
Processions

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

When I was growing up down in Coweta County, I walked a lot. Almost every day, after school, I would walk back through the woods behind our house, or down to the creek in front of our house, or through the farm pastures over to the lake. Those walks were rather like processions for me, routine and familiar rhythms that nevertheless often became exciting and even revealing.

In a similar way, my family, in a car, would process down Highway 34, towards Newnan, to school, and on Sundays, to church. The highway ride was a procession for us, joining with other cars, and even trucks and tractors in those days. From all walks of life, we formed a procession to town.

My life journey, my walk, has, of course, brought me to this beautiful church, the Cathedral of St. Philip. Parishioners and neighbors often see me walking here. Those walks are routine, through familiar streets, but they inspire new things. “Solvitur ambulando,” Augustine of Hippo once said, “It is solved by walking.” A good walk seems to solve all sorts of things for me, personal problems for sure, but also professional problems – like what can I possibly preach on this Sunday? Go for a walk. It is solved by walking.

This past Easter, I once again thrilled to see so many other people walking. Those people were you, many of you arriving early for the Easter Vigil, in the dark, before sunrise. One of my favorite times of the year, one of the holiest for me, is waiting by the Easter Fire, watching people walk to the fire. We are all walking in the dark that morning, some of us with flashlights, and some of using the streetlights. Our destination is light. Our destination is that Great Fire, the New Fire, of Easter. This past Easter, some of us were thrilled, while watching and walking, to see a tremendous meteor flash above the Cathedral roof! What a brilliant fire to begin the lighting of our Paschal Candle and the New Fire of Easter! We saw it because we were following our routine, out walking, even in the dark, and watching.

During all our Easter services, we took time to walk again. In church, we call our walking something else. We call it a “procession!” With dogwood branches and holy water, we processed again, around and around the inside of the Cathedral nave, bathing ourselves in both light and water.

Processions are where prayer happens. Sometimes that prayer is intentional, as in church. But, I believe our church processions actually begin when we wake up, and when we begin the familiar routine of getting to church again. All those church processions – to church itself in our cars, walking to the nave, walking in the nave—all those church processions are meant to give us practice. At church, we are practicing how to process in prayer, so that we can also pray during our other daily processions. When we practice enough, we will see a rainbow on the way to church, as many of us did this past Sunday!

All of us have daily processions. Those daily processions include the journey from sleep to wakefulness each morning, down the hall, down the stairs to our coffee or breakfast, driving or riding or walking to work, to school, to the grocery store. Is it possible that we might encounter prayer during those ordinary processions? Is it possible that we might

encounter, not just errands and tasks and responsibilities, but also the presence of the holy? Walking in church, processing in church, is meant to give us just that sort of practice. If we can practice prayer while processing in church, we might also be able to pray in traffic jams, in check-out lines, and walking outside to meet the new day.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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