



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Vol: 7 No: 2 May 2003

Raven's Bread is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in the eremitical life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. The newsletter seeks to affirm and support this way of life. ***Raven's Bread*** is a collaborative effort and thus depends on the shared reflections, stories, news, notices, letters, and information from hermits themselves. The ***Raven's Bread*** Web page is an abbreviated version of our full printed newsletter, which also includes a **Bulletin Board** and **Reader Forum** featuring responses to a quarterly discussion topic.

Please send your written contributions, as well as address changes and subscriptions to:

Raven's Bread
18065 Hwy 209
Hot Springs, NC 28743

The annual subscription to the printed newsletter is \$8.00 in USA and \$10.00 US currency for foreign subscriptions. (Drafts drawn on US banks are the most convenient form of payment by foreign subscribers.) Any extra donations will be used to subsidize subscriptions for hermits who cannot afford the full cost.

To E-mail ***Raven's Bread*** directly click on this link: fredette@nclink.net

Raven's Bread (formerly ***Marabou***) derives its name from the experience of Elijah, the prophet, in 1 Kgs.17: 1-6. A raven, sent by God, nourished him during his months of solitude at the Wadi Cherith (the Cutting Place).

zzzzzz **Thoughts in Solitude** zzzzzz

Excerpts from The Art of prayer: An Orthodox Anthology **By: Igumen Chariton of Valamo**

You dream of a hermitage. But you already have your hermitage, here and now! Sit still, and call out: "Lord have mercy!" When you are isolated from the rest of the world, how will you fulfill the will of God? Simply by preserving within yourself the right inner state. And what is this? It is a state of unceasing remembrance of God in fear and piety, together with the remembrance of death. The habit of walking before God and keeping Him in remembrance – such is the air we breathe in the spiritual life. Created as we are in the image of God, this habit should exist in our spirit naturally. If it is absent, that is because we have fallen away from God. As a result of this fall, we have to fight to acquire the habit of walking before God. Our ascetic struggle consists essentially in the effort to stand consciously before the face of the ever-present God.

There are also various secondary activities which likewise form part of the spiritual life. Here too, there is work to be done, in order to direct these activities to their true aim. Reading, meditation, prayer, all our occupations and contacts, must be conducted in such a way as not to blot out or disturb the remembrance of God. The seat of our consciousness and attention must be concentrated on this remembrance of God.

The mind is in the head and intellectuals live always in the head. They live in the head and suffer from unceasing turbulence of thoughts. This turbulence does not allow the attention to settle on any one thing. Neither can the mind, when it is in the head, dwell constantly on the one thought of God. All the time it keeps running away. For this reason, those who want to establish the one thought of God within themselves, are advised to leave the head and descend with their mind into their heart, and to stand there with ever present attention. Only then, when the mind is united with the heart, is it possible to expect success in the remembrance of God.

This, then, is the aim which you should now set before yourself, and toward which you should begin to advance. Do not think that this task is beyond your strength, but also do not think that it is so easy that you have only to wish it, and it will be immediately accomplished. The first step in attracting the mind to the heart is essentially to be moved with sympathy, entering with your feelings into the meaning of the prayers which you read or hear; for it is the feelings of the heart which usually dominate the mind. If you take this first step as you should, these feelings will change according to the content of the prayers. But besides this first kind of feelings there are others, far stronger and more overwhelming – feelings which take captive both our consciousness and heart, enchaining the soul and giving it no freedom to continue reading, claiming its attention wholly for themselves. These are special feelings; and as soon as they are born, the soul too gives birth to prayers which are their very progeny. You must never interrupt these special feelings and prayers which are born in the heart – do not, for instance, go on reading but stop at once – for you must leave them freedom to pour out until they are exhausted and emotion returns to the level of the more usual feelings during prayer. This second form of prayer is more powerful than the first and sends the mind down into the heart more quickly. But it can only act after the first form, or together with it.

A Word from Still Wood

“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?” A small newsletter, “Friends of Silence,” by Nan Merrill always features this provocative quote on the first page. It is a question that disturbs us, partly because it is extremely important and partly because the answer is uncertain. This question is a particular challenge to all of us who aspire to a life of solitude and prayer.

“Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?” If the Word were truly being heard, what would our lives be like? Our country? Our planet? Would we be so tormented by impatience, anxiety, rash judgment, anger or depression? Instead, if we were quiet enough to hear the Word, perhaps we would experience more tranquility, peace, and sweet contentment with what each day offers and asks.

If there were more silence in our frenetic society, would there be so much violence and rage? Ambition and competition? Loneliness and despair? What would the “Great Society” look like if the Word of the Lord influenced decisions in the oval office? In political caucuses? In corporate board rooms? What would happen if everyone in our country turned off their TV, radio, stereo, and walkman for even 15 minutes? What would happen if there were a 15 minute moratorium on the use of cell phones, emails, faxes and satellite communication? Whose Voice would we hear in the ensuing silence?

We wonder what our global village would be like if we took time to listen to what everyone was saying – no matter what the language. In every conversation, the silences speak more truthfully than the words. Do we know how to listen for the Silence which allows the Word to be heard?

As hermits and solitaries we may wonder what we should do when senseless wars, boundless greed, overweening arrogance determines the future of our beloved earth. Perhaps it is our job to insure that there IS enough silence for the Word to be heard? Can we cultivate quiet so the Voice of Love can silently seep into our anguished, anxious hearts and teach us ways of compassion, forgiveness and mercy?

What can we do? “(We) have been told what is good, and what the Lord requires of (us):... only to act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with our God.” (Micah 6:8)

Here at Still Wood we cherish the silence that allows us to hear the birds, the breezes playing in the unfolding leaves and the surge of Spring Creek swollen with spring rain. Sadly, there is also the silence of a beloved little voice, that of our white cat-companion, Merton the Tom. He passed into the fields of celestial catnip during Lent. We miss his wise and regal presence and ask: “For such a little guy, how could he have taken up so much room in our lives, our hearts?” This silence of his absence, strangely enough, also engenders the quiet Presence of the One in whom nought that is loved is ever lost.

We once more thank all of you who have contributed to this issue - with insights and personal sharings; with renewals and donations. Our gratitude is boundless and is echoed by all the readers who make up our Raven's Bread fellowship. Let us continue to support one another in prayer, especially during this joyous Paschal Season!

With Grateful love,

Karen & Paul

The 2001 Survey of Raven's Bread Readers

Since "The Survey" was initiated more than 620 copies were mailed to our readership. Over 175 became participants. A truly gratifying experience that continues to generate a wide range of responses. The volume of returns stays at a fantastic 25%!!! It says something wonderful about everyone who cooperated in this project, making it truly reflective of what is happening in our own time re solitary lifestyles. We continue to receive requests for **Survey Results** and back issues containing the summaries we have printed thus far.

The current print issue of **RB** (May 2003) features the results of the Seventh of Ten Reflection Questions: *"What has been your experience of finding spiritual guidance? If you have a spiritual director experienced in guiding eremitics, how did you find him/her?"*

117 "resourceful people" responded to this topic, an indication of the importance of spiritual direction to persons interested in the solitary life. However, the need for such guides seems to outstrip the number of experienced people available. The summary indicates that God provides guidance whenever it is crucial that a person have it - usually during the process of initial discernment or when a person is experiencing a movement toward living a different form of the solitary calling...

(from editor's introduction, pg. 4 of May 2003 Print Issue)

We are still offering the initial "big picture" summary from the eleven categories covered in the Survey's check-off section (Personal Information, Location, Religious Affiliation and Status, Lifestyle, Prayer Forms and Religious Practices, Financial Situation, Spiritual Direction, and Difficulties) which was published in the August 2001 Issue. In upcoming issues, we will continue to review with our readers the material received in answer to the **10 Reflection Questions** and offer updates about any significant new data we receive. Eventually, a complete Report will be available from **RB RESOURCES**.

If you are interested in obtaining the **2001 Raven's Bread Survey Results**, these initial reports are available upon request to our online readers for \$5.00 each (U.S. currency):

By Mail:

Raven's Bread
18065 Hwy 209
Hot Springs, NC 28743

By Telephone: 1-828-622-3750

By E-Mail: fredette@nlink.net

**If we fail to embrace our ultimate aloneness
and seek meaning only in communion with others,
we wither and die...**

from The Courage to Teach by Parker Palmer

zzz **Hermits for Peace** zzz

We keep to ourselves in so many different ways.

