
An End to A Season

**An article for *The Cathedral Times*
by the Very Rev. Sam Candler
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Last Sunday at church, I wore my Atlanta Braves baseball cap as I greeted people in the narthex before the services. I was so glad to see people smile!

Some were smiling because they were simply indulging my long-time interest in baseball and the Braves. I realize, of course, that not everyone is a baseball fan; thank you for letting some of us be fans! However, others were smiling because they thought, maybe, I had it wrong. They pointed out to me that the Braves had lost their baseball game the previous day. In fact, with that loss, the Braves had been eliminated from postseason play. Their season had ended, and they would not be going to the World Series this year.

I knew, of course, that the Braves had lost. Still, I was smiling; and I was hoping to draw smiles from others. I was hoping to turn disappointment into something more satisfying. The Braves' season has ended. But, then again, the Braves' season ends every year; there is always an ending. Only rarely does the Braves' season, or any team's season, end with winning the World Series. It is good to wear a Braves cap on the day after the season has ended, no matter how it ended. Thank you for smiling.

I will spare you a long essay on baseball and how its 162-game schedule really does reveal the truly great players and teams over time. The point is that the seasons of good sports do teach us how to deal with the seasons of our own lives. Our lives do not consist just of one spectacular event, whether it was a winning or a losing event. Our lives consist of the daily engagements and decisions we make, the choices we make of how to spend our time and energy. Our lives consist of the relationships we have and the communities we are part of. It is over time, over the many seasons of our lives, that we show our character and values.

We all have seasons of disappointment, and even loss. But they do not take away the fuller measure of who we are and what we have been doing. I was wearing an Atlanta Braves baseball cap on Sunday because I was saluting a superb season, a season of great baseball. Some of you may know that we Atlanta Braves fans have had lots of practice with this discipline; the Braves once won their division fourteen years in a row and yet managed only one World Series win in that span. I didn't mind those years, because I am in it for the great baseball, not for the one great win.

Sure, I love to cheer when my team wins it all! But most teams do not win it all. In Major League Baseball, there are thirty teams; and each one of them could win on any given day. Some seasons are hot streaks, and some seasons are cold streaks. Such is my life, too.

One of my heroes, the former president of Yale University, who resigned that season of his life in order to become the Commissioner of Major League Baseball, was Bart Giamatti. He wrote one of the classic descriptions of this time of year in baseball:

It breaks your heart. It is designed to break your heart. The game begins in the spring, when everything else begins again, and it blossoms in the summer, filling the afternoons and evenings, and then as soon as the chill rains come, it stops and leaves you to face the fall alone. You count on it, rely on it to buffer the passage of time, to keep the memory of sunshine and high skies alive, and then just when the days are all twilight, when you need it most, it stops. Today, October 2, a Sunday of rain and broken branches and leaf-clogged drains and slick streets, it stopped, and summer was gone (from, "The Green Fields of the Heart").

This year, however, I am thinking a little differently from the way Giamatti put it. I am glad. I am thankful for this

season, now recently ended. Seasons end in life, and it is fun to be thankful for them. It refreshes my heart to remember people and teams—individuals and communities—in all areas of life, in sports and not in sports, with fondness and gratitude. Thank you for smiling with me, through these seasons of life!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

The Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler
Dean of the Cathedral of St. Philip