
There's Nothing Like Actually Going to the Game!

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

I loved Labor Day in Atlanta this past week. Yes, I paused to give thanks for all those who labor. Yes, I lamented the damage Hurricane Dorian was inflicting upon Bahamas, and I worried about its future track along the Southeastern coast of the United States.

But I also went to the baseball game on Labor Day. Being from Atlanta, there is only one baseball game; and that's the one the Braves are playing that day. As some of you know, I am an old and very devoted Braves fan, having become attached to them since 1966, the year they arrived in Atlanta. Even now, every day, I can usually tell you what time the game is; and I can supply you with the latest statistics.

Further, if I am in the car during the game, I will often listen to it on the radio. At home, I will glance at the game on the television. And television these days provides excellent coverage, with close-ups and replays and commentary.

However, there is nothing like actually going to the game! At the Braves park, or at any baseball stadium, the energy is different from any experience I get from television (or even radio, which still might be a close second!). In the stadium, I am with people. I am simply with people, all sorts of people. There are the well-groomed people, and the not so well-groomed people. There are the loud people, and there are the quiet people. Young and old, of every race and nationality.

We are all there, in that public space, watching something we love, making way for each other in the crowded rows, picking up someone's accessory which fell from the row behind us, passing a hot dog from the vendor to our neighbor. Sometimes, we cannot see exactly what is happening. Sometimes we are so far from the batter that it takes us a split second to pick up where the ball was hit.

But we get it. The amazing spirit of a baseball game, and most any game, is amplified when fans and spectators experience it together. It's the same with theater; it's the same with music. Well, perhaps you know where I am headed with this reflection. I feel the same way about Sundays at church! The amazing Spirit of God is amplified when we people of faith experience God together.

At the Cathedral of St. Philip, we are proud to be able to livestream worship services, to produce podcasts, to print out sermons, to publish newsletters, all of which encourage and inspire love. But there is nothing like the energy of worshipping God together, to be with people, all sorts of people: the well-groomed and not so well-groomed, the loud and the quiet, the young and the old. To make way for each other in pews and aisles, to pass the plate to each other, to pass awkward gestures of peace with each other. Like being at a baseball game, too, sometimes we cannot see or hear exactly what just happened! But we get it. Something holy is happening, and holiness is amplified when people gather together.

I am thrilled that "The Season" has begun again at the Cathedral of St. Philip! The energy of faithful Christians gathered together draws me again, away from the perfectly good things I can experience individually, to the perfectly good things I can experience in the community of God's people. Our season brings us some new players! We have, at least, two new clergy, one being our new youth minister. We have new parishioners! We have new programs! And we have the veterans, the wise and the aged who show us new folks the traditions of the team and the traditions of the game.

There's nothing like actually going to the game. And there's nothing like actually going to church. Yes, it takes preparation and time. It requires some effort from us. Things can go wrong, and people can irritate us. But something greater than us also greets us in those places; that "Something Greater" is what amazes and thrills us. At church, it is the mysterious Spirit of God, alive and growing, in this beautiful community of God.

A handwritten signature in dark 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