Some dwell in city neighborhoods, and others in rural places among the trees. Some

are religious, others find faith in their own ways. Some find relationship in work or with modest friends, others think of sky and rock, trees and birds as dear companions. These are hermits - men and women who find sustenance outside the life of the world. Men and women who have found completion without worldly life.

A hermit stops, looks and listens as the world repeats endless cycles of peace and war. A hermit knows that the peace of the world is always conditional. A hermit knows that true peace is not just the absence of war. Hermits watch as another cycle of war takes the world in its jaws.

A solitary vocation is neither an escape from life nor is it self-indulgence. A hermit seeks to remain in a condition that is other than war or peace. It is an awesome task that takes everything the solitary can offer.

Deep in solitude, hermits enter the Great Peace. We pray in our own ways, taking in worldly life and releasing unconditional love in an endless rhythm of awareness and compassion. We free white and black doves from confinement. This is our livelihood, commitment, and way of life.

Hermits for peace live in vigilant, simple attention. Our prayer is silence and our rule, simplicity. They say this is a just war, but the hermit knows it is just war. Come, Hermits for Peace - please join us in contemplation.

from: Mountain Sage Hermitage, Nederland, CO

Discussion Topic for August 2003 Issue:

A Reader writes:

"Independence, Dependence, Interdependence I believe these are vital for all hermits.

How do other hermits hold them in balance?"

Deadline: July 1, 2003

So, instead of loving what you think is peace,
Love others and Love God above all.
And, instead of hating the people you think are warmongers,
hate the appetite and the disorder in your own soul,
which are the causes of war.
If you love peace, then hate injustice
hate tyranny, hate greed-
But hate these things in yourself,
Not in another.

Thomas Merton

"A Suggestion"

Trying to get in touch with another hermit? Want contact from a hermit or solitary? Aware of opportunities that may be of interest to solitaries? Have you a service to offer? Are you looking to locate or re-locate a hermitage? Why not place your message on the **Bulletin Board** of ***Raven's Bread*** (printed version). Requests are posted **free of charge** for our regular subscribers.

Resources Available from *Raven's Bread*

(all prices include postage)

Readings in Spirituality - Annotated Bibliography by Sharon Jeanne Smith **31pp. \$15.00**

Solitude & Union: A Select Bibliography on the Hermit Way of Life by Cecilia W. Wilms **26pp. \$13.00**

Commentary on Canon 603 from "The Law of Consecrated Life" by Jean Beyer SJ, 1988 Translated from the French by W. Becker, 1992 **10pp. \$3.00**

Hermits: The Juridical Implications of Canon 603 by Helen L. Macdonald, Researcher Novalis: St. Paul University, Ottawa, ONT **24pp. \$12.00**

Notes to Guide the Beginning Hermit by A Hermit of Mercy **15pp. \$7.50**

Statutes for Hermits by The Bishops of France (1989) **12 pp. \$6.00**

Fellowship of Solitaries

Comprised of and open to religious solitaires of all stripes. The Fellowship is ecumenical and has no official connections with any church. People may join the Fellowship either as Members or as Associates. All receive a regular Newsletter and a List of Members, so that they may be prayerfully aware of each other in their different paths and to make contact with each other if they so wish.

Correspondent: Eve Baker, Coed Glas, Talgarth Road, Bronllys, Brecon, Powys, LD3 0HN

To email Fellowship of Solitaires directly click on this link: fos@btinternet.com

To access the website of Fellowship of Solitaires click on this link: <http://www.btinternet.com/~benedict.baker>

Inner Light Productions, Michael McClellan, Editor

Thoughts-of-the-Week from the Desert Fathers

To subscribe:

Send a blank e-mail to: thoughts-of-the-week-request@innerlightproductions.com

with this text in the body: subscribe thoughts-of-the-week

Four Articles by Kenneth C. Russell. Reprinted by permission from "*Review for Religious*" (excellent footnotes & references)

Being a Hermit: Where and How 12 pp, \$6.00

Acedia - The Dark Side of Commitment 4 pp. \$2.00

The dangers of Solitude 5 pp. \$2.50

Must hermits Work? 10 pp. \$5.00

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from 11 categories (personal information, location, religious affiliation and status, lifestyle, prayer forms and religious practices, financial situation, spiritual direction, difficulties).

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.5 No.3. **2 pp. \$5.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from First Reflection Question: "For me the grace and essence of solitary living is..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.5 No.4. **2 pp. \$5.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Second Reflection Question: "How did you come to recognize your call to religious / solitary / hermit life?"

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.1. **2 pp. \$5.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Third Reflection Question: "Reactions of others to my choice of eremitic life..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.2. **2 pp. \$5.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Fourth Reflection Question: "For members of religious congregations: Reactions of the community to my choice of hermit life..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.3. **2 pp. \$5.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Fifth Reflection Question: "For former members of religious congregations: What prompted you to leave? Was your departure related to your attraction to solitude..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.4. **2 pp. \$5.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Sixth Reflection Question: "If you are married and attracted to Solitude, how do you work this out with your spouse?"

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.7 No.1. **1 page \$2.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Seventh Reflection Question: "What has been your experience of finding spiritual guidance?"

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.7 No.2. **2 pages \$5.00**

Raven's Rest

The Silence...The Solitude...The Solace of God...

Retreatants welcome to schedule time from April 6 through November 1, 2003 at **Raven's Rest** Hermitage (a fully furnished apartment with kitchenette & private entrance) here at **Still Wood**. Offers opportunity to experience solitude and silence on a forested mountainside of the Newfound Range in the rural Smokies, approximately 35 miles N.E. of the Great Smokies National Park and 35 miles N.W. of Asheville. Spiritual Direction available upon request. Suggested offering \$25.00 per day includes meals. For further information, contact:

Paul and Karen Fredette
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Tel: 828-622-3750
[email: fredette@nclink.net](mailto:fredette@nclink.net)

BOOK NOTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Art of Spritual Direction: Giving and Receiving Spritual Guidance by W. Paul Jones. *The author likes to image the role of the spiritual director as "so entering the lives of others that one is able to sing their song when they forget the words – knowing best which verse to sing, and whether to sing it in a major or minor key."* Drawing on years of experience as both directee and director, Jones gives the reader a full understanding of the various types of spiritual direction as well as guidelines, methods, and resources for sessions. 2002. Paperback, 299 pp. Upper Room Books, 1908 Grand Avenue, Nashville, TN 37212 - www.upperroom.org

Teaching The Dead Bird To Sing: Living the Hermit Life Without and Within by W. Paul Jones. *In this book, the author, a former social activist and noted theologian, shares the intimate record of his journey toward monastic life. He describes the anguish of facing his own inner demons, the glimmers of spiritual insight along the way, and both the terror and the exhilarating freedom that come with profound solitude.* 2002. Paperback, 224 pp. \$16.95 Paraclete Press, Brewster, MA - www.paracletepress.com

Web of Silence: Letters to Meditators by Laurence Freeman. *The author gives practical, inspirational advice on prayer, meditation and seeking God. "As the world moves so rapidly into ever denser folds of communication, its need for silence grows proportionately." Without periods of silence and non-action our lives become meaningless spirals of stress.* 1998. Paperback, 152 pp. \$11.95 Continuum Publishing Co. 370 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Listening To Silence: An Anthology of carthusian Writings compiled by Robin Bruce Lockhart. *For hundreds of years Carthusians writing in solitude, alone with God, have produced some of the most powerful spiritual writing known to humankind. In this volume Robin Bruce Lockhart has gathered together a selection of the finest Carthusian writings from across the centuries which demonstrate their timeless and uplifting qualities.* 1997. Paperback, 108 pp. Darton, Longman, and Todd, Ltd., 1 Spencer Court, 140-142 Wandsworth High Street, London SW18 4JJ UK

New additions to Raven's Bread Resources:

"A Rule for Hermits" by Padre Fray Alberto E. Justo, OP in English and Spanish. