

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

## Tested by Fire

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

A couple of years ago, Roseanne Perry wrote a young adult book called, *The Heart of a Shepherd*. It is the story of a young boy named Brother who lives on a ranch in Montana. His dad is off fighting the war in the Middle East. His mother is taking classes in a faraway city. His older brothers are in military school. So, for the time being, it's just Brother and his grandfather taking care of the cattle on the ranch.

Brother is a great kid. He serves Mass on Sunday and mends fences on Monday. On Saturday nights he plays chess with his grandfather on the back porch. He carries a torch for Rosita, his best friend's sister, the prettiest girl in school who can kill a rattle snake with a sling shot.

Brother knows that he wants to be like his father who is a soldier. He wants to be like his who is a rancher. Though he knows what he wants to be when he grows up, he's not sure what he wants to *do* and much of the book is focused Brother's ruminations on his vocation.

For the time being, Brother is determined to prove his worth by working hard on the ranch. He loves the ranch. And he loves his grandfather. He loves his grandfather so much that, one day, while trying to rescue the cattle from a raging wildfire, his grandfather dies from a heart attack in the effort to put out that fire and it is left to Brother to lift his grandfather's body back up on the horse that he was riding and lead the horse away from the fire and back to town many miles away.

In this story, a young boy is tested by fire. Yet it is the fire of love that gives Brother the courage to do what no boy his age should ever have to do.

After the smoke clears and his grief subsides, Brother looks back on that day and realizes that it was on that day that God revealed to him his true vocation. For Brother, what now mattered the most was not life in the army or life on the ranch, but life in heaven. He decided that day that he would not be soldier in the army, but a chaplain in the army and he begins to pray that he might, someday, become a priest.

Now you know what the story is called, *The Heart of a Shepherd*."

It is but one small story about finding one's vocation. God give each of us a different story to live. But, no matter what type of story we live, we will—all of us—be drawn to the fire of Love. And we will be tested by fire of Love. And we ourselves will become the fire of Love. God's eternal love, leading us all to our true and eternal home.