



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

Force of Habit

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

When I tether my horse to a post, I use a double-rope knot. This means that I wrap strands of rope around the post before tying it off with in rabbit-ear loop. It's not a pretty know. In fact, it looks big and bulky and lumpy and bumpy. But one yank of the loose end and the rope drops off the post like ragdoll off a highchair. Not a stitch of rope is left behind the post or snagged around the post. It's a perfect knot to use with colts that often spook. This means I use this double-rope knot all the time. And, because I use it all the time, I tie this knot thinking about how I do it.

I can *show* you how to tie this knot, but don't ask me to explain it. I have to do so with my hands, not my words.

I also know a nifty way to tie up the latigo strap when I undo the cinch. I thread the strap through the saddle's front loop, pull it toward my chest, drop it down, double it up, and snug it tight like a necktie.

Like the double-rope knot, the one pull on the loose end and the four-foot strap falls to the ground as soft as rain.

I'm sure you employ routine tasks each day without having to think through the process. This frees the brain to concentrate on more important matters.

A similar advantage applies to the practice of religion. When we are in the habit of performing certain rituals, they become so much a part of us that, if asked to explain why we do them, we don't quite know what to say. I'm referring to things like genuflecting, making the Sign of the Cross, saying grace before meals or kissing the crucifix when you finish praying the rosary.

Like a cowboy tying a horse to a post, or a mother tying the shoe of her toddler, there are things that Catholics do without have to "think them through."

We should be proud of this. It means that we do these actions so often that they have become a part of us. We perform them heart because that is where that is where love resides: in the heart. Deep in the heart.