

Welcome to the High Plains Preacher! Stories about the Bible, high wind, fast horses, lack of moisture and other elements of life in the Texas Panhandle

## Ezekiel and the Big Screen

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

What can you tell me about the prophet Ezekiel? If you don't know much about Ezekiel, you're missing out on one of the more colorful players in the Old Testament. Ezekiel, you see, had a flare for the dramatic. So much so that, if Steven Spielberg were Catholic, he'd consider Ezekiel his patron saint. Why? Because Ezekiel's prophetic visions are ready-made for the big screen!

Imagine, for instance, a movie about a destroyed city and a devastated nation: abandoned buildings, busted glass, burned-out vehicles, empty streets. And, on the outskirts of that city, a parched desert. And in that desert, a valley of dry bones.

That's what we'd expect in a movie by Steven Spielberg and that's exactly what we find in the Book of Ezekiel. Only Ezekiel does Spielberg one better! Ezekiel doesn't stop with human bones, for him, this is just the beginning of the movie! As we stare with him at those bones, God speaks to Ezekiel, proclaiming that soon those whitened bones will be rejoined with tendons, ligaments and muscle tissue. For thus says the Lord: *A devastated nation will arise!*

This is not Science Fiction. This is not Hollywood. This is the Word of God.

*"Oh, my people! I will open your graves and have you rise from them. I will place my spirit within you so you can live again. I have promised and I will do it, says the Lord."*

For a people as good as dead, Ezekiel proclaimed a new world ahead and his message rings true for us today. In a divided nation and out of deserts of splintered relationships, the Word of God, who is Christ, leads us through the Valley of Death, *with his rod and staff to guide us*. All we need do is follow his lead.

So, week after week, we trudge into church from out of the heat of the desert to catch our breath and regain our strength at the way station we call the Mass. It is there that an amazing event takes place: bread placed on a golden plate becomes as soft as skin and wine poured into a chalice becomes the stain of blood on a bandage, the bandage that covers the wounds of Christ, the One who took the bullet for you, the Savior who fought for you, the Messiah who gave his very life for you. And who, on the day of Easter, rose from the Tomb and broke the chains of Death...for you!

This mystery we call the Mass is the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision from long ago. It is there that get the strength we need to press on from despair to hope, from death to life. From the deserts of this world, to oceans of love in the next.

## Written in the Stars

by Jim Schmitmeyer

Couples engaged to get married often up a gift registry at some store. This allows their friends and family know where to purchase a wedding gift and just what sort of gift the new couple desires to receive. This is how it works: you visit the designated store or go on-line to its website and request the couple's wish list. After you purchase a gift, that item is removed is removed from the list. This keeps a newly married couple from receiving, let's say, twenty-five toasters. Or, if they're Catholic, fifteen statues of Our Lady for the flowerbed. Wedding registries are practical and convenient.

In addition to gift registries, there are *star* registries. I heard them about on a country radio station just last week. Star registries precede gift registries are more romantic. In place of simply singing a song to your sweetheart, you can now name a star in her honor for just \$19.95.

It is a nice idea but one that does carry potential risks. For example, how does a young man point out which exact star belongs to his girl? Can he afford to buy a telescope in order to do so? Can he operate a phone app to locate the star without looking like an idiot?

Worse of all, how does make this statement sound romantic: "*Honey, I named this star in the Milky Way after you! Look up there and you'll see it twinkling at 26.8 degrees NE of Canis Majoris, tucked in between Leonis and T-Alpa-792?*"

Naming a star after someone you love is a nice gesture, the Bible offers a much better approach. In the Book of Psalms we read, "Lord, when I look to the heavens and see the stars that you arranged and set in place, what is man that you should think of him? Mortal man that you should care for him?"

Which is more impressive? Naming a star after someone you love, or knowing that the Creator of the stars already knows her name?

Psalm 148 says it the best: *Praise Him, sun and moon! Yes! Praise Him, all you shining stars!*