
Thanksgiving This Year

**An article for the *Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler, *Dean of the Cathedral*
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This year, I am thankful for grocery store visits.

They usually do not start well. I am irritated that our house has run out of something important, and we are supposed to never run out. It might be eggs or butter. It might be toilet paper. So, we assemble a list of other things we need. I will realize later that I have forgotten something. I make my way. I am already a bit impatient.

I drive my familiar route to the local market. Our store might be a regular chain, and it might be a farmers' market, but I have a preferred way to get there. Efficient as it is, it is rarely without traffic, and I encounter both the slowpokes and the speedsters. I am on an errand, and it is a chore.

Next, I meet the challenge of finding a convenient parking spot. There is never a convenient parking spot. I am on an errand, and it is a chore. Both cars and people zig and zag through the parking lot; there has never been an efficiently designed parking lot, anywhere. I practice patience.

But something happens as I walk to the store. I meet people. I meet all sorts of people, from the finest to the most slovenly. I realize—I even give thanks—that we are all here to meet our basic needs, and we share something in common in those needs. I say hello. I even smile. The grocery store, the market, has gathered us all together. The grocery store visit is my discipline of practicing patience.

Once inside, I meet more people in need. So engrossed are they in their purchase, they are blocking the entire aisle. I slow down. Next, the poor shelf stockers are lugging huge carts of new supplies down the aisle. They cannot even see me, and they invariably stop their cart right in front of the items I was hoping to peruse. I smile, and they try to move their load.

Patience comes more easily when we respect people! At the farmers' market, we get a chance to respect their more recreational clothes, too: and we have the opportunity to respect their dogs!

The store is sold out of at least one of things I had hoped to buy. Perhaps the supplier no longer even makes the product. I have to find a substitute. I study a bit. Sometimes, I actually find a new favorite food. I talk with a person I had seen in church last week but not been able to speak to. I see some people I have not seen in years. They are still coming to the grocery store.

I get to the checkout lines and can never predict which will be the shortest. Never. Of course. I inevitably choose the line with the slowest checkout person, and she has to ask me which kind of tomatoes I picked out. She is nice. The person putting my items into bags is doing his best, and I help him a bit. They have helped me assemble my needs. I am thankful for them.

Finally, I have paid the bill; and I push a cart, or carry a laden bag, to the car. I am thankful for the gift of having stores nearby, with such supplies. Not every culture, not even every American, can drive to a local market for fresh goods.

Then, a few days later, maybe that very evening, another routine develops. Someone prepares a feast with the supplies of the day. We may take turns with the preparation. Maybe the dinner is a small supper for only two people, or maybe just one. Maybe, just maybe, the supper is a feast! Maybe others show. Maybe what was only a few fish and some bread, for a few people, becomes a feeding of five thousand.

When people take the time to do their chores, when we go to the grocery store and buy our routine things, we are preparing the way for something tremendous. We are preparing for a feast. I give thanks for the patience and love and discipline that going to the grocery store teaches me. And I give thanks for all those who have gone to the grocery store this year, for me, and for us. Their commitment and patience have prepared tables and altars for us. Eucharist means thanks! Let us give thanks! Let us keep the feast!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
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