
Easter Monday

An article for the *Cathedral Times* by the Very Rev. Sam Candler



On Easter Monday, I visited a place which has become a routine for me. It is a chapel of sorts, but it is outdoors. In fact, it is a swamp. It is a place out in the country where the hard Georgia clay rolls down into bowls alongside a creek, where I grew up. Beavers have dammed up a couple of smaller streams; and now a rather hidden beaver pond rests way back there in the woods. It has become a chapel for me; and I simply sit there, prayerfully watching the life of a swamp.

They say the word “chapel” comes from the word “cappa,” which means “cloak,” or “cape.” Legend has it that Saint Martin of Tours, while in the military but also a catechumen, cut his cloak in half, in order to share it with a beggar. Then, he dreamed that very night that Jesus was wearing the torn cloak. When he woke up, the cloak was whole again. Soon, Martin was baptized.

After Saint Martin died, his cloak became preserved and treasured, as a sacred relic. It was even carried about. The place where that cloak, or “cappa,” was housed became a holy place known as a “cappella.” By extension, they say, it came to be that any sanctuary which housed sacred relics became known as a “cappella,” or chapel. And the priest there came to be known as a “cappellanus,” or chaplain.

My little swamp chapel certainly holds sacred relics. On Easter Monday, I saw the old antlers of a deer and some coyote bones. I studied the white shell of an armadillo, still intact. And I saw the completely white bleached shell of a box turtle.

For me, the real evidence of Easter is not Easter Sunday, but Easter Monday. Easter Sundays, of course, are great celebrations, loud and festive and bright. But, for all of us, if Easter is real, it has to be just as real on Monday as it was on Sunday. Sometimes it takes living through Easter Monday to understand the power of Easter Sunday.

So it was in my little chapel that I realized amazing new life amidst the dank swamp water and white bones. I saw the beautiful white atamasco lilies, and yellow irises, blooming above the water’s edge. Easter flowers! (and near those weird looking black mushrooms known as devil’s urns!) I saw the red buckeye bulging out. And I wondered at how fragile the beautiful wild azaleas looked, when they were so hardy at the same time.

I guess the chaplain at my little swamp chapel was the barred owl who seems to live there. That day, he sat on a tree limb and seemed unafraid of my presence, about twenty feet away. In silence, we simply gazed at each other. I asked him some questions, and I seemed to receive some wise answers. Good chaplains deliver wise answers, wherever they are.

Some of us have Easter Sundays, days that are splendid and exuberant. But I hope all of us have Easter

Mondays. Easter Mondays are the days when we return to daily routines, but when we notice little bits of resurrection in those routines. Even if the land is swampy and the water is dark, and even if there are bones and fungi all around, even then, there is also resurrection and new life blossoming all around, too. Happy Eastertide!

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