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## *"I Don't Mind! Thanks For Shopping With Us!"*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip**

I must confess that I do not always take my shopping cart to the designated parking lot racks when I have finished unloading my groceries. On most days, I am just in too much of a hurry. Thus, I carefully park my grocery cart at the top of the parking space, or at the end of the rows, or in some other spot that I deem will not leave me liable for having it roll into someone's expensive automobile.

But last week, I was feeling merrier than usual. In fact, during my grocery shopping I had seen and spoken to what seemed like half the parish; and three other people had stopped me to introduce themselves. I had plenty of time. So, after I had put the groceries into the car, I began to roll the cart to the nearest designated space.

Lo and behold, I was about as far away from such a spot as was possible in that lot. There was no "shopping cart pen" in sight. Then, I spotted a young grocery store employee who had obviously been assigned the task of corralling and gathering all the carts from the lot. What a job that must be. He had about eight carts.

Again, feeling happier than I usually do after buying twenty items that cost as much as eighty items, I started to roll my cart toward him. "Here's another one," I called to him. But what he said in response surprised me. "I'll come get it. I don't mind. Thanks for shopping with us!" I still rolled it toward him, but he deliberately came toward me and took it gratefully.

Well, I will certainly shop at that grocery store again. I was touched by one of the youngest employees, maybe one of the least employees on the tenure totem pole, thanking me for shopping with them. He understood. What looks like the satisfaction of my ordinary need-buying groceries for the household-actually involves lots of people. It involves a team. "Shopping with us" involves lots of things besides finding just the right cut of beef or the best coffee or the freshest eggs.

Right about here is where I talk about the church-the community of faith-also being a team of people. But before I make that transition, let me make one thing perfectly clear: Going to church, or being a member of a community of faith, or finding a church, is not just about going "shopping." At the Cathedral of St. Philip, we realize that many people "shop around," and we welcome them. But what we hope is that a church commitment is much more than simply finding the most convenient shopping center. We hope you find a church that comforts and challenges you spiritually, intellectually, and morally. Those kinds of challenges and comforts will always require a long-term commitment center, not a quick one-stop convenience shop which happens to be on your way somewhere else.

Nevertheless, as I left that grocery store, I wanted everyone at the Cathedral of St. Philip to act the way that young man in the parking lot acted. I want everyone at the Cathedral, from oldest parishioner to newest staff member, to be able to say to guests: "Thanks for being here with us. Thanks for praying. Thanks for worshipping with us. Thanks for serving with us."

Wait! What's that you are thinking? You do not know any guests or visitors? Well, this is your opportunity. In the next two weeks, the Christian Church will be observing our holiest days, culminating with the grand Feast of the Resurrection, Easter itself. Invite someone to join us. Invite your neighbor, your work colleague, your own family member. Invite that person who is shopping around.

The Cathedral of St. Philip is a team. The witness to resurrection and hope and new life is a witness that all of us participate in. It is not just the sermon, not just the building, not just the music, not just this or that program. It is all of us, a team of witnesses saying to the world, "Taste and see. Come join us." We have two weeks. Invite someone to join you during Holy Week and Easter this year!

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler