

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

Paperclips

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

It's springtime and everyone loves springtime. But it brings with it one drawback: springtime means spring Fever. It hits me bad. Especially when I'm in the parish office and get to thinking about guys who work outside with things like hammers and bulldozers and chainsaws. Some men shove steers up loading ramps into cattle trucks but the only thing I get to shove is paper across my desk. So, come spring, I spend a lot of time looking the office window fiddling with paper clips.

When was the last time you fiddled with a paper clip? Did you bend it apart then try to bend it back into shape? Can't be done. Until now.

Scientists at the University of Illinois have concocted a type of metal that snaps back to its original shape when heat is applied.

Not a big deal when it comes to paperclips, but a it'd sure come in handy the next time you find yourself in the middle of an intersection with a crinkled-up fender. It's called "metal with memory" and involves chemical reactions with compounds less than 100 nanometers in thickness. (For comparison, the width of a human hair is about 100,000 nanometers.)

We value science. It gives us chemo-therapy to fight cancer. It can produce drought-resistant cotton and genetically modified corn. And now science can put paperclips back into their original shape. But science is not the only course in the curriculum of life.

Science cannot explain the longing of the soul or the purpose of life or the reason we are here. Something as simple as choosing the right name for your baby girl or the challenge to love one's enemy moves us far beyond the realm of chemical reactions.

It's great that chemical engineers can now create "metal with memory," But there exists a deeper memory that is far more important: a memory handed on to us by our parents, safeguarded by the Church, a living memory unfolded before us in the Sacraments that we celebrate.

The memory of a virgin conceiving without sin, water turning into wine, lepers being cleansed, a blood-stained cross on Calvary. And an empty tomb outside Jerusalem.