

Contemplation at the Bar R Ranch

by [Jeff Gundy](#) in the [June 12, 2007](#) issue

Both the owner and his daughter said we'd have to see the crosses,
so of course I tried to avoid them, but wandering aimlessly

after sublimity as I do on free afternoons I followed a sign
that said "Baptismal" down a narrow way

and stepped carefully on the rocks across the icy creek.
When I looked up there they were, enormous,

big enough to crucify a pteranodon or a giraffe.
As I climbed the muddy path some part of me said,

I have to safeguard my doubts and another remembered
how the old picker said to Goodman, *I find*

the prettiest woman in the room and play every song for her.
Too edgy to eat, Salinger's Franny tried to pray

the Jesus prayer all the way through homecoming.
With the sun low behind the crosses, I could barely look.

Thin grass, lichens, rocks and gravel lay low all around,
stunned by some brutal devotion not their own.

Three weeks to solstice. Faint thin birdsong.
So many trees, so many rocks, so many women

whose lives and bodies I will never touch.
The creek rippled on, Shasta glowed in the chilly haze,

a strand of spider silk glinted in and out of sight.

Breathe in: *This is paradise*. Breathe out: *I must go*.