

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.

Horse Sense

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

I train horses and, right now, I'm also training a young man named Kyle how to start colts. Kyle is not an experienced rider. Nevertheless, like most young fellows, when he sees a horse the first thing he wants to do is jump in the saddle. I remind Kyle of a saying among us horse trainers: *Green-on-Green makes Black-and-Blue*. In other words, you put a green rider on a green horse, you're cruisin' for a bruisin'.

At this time, we're doing ground work with a two-year-old colt named Buddy. We take it slow. Each session is short and simple. When Buddy learns one new thing, we call it quits and come back the next day.

"Remember that he's just two-years-old," I tell Kyle. "On top of that, a horse's brain is the size of a walnut. They can't process too much at one time."

Kyle nods. "Think I can get on him next week? Or maybe tomorrow?"

"Kyle," I drop the tailgate on the truck. "Sit down. We need to talk."

It's been a long day and I'm feeling as old as Abraham. I decide to quiz Kyle, a good Baptist, on the Bible. "How old was Abraham when Isaac was born?"

"Not sure," he says. "Pretty old, I know that."

"He was 99," I tell him. "Abraham's faith needed time to develop to the point where Abraham could handle the job of being the father of many nations."

I point to the colt. "That's how it is with a horse, Kyle. The longer it takes a horse to learn something, the better he knows it."

Kyle swatted a fly. "You're telling me to be patient."

"It pays off," I said.

Kyle fiddled with the halter. "Think he'll be ready to ride next week?"

"That depends," I said, nodding at the colt standing quietly in the round pen. "Buddy's right on schedule. We'll see how far you come by next week."