Christians, Become Who You Are…

Have you ever been to Dagobah?

Odds are probably not, as it doesn't exist. But it was the swampy and murky world where Yoda lived, the little green character we meet in "The Empire Strikes Back."

Admittedly I had to look that one up, (and am a bit more of a "Star Trek" guy), but if you remember that movie, much of it takes place on that swampy planet. It's here Luke Skywalker learns how to use the abilities he has, by listening, practicing, (and sometimes failing), but trusting that this seemingly strange little green guy will help him find who he really is and achieve his destiny.

This week in our Gospel, we don't meed Yoda, but we do meet Saint John the Baptist. He appears in the dessert, which is a significant thing because it is there one can go to get answers. People would journey at the time of John to him as he was seen as a holy prophet, and he baptized people as part of a ritual where a person would essentially get a new start or new orientation in life. The dessert features prominently in the Gospel, where Jesus also goes to be baptized, and where Jesus goes and is tempted by the devil. At a deeper level though the dessert is a place where one is free of distractions; where a person can seek answers to who is God, who am I, and what is the purpose of my life.

As we journey towards Christmas, we think about the past in Christ's coming the first time, but also the future when we will meet Jesus face to face. And it's a great time to seek God and think about our relationship with Him, namely how do we become the people we know we can become?

For one, we go not to Dagobah, but to our own version of it if you will. Find time for a bit of silence away from technology; find a bit of time for prayer. Even just a little bit every day can recharge the soul.

Secondly, we need to repent. John the Baptist tells us "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." People come to John to confess their sins. Part of going into the dessert if you will is it not only gives us answers as to what to do with decisions in our lives, but when we are free of distractions we can look at our lives and see what needs changing. All of us have room for improvement - and a health conscience is always asking "how can I become even better."

Lastly, seek out prophets in your life. We all need a Yoda, or a John the Baptist. People who will challenge us, who will give us the straight story, not just "likes" as on social media. We need encouragement, but also people who help us become saints because they see to our heart and the people we can become with effort.

The Gospel closes with John saying Jesus who is coming will baptize with fire and the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the Holy Spirit can fill our hearts and souls and can do so much. We

are mindful of this every time a baptism is celebrated. But just as a fire needs kindling, and a flower garden needs care and maintenance to bloom next spring and summer, the same is true with our souls. Let us not fall into the habit of thinking “I go to Mass once a week, I go to school or work and take care of the responsibilities in my life, and that’s good enough.” Luke Skywalker could do a few things with “The Force” by the time he got to Dagobah - but he could do so much more after he emerged from there, becoming who he was called to become. You and I aren’t called to become a Jedi Knight. You and I are called to become saints. With Jesus, and with the prophets he sends us in our lives, we can do just that. Let us listen to them, and have the humility to acknowledge we are works in progress, but can become so much more.

One of the things the early Church Fathers would say is “Christians, become who you are,” meaning we are loved by God, but when we respond to that love of God (grace), we can truly become amazing. May we strive to do that every day on our journey through life.

Have a blessed week!

Fr. Paul