

---

## *Blessings on Peachtree*

An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by Canon Cathy Zappa

On this Independence Day, I had the privilege of participating in Dean Candler's tradition of blessing runners in the Peachtree Road Race. And it *was* a privilege indeed, and a whole lot of fun, too! With fellow clergy and some younger helpers, I got to fling holy water and proclaim blessings on thousands of people who walked and ran and crawled by.

I was asked if agnostics were allowed, if the blessings were for Presbyterians too, and if they would work on Baptists. "Yes, yes, yes!" I was able to answer.

Many runners were more confident. They came out of their way, making costly extra steps on this hot morning, just to claim their blessing and to be sprinkled with holy water. "I look forward to this every year!" I heard. "This is my favorite part of the race! I really need this!" Some asked for extra blessings; one asked for the whole bowl of holy water. One man kept saying, "Can I get a knee? Can I get a knee?" I thought he wanted to kneel, or wanted me to, so I just smiled and nodded and hoped he would run on. But then I realized that he was asking me to *bless* his knee, so I sprinkled holy water on it, too.

Several men took off their caps as they approached; many people crossed themselves.



"Bless me," I heard several times, "for I have sinned!" "Bless me," others called, "because I'm going to sin!" Yes, aren't we all!

We blessed all kinds of Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, agnostics, atheists, and I'm not sure what else. We blessed fast runners and slow walkers. We blessed the young and the old and everyone in between. We blessed the hesitant, the reverent, the flippant, the wounded, the desperate. We blessed people who ran with a can of beer in their hands, at 7:30 in the morning. And we cheered on the people who zoomed by before the crack of dawn in wheelchairs, and the street sweepers and sanitation workers who came at the end.

Behind me, I heard a Cathedral member say, "Aren't people beautiful?"

Yes! Yes, they are!



As Dean Candler has reminded us often, this is part of our witness in this city: we are to go out into the streets, into public places, into prisons and hospitals and shelters and schools, looking for the beauty in each of God's people and blessing, blessing, blessing. [It's not our job to withhold God's blessing, after all, but to scatter it widely and indiscriminately, as the sower does in Jesus' parable (Matthew 13:1–9).]

After all, as the psalm for Independence Day, Psalm 145, says, "The Lord is loving to everyone, and his compassion is over all his works." Let us bless the Lord!