

Christmas Day

25/12/15

“Jesus, Jedi and the journey...”

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Darth Vader: There is no escape. Don't make me destroy you, Luke, you do not yet realise your importance. You have only begun to discover your power. Join me, and I will complete your training. With our combined strength, we can end this destructive conflict and bring order to the galaxy.

Luke Skywalker: I'll never join you!

Darth Vader: If only you knew the power of the Dark Side. Obi-Wan never told you what happened to your father.

Luke: He told me enough! He told me you killed him!

Darth Vader: No, I am your father.

Luke: No...no. That's not true. That's impossible!

Darth Vader: Search your feelings, you know it to be true!

Luke: Noooo! Noooo!

Some of you may be wondering what on earth this has to do with a Christmas Day message?

Well, you may have recognised the narrative immediately as an intense conversation between two of the main characters in the story and film of Star Wars, especially seeing all the current hype with the recent release of the latest rendition.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the series of films entitled around the theme of Star Wars; it is an American epic space opera franchise centred on a film series created by George Lucas. It depicts the adventures of various characters “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away”.

The first film, entitled *A New Hope*, was originally released back in 1977. The sequel released this month around the world is number seven! All previous six films to date were nominated for or won Academy Awards, and were commercial successes, with a combined box office revenue of over \$4.38 billion.

There are strong parallels to be drawn between the essence of the Star Wars story and the reason we are all here together in church this morning: to celebrate the birth of Jesus and the New Hope that his birth brings to the world.

One of the prominent elements of Star Wars is the 'Force'; this is an omnipresent energy that can be harnessed with those with that ability. It is described as an energy field created by all living things that surrounds us, penetrates us and binds the galaxy together. While the force can be used for good, it also has a dark side that, when pursued, imbues users with hatred, aggression and malevolence.

I do believe that the Star Wars story is so powerful because it embodies all of the struggles true to human life, no matter the time period. It is thus, timeless. The story depicts the valiant fight of the few rebels (Luke and his Jedi army) against the Empire (led by Darth Vader and the Sith).

Thus the story includes the human narrative of pain, struggle, freedom, love, family, betrayal, good vs evil and most importantly of all, a New Hope.

Lucas himself was quoted in a 1999 Times Magazine interview as saying:

"I see Star Wars as taking all the issues that religion represents and trying to distil them down into a more modern and easily accessible construct... I put the Force into the movie in order to try to awaken a certain kind of spirituality in people – more a belief in God than in a particular religious system. I wanted to make it so that young people would begin to ask questions about the mystery."

And, the mystery is what it is all about.

Today we gather here in order to acknowledge and celebrate a very special mystery. A mystery whereby a young virgin woman became pregnant and

eventually gave birth to a very special baby boy who would go forward to make a huge impact on the world.

In many ways, Jesus struggled against His own evil Empire. He also had to deal with love, betrayal, family, pain, fighting for freedom and all those human qualities linked to life as we know it. Jesus also had the advantage of a special force, as in the Holy Spirit, which empowered Him and gave Him strength. Jesus also empowered his disciples; they were His Jedi army...

We are reminded in the Gospel of John today how the Word became flesh, the incarnation.

The Incarnation is the mystery and the dogma of the Word made Flesh.

The noun *incarnation* comes from the ecclesiastical Latin verb *incarno*, meaning to make into flesh. This is what we are celebrating on Christmas Day. The fact that God was prepared to come into our world in order to make a difference to our lives, in order to bring us hope, a New Hope.

Essentially, the incarnation is when the Son of God takes on flesh and becomes fully human without ceasing to be fully truly divine. Divinity is not something that Jesus acquired later in life, or even after His death and resurrection. Incarnation does involve miracle and mystery.

However, my focus this morning is not primarily on a deep theological explanation of how the incarnation should be understood or a detailed précis of Star Wars, it is however a reminder of why so many people around the world honour this day as special.

Today, around the world Christians are reminded and acknowledge, that we are indeed grateful for the fact that Jesus was born into the world... for you and me.

Never before have I become so aware of the acute need for hope in the world... a New Hope... a hope that is brought on by the Gospel and the love of Jesus Christ.

The world remains submersed in a sad materialism, violence, evil, corruption and even a strong move away from the church and all that the New Hope represents.

Never before has the world been in such a dire need for hope, for ultimate self-actualisation cannot be found in money or the accumulation of goods, power and status. True fulfilment in life is found when our hearts and souls meet God in all His humility and grace. True salvation is found not in our credit card or the shopping mall, but in receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ at Mass.

So then my friends, what should our response be this Christmas morning?

Firstly, I believe that as Christians we should take the opportunity to reflect a little more deeply on the wonder of the incarnation and all that it represents for the world and our lives. I think, too often, we tend to take the incarnation and the birth of Jesus for granted. It is a miracle. It is an event we need to ponder over and remain awe struck about.

Secondly, we need to pass on this wonder to our children and if it means we need to include the Jedi and the Sith in our discussions with our children as a way of drawing parallel themes with Christianity, then by all means do so. Keep the faith alive. George Lucas has done a lot of the hard work for you... have that discussion... draw out the parallels... the force, as in the Holy Spirit is with you!

Thirdly, as Christians we need to have a real and practical response to the incarnation in the world around us. This implies real world action. Set yourself a New Year's resolution to do that one thing that you really know that needs to be done and that you have been putting off for ages. Make that phone call, look up that long lost friend, buy your partner that bunch of flowers, visit that old age home, donate those funds to your favourite charity. Jesus was born into this world in order to bring a New Hope and to make a difference. We honour Him when do the same. Be real.

Lastly, Christmas is a time of celebration, laughter, joy, giving and hope. It is important for me to mention that for many people this is not the case. There are people all around us who really struggle during this time for various reasons, be it through the death of a significant other, divorce, dysfunctional family or even poor health. If you are able to, open up your heart and your home today and extend the good tidings that Jesus brings to us. This is called

paying it forward, spreading the New Hope and keeping Jesus alive in the world.

May God bless you this Christmas day and let us be strong in the faith so that we do not open ourselves to a famous quote from the character of Darth Vader: "I find your lack of faith disturbing."

Be strong in the faith.

Always.

Joy to the world for the Lord has come!

Amen.