

## THE HIGH PLAINS PREACHER

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

### Some Assembly Required

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

How many of you read the instructions before assembling a new piece of furniture? How many of you read the owner's manual that came in the box with your microwave? Have you ever taken time to read the safety precautions on a bottle of aspirin?

Most of us do not waste time reading instructions. But, now and then, we might grab a set of directions out of frustration when drawers don't fit, lights don't blink and there are too many screws left lying on the floor.

In a case like that, I'm always thankful when, next to the written instructions, are illustrated drawings. I'm much more apt to study a series of drawings than read a list of instructions.

And this brings me to the Bible and the reason why I tend to relate to Gospel stories more than the Epistles of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. John or St. Jude. Their writings tend to be more like instructions and I prefer books with pictures, that is to say, illustrations.

So, allow me to provide an illustration of what I'm referring to. I recently read the passage in the Acts of the Apostles that tells of Paul and Silas chained to a stake in a prison cell. Late that night, as they were praying and singing, the city was hit by an earth quake and the door to the cell swung open. The guard, thinking the prisoners had escaped, drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul called out, "We're still here!" and the guard spirited Paul and Silas away to his house. When they arrived, he asked how he and his family could be saved.

The passage tells us that Paul spoke the Word of God to him. But this was only Step One. Step Two followed when the guard did an amazing thing: he knelt and bathed the wounds that the prison shackles had inflicted on the wrists and ankles of Paul and Silas. It was then that Paul baptized him.

In other words, the words of instruction were not enough. By his action of humility and compassion, the guard showed Paul and Silas that he not only grasped the meaning of the gospel that Paul delivered, but he was ready and willing to put it into practice.

This story provides more than an illustration of what it means to believe. It also provides a model for all believers to follow: studying God's Word is important but putting it into practice is vital.

Without doubt, when it comes to the Kingdom of God, some assembly is required.