
Blessings To You!!

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,
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There is no way I can miss the Peachtree Road Race anymore. I know that some folks have been running it for over twenty years. Our own Priest Associate, Dr. Bill Harkins, has been running it for twenty-eight years. I have been blessing the race for only six years; I'm just a newcomer. When runners flop exhausted into their Fourth of July afternoon armchairs, I am merely resting my voice and my arm.

Ever since the great Peachtree Road Race occurred on a Sunday, in 1999, the Cathedral of St. Philip has been gathering a community at 6:30 am. That year, instead of worrying about missed church services on Independence Day, we decided to conduct those Sunday services right at the street. We would welcome the runners and bless them. The result was such a blessing, not only to runners but also to us, that we have done it every Fourth of July since then.

By now, hundreds of runners expect that blessing. They swerve over to the right to soak up the water and the good words. They are all shapes and sizes, and they are all sorts and conditions of humanity. It is absolutely amazing what our Cathedral community sees go by on that morning.

Whatever it is, we bless it. Superman darted by. Three "runaway brides" romped on. Slow walkers, fleet athletes, entirely obese folks, young people as skinny as a rail. One group marched mischievously with a sign declaring, "Beer= Good, Water=Bad." Well, I certainly disagreed with that sentiment, but I blessed them saying, "This water is good! This water is holy!" They laughed.

Folks ask if they can receive the blessing if they are Jewish. Of course. Some people say that haven't had a blessing for years. Some cross themselves. Some kneel and kiss my hand. Mayor Shirley Franklin came by. Congressman John Lewis stopped for a blessing. One man said he had received a blessing last year, and his wife had had twins. Another person said he had been healed, and this past year was the best of his life. One man said the blessing had been part of his performing CPR on a fallen runner several years ago (I actually remember that one).

This year was another first. A woman showed up, rather sheepishly, and she removed her hat. She confessed, "I just called someone a \$%&*!\$." I told her she was forgiven. Yes, her blessing had evoked actual repentance on her part. Such is the power of God. Blessing is not just a "feel good" event. Holy blessing actually produces repentance, when repentance is necessary.

Our ministry at the Cathedral of St. Philip is a ministry of blessing. I believe in that blessing. God wants to bless us, and God created us for blessing. I know that sometimes the way we bless, and what we bless, upsets folks. But I would always rather err on the side of blessing than the side of condemnation. As for me and mine, we will speak good words to people; we will bless.

Our world needs God's blessing. And God has empowered each of us to deliver it. Consider, this summer, whom you need to bless. Consider all the folks who are running the race with you. They are right beside you. Maybe you don't agree with everything they say or do. Maybe they don't agree with you. But God has placed us on this grand road of life together. Don't miss the blessing.

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler

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