

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

## Overlooked

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

Can you relate to these words by Donald Miller?

*I grew up going to church, so I got used to hearing about God. He was like Uncle Harry or Aunt Sally, except we didn't have pictures. God never sent presents either. We had this dumpy house and dumpy car and I had zits. Looking back, I suppose God sent sunsets and forests and flowers, but what is that to a kid? I didn't feel like I knew God, yet He expected me to behave according to His standards.*

This is how Miller describes his childhood experience of God in his book, *Blue Like Jazz*. He sums it all up by saying: *If you don't love someone, it gets annoying when they tell you what to do or how to feel.*

In adulthood, Miller put his childish thoughts aside and embraced the Lord who, he now knows, loves him beyond what his mind can comprehend or his words can bring to convey. Still, his description of his childhood image of God as some distant figure is one that a lot of us can relate to.

In his first Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul strikes a similar note when he writes: "When it comes to being saved, not many of us were well-born, not many of us were influential or people of high social status."

Or, as Donald Miller would put it, we are like kids with runny noses and acne, living in dumpy houses with divorced parents working dead-end jobs. *Yet God chose us!*

When God stepped into our world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, he reached out to backstreet people. He chose ordinary people. He chose the weak and vulnerable.

Now, if you look at it from God's angle, it is not easy to convince someone that you love them if they themselves are convinced that they are unlovable.

Perhaps this is the reason why our bishops have called for a new evangelization that begins with relationship, rather than rules. It might be hard to obey rules and regulations but, when someone loves you, you'll do everything you can for them.

It all starts with relationship. "Where do you live?" asked a man named Thomas on the day he first met Jesus. "Come and see," replied Jesus. "I live just up the street."

He lives with us. He is one of us. And he loves us deeply because he knows us so well.