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## *Reading After Easter Day*

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

I took a break on the Monday after Easter Day. Some of you know that I insist upon all the Church taking a break on Easter Monday! I call it the “Great Sabbath Rest,” which God promises the people of faith after a mighty, heavily scheduled Holy Week. It is always a happy rest!

Even with quarantines and shelter-in-place directives, I and the Cathedral staff were tired after this year’s Holy Week. We had kept in touch with so many people, and it seemed like every day we were recording new services, and sermons, and meditations; and we were still conducting all our Bible Studies and meetings online. Even if we had not left our homes all week, the Cathedral staff took a well-earned rest.

People have asked me what I am reading during times at home, in this Season of Social Distance. People are looking for good things to read! Well, on that Easter Monday, I had good time to read! And I offer you some possibilities.

It so happened that Easter Monday, April 13, was the birthday of four notable writers and authors. So, I read something from each of them! The tough and pithy Irish poet, Seamus Heaney, was born on April 13. Like many a great Irish poet, he wrote about earth itself, and about the deep realities of human relationships. I read *Digging* (about his father’s farmwork, or is it about his own writing?). I read *Mid-Term Break* (about being called home during the school year, for a sad reason). And I read the wonderful, luscious poem, *Blackberry-Picking*. It concerns the brilliance of blackberries, but also their susceptibility to disease. They are short poems, but wonderfully dense and rich. Try them!

April 13 was also the birthday of Thomas Jefferson, whom I have always admired for his industry and intellect and inventiveness, even after recent disclosures of his relationship with Sally Hemings. His life is a reminder of the tragedy that often accompanies even brilliant people and revolutionary tremendous times. He, of course, wrote much of The Declaration of Independence, so I read that on April 13. It was a helpful reminder of the solid heritage and the foundational principles of our country (read The Constitution, too!). Despite times of tragedy and times of fumbling, I love the United States of America.

April 13 was also the birthday of another hero of mine, the playwright, Samuel Beckett. Actually, he was another Irishman, but he spent much of his life in France, as truly an existentialist. I consider his play, *Waiting for Godot*, one of the masterpieces of twentieth century literature; and the play seems to make strange sense in whatever culture or time it is set in. In this season of socially distancing pandemic, Steven Levingston wrote recently in *The Washington Post* that “We — the entire human race — have become Vladimir and Estragon, the happy-sad/anxious-silly/hopeful-bleak duo of *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett’s 1953 stage masterpiece. Like Vladimir and Estragon we are stuck, we keep to ourselves, we wait for our Godot.” To which I add, “Nothing to be done.”

Is Beckett too dense, or disturbing, or foreign for you? Well, then join me in reading the fourth author whose birthday was April 13: the lovely and erudite woman from Mississippi, Eudora Welty. Her masterpieces are too many to enumerate, but her writing often connects Southern culture to classical mythology. And she certainly connects us all to the truth of the human condition. On April 13, I needed something lighter, and I read the delightful short novel, *The Ponder Heart*. That novel’s setting in the Old South might require some patience and grace. But I recommend it as a wonderful piece of humor and small town life.

Enjoy some reading while you are socially distancing! As John Ciardi used to say, "Good words to you."

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 Sam Candler  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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