
Homecoming Sunday!

An article for the Cathedral Times by Dean Sam Candler

(Excerpts from Dean Sam Candler's Sunday [sermon](#), titled "A Cloud of Witnesses!")

What a delight it is, for so many of us, to be here this morning, surrounded by the witnesses of the Cathedral of St. Philip! ... Welcome to a cloud of witnesses! Welcome to "the cloud," the "cloud of witnesses!" Clouds! ... Have any of you observed the clouds this summer? Have you pondered the clouds while outdoors, maybe in your backyard, or at the park—or at the beach, or in the mountains?

I have delighted in most every different type, whose various compound names often confuse me, but whose beauty always inspires and provokes me. I have seen the stratus clouds, those low-level clouds, down-to-earth. I have seen the lovely alto-type clouds—mid-level clouds often billowing into shapes of fantasy and illusion. I have strained to see the cirrus clouds—high-level clouds, lofty and high and wispy.

Each type has its value, sometimes shading a hot summer day, sometimes forecasting a weather pattern, sometimes pouring tremendous rain upon a needy earth. As you may know, clouds form when water vapor coalesces around a tiny dust particle in the air. Clouds actually need small dust particles to form. Every cloud contains some sort of condensed vapor around a small piece of dust.

... Since the Epistle to the Hebrews says we are surrounded by "a cloud of witnesses," maybe the witnesses around us, in the Bible before our time—and, in our own time, right beside us—maybe all these various witnesses are just as various as the clouds in the sky.

Some of us are light and airy, like high-level clouds. Some of us are dark and stormy, maybe brooding. Some of us provide nourishment with our water, raining blessing down upon others during needy times. But some of us have the potential to do great damage with our storms. Some of us are down-to-earth, and some of us are high and lofty.

But every one of us starts as a particle of dust. Stardust, maybe. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." It is water that turns us into a cloud. It is this baptismal water, which we will bless later in this service, it is this baptismal water that turns us into a cloud of witnesses.

... What do you see in the clouds this morning? I see witness. I see the lovely shapes and sizes of faith, some billowing and beautiful, and some wispy and fragile, but still beautiful—all of us giving shape to faith and following Jesus, our pioneer, our perfecter, our Lord.

