

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

The Holy Cross

Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

The world is full of crosses. We don't have to look far to find one. There is a cross that dangles from your rosary, for instance, as well as the crosses that stand tall and proud atop the steeples of our churches.

There are gold crosses on necklaces worn by pretty girls and crosses tattooed on the arms of some pretty tough guys. On Sunday mornings, I see young parents lift their children to the holy water font at the door of the church, then take their child's hand trace the sign of the cross over the child's confused and uncomprehending face.

Yes, there are crosses everywhere you look.

"If you wish to become my disciple," says the Lord. "You must pick up your cross daily and follow in my steps."

Do you have a cross hanging on your bedroom wall? Or a cross stamped into the leather of your belt? If so, what does that cross mean to you?

In some respects, crosses are similar to words. Our world is full of them and, therefore, they are easily ignored. Like so many words we hear day after day, the message of the cross can go in one ear and out the other.

Yet, if we ignore certain words, we do so to our peril, like the word *Danger!* posted at the edge of cliff in the Palo Duro Canyon. Or the word *Poison* printed on a jug of herbicide in a backyard shed. These words spell D-e-a-t-h, so we pay attention to them. Other words, however, spell L-i-f-e. And we pay attention to them as well, such as *Life Jacket*, *Tornado shelter*, *Emergency Exit* or *Slow Down – Children at Play*

Just as words have the power to save lives, the Cross has power to save souls.

I knew a woman who suffered from Alzheimer's disease. She grew up speaking German as a child and, on the night that she died, she was anxious and afraid. The disease had progress to the point where she would only respond to German. Sadly, no one in her family any longer spoke German so, in the final stage of her life, no words or faces were familiar to her. Yet, her daughter placed crucifix in her hand and she recognize the cross! She grasped it tightly and held it close to her heart until the moment she died.

That woman was my grandmother. And the last lesson she taught us was the power of the cross. A power stronger than any language can convey. A power strong enough to carry us from this life to the next.

