
All Saints Week and Real Time

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When most of our country sets our clocks back one hour in November (“fall back”), I am one of those who merrily chortles, “Yay, we are back in real time now!” I am not a curmudgeon about it, and I don’t complain. I like to think that I can make time work for me, no matter what time it is. I just enjoy the lengthening and shortening of days and nights as they occur naturally, without having to interrupt that rhythm twice a year.

This year, we set our clocks back on the morning of All Saints Sunday, but we were returning to a kind of real time throughout the week of All Saints Day. We were returning to real time. It was really time to celebrate All Saints Day in person with our guests at the Homeless Requiem, the dinner and Eucharist in which we remember by name those who have died in the past year without homes.

There was something steadying and reassuring at our Homeless Requiem evening this year. The careful preparation and work resulted in a graceful and non-anxious celebration. Thank you! Thank you to all who showed up in person! We missed the singing of the Voices of Hope Choir this year, a choir that is made up of inmates of the Arrendale State Prison, since the logistics and short staff there prohibited a visit. But, lo and behold, Cathy Zappa was thrilled to discover, at the end of the service, two former members of the Voices of Hope Choir. They were out of prison now, one living in Gainesville, but they had taken the time to be at the Cathedral of St. Philip on November 1. They remembered the day. None of us knew they were coming. That conversation with them might have been my happiest moment of the night.


Real time around All Saints Week at the Cathedral returned to its usual format this year, rather a three-part celebration. The first part is the Requiem Eucharist for the Homeless. The second part is the morning of All Saints Sunday, when we baptize new Christians into the Church. For some reason, we always have a lot of baptisms that day! At the 8:45 service especially, there seemed to be children everywhere, even after a couple of families had to withdraw at the last minute. The halls and the aisles and the pews of the Cathedral were lively (but also amazingly quiet for the baptisms themselves –unusual!). After the baptism service, a couple whose children are now grown and out of the house walked up to me. “You know,” they said, “we don’t mind all the energy of the children during the service. It’s wonderful to have them here.” They were so right. We are back in real time.

Then, at 4:00 pm on All Saints Sunday, we celebrate a Choral Eucharist, remembering by name all those members, friends, and family of the Cathedral who have died in the past year – the third part of our All Saints ministry. This year, we spoke over 160 names. That number seems accurate. At the Cathedral, we are remembering someone who has died, on average, about once every two days or so. At the Cathedral, we honor and we bless those who have died; and we try to provide that touch of grace to those who are grieving or in pain. It is a holy ministry. The Cathedral Choir helped lead our worship this year with the extraordinary music of Gabriel Fauré’s *Requiem*. Incredibly beautiful.

Oh! I didn’t mention a new feature of our All Saints week! At the 12:15 daily Eucharist on Tuesday (the actual All Saints Day), we processed outside St. Mary’s Chapel, and around the upper level of the Atrium, and around the downstairs of the Atrium, while chanting a Litany of the Saints and singing “For All The Saints.” We were truly in person! It was like we were processing around a European village; we were processing around the village of the Cathedral of St. Philip!

This year, I was reminded again of how valuable All Saints Day is for the Church, and for the world. It is just as much a principal feast of the Church as is Christmas and Easter; and it sure felt that way for me this year.

There are lots of things that other organizations do which the Church also does: provide hospitality, serve meals, provide daycare and education, sing music, do justice, organize study groups and classes. We do all those things well, too. But no organization can match the way that the Church provides blessing at the time of death. At the heart of our life, that is what we do every time we gather: we celebrate death and new life. That rhythm is the heart of every service of the Holy Eucharist, too. Ordinary time stops during those services; we are in real time.

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 Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip

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