanted to say, "Well, of course there are celebrities here""YOU!" We gather every Sunday for something to celebrate; our community, our love, the Word of God, divine beauty, and earthly service. We celebrate every Sunday! Check us out every week and you would notice!

Only a few days after that, another event was being held at the Cathedral, one that involved many non-parishioners. The parking lot was packed on a weekday (as it often is, by the way). I swear, I am not making this up, someone trying to be cute came up to me and said, "Hey, Dean, don't you wish your parking lot could be this packed on a Sunday morning!"

Of course, our parking lot HAD been that packed on a Sunday morning, on the Sunday morning just before he was here! Well, I learned long ago not to actually speak what I am thinking; but I did tell him that we were indeed packed on that previous Sunday and that he should come on Sunday mornings and see.

Then, a few days later, another well-intentioned person approached me with this familiar question, actually a rather tricky one: "Hey, Dean Candler, what's new at the Cathedral? Are y'all doing anything new right now?"

Of course, that is not actually a silly question. In fact, it is a rather common one in many enterprises. But it is a tricky question, and one that trips up many a company or organization. It is tricky because it assumes that unless you are doing something "new" that maybe not much is going on, or maybe nothing worth checking out. It was like that question concerning a "celebrity." Would a "celebrity" really cause someone to come to church who would not otherwise come?

Unfortunately, our culture is so obsessed, or even addicted, to "new and improved" that we too easily ignore the steady, consistent organizations that sustain our civil and spiritual values. All too easily, we leave those consistent sources of energy for whatever claims to be "new and improved."

I made this analogy the other day: Our church is like a great football team, a strong and successful one. We succeed by doing the routine things well, like "blocking and tackling, and running and throwing and catching." A great football team does not need to run out some new "trick play" each week in order to succeed.

At the Cathedral of St. Philip, we follow the routine habits of our spiritual lives, and we do them very, very well. This past Sunday on the First Sunday of Lent, we heard the same gospel and sang many of the same hymns that we have done in years past. But the sermon was powerfully different, and the singers were powerfully different, and the congregation was also powerfully different. It was the same Lenten routine as last year, but it felt energetically new. We do lots of new things, every day and every week. But they are not always the media-grabbing things, or the flashes in a pan that have fizzled out in two months.

(By the way, the same goes for baptisms and weddings and funerals. People prefer baptisms, weddings and funerals here because we do them well, because they have proven to be beautiful and honorable and spiritual here” not because we have discovered some new device or trick play. So, you don't need to ask to do them differently, and you don't need to ask for private baptisms!)

Are we packed? Yes. Are there celebrities here? Yes. Are we doing something new here? Yes. Yes, to all those questions. I invite you to find out for yourself. Come join the steady spiritual routines of the Christian Church, habits and prayers that have stood the tests of time. Join us this Lent, and you will find your life powerfully renewed at Easter.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip