

In our second reading, Saint Peter wrote: “Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” He then tells us how to do it: with gentleness and reverence and keeping our consciences clear and to be willing to suffer as we do it. Then, using suffering as the link, he goes on to tell us what the reason for our hope is: “For Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God. Put to death in the flesh, he was brought to life in the Spirit.” The reason for our hope is that, having united himself to us in such a way, Jesus died a death like ours so that we can experience a resurrection like his. Our hope is really Jesus himself.

“Why do you always seem to be so full of hope and joy?” Jesus’ Passion, death, and resurrection is a very specific way to answer that question, but it probably won’t be enough, and Peter didn’t expect it to be enough. He said for us to always be ready to give an explanation for the reason for our hope. Beyond knowing that Jesus suffered, died, and rose again for us, we need to know the rest of the story. We need to know the scriptures. We need to know our faith.

Now for a little bit of fun, at least for me, maybe not for you, but bear with me because I do have a point. What is the connection between Spider Man, the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and Dolly Parton? How is John Wayne connected to Star Wars, not just generally, but with a very specific uncredited appearance? And speaking of Star Wars, what is the deal with the new Star Wars movie coming out later this month, The Mandalorian and Grogu? What the heck is a Grogu; it sounds like a brand of yogurt. If I didn’t already know the answers to those questions, I bet there is a young person here who could not only tell me who Grogu is, but his back story, his connection to the larger Star Wars universe as well as every single easter egg in the movie trailers and what they mean. Maybe Star Wars isn’t your thing, but something certainly is. What are you passionate about? Whose story do you know almost as well as your own?

The letter to the Hebrews refers to Jesus as the author of our salvation. Authors tell stories and good authors often use things like foreshadowing or other little clues sprinkled into their stories that help to form them into a cohesive whole from beginning to end. So, here’s another question. What is the significance of Phillip’s trip to Samaria in the first reading? The Holy Spirit was playing around with a pattern. What was the importance of sending both Peter and John to Samaria? There is some irony in the choice of John to go with Peter. In two weeks we celebrate Pentecost; in August we celebrate the Assumption of Mary. Both liturgies have unusual choices of readings for their vigil Masses. What is the

connection between the Tower of Babel and Pentecost? Why does King David appear in connection to the Assumption of Mary? We are still in the Easter Season so what are the subtle connections between Mount Calvary and the Garden of Eden?

We know so many good stories, things we are passionate about, but do we know the most important story of all? If we want to be able to give an explanation for the reason for our hope, we have to know the story and the back story of our faith. We have to know God's story as he revealed it to us throughout the history of salvation. As the best of all authors, God has sprinkled the story of our salvation with tons of Easter eggs to help make it a cohesive whole.

All of this does have a connection to today's gospel in which Jesus said "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." What was the last commandment Jesus gave the apostles before his ascension? "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." As an apostolic church, that mission has been passed down to us. In order to teach the faith and make disciples of all nations, we have to know our faith, we have to know our story and how it connects to all other stories.

Those kids who might be able to tell me all about Groucho didn't learn all that stuff just by watching a few short videos now and then. A lot of time and commitment goes into learning about the things we love. And I am not saying there is anything wrong with that because maybe they might bring us joy and hope, they might help us find a little bit of light in the darkness...but they are not the reason for our hope and they cannot save us the way Jesus did.

To be able to give an explanation for the reason for our hope and to teach others about Jesus as he commanded us requires more than just a fifteen minute homily once a week. It requires a lifetime of study and commitment. It requires studying the scriptures, reading books, using media such as [Formed.org](https://www.formed.org), the Hallow app or whatever other resources are available; the best place to start is the Bible. If we can learn all there is to know about the Sith and Jedi or about the Dodgers and Yankees or John Wayne and Dolly Parton or whatever else it that we are passionate about, how can we say we are too busy to learn about Jesus and how he saved us? Jesus is the reason for our hope. Do we know him and his story well enough to share it with others? If not, it is never too late to begin the training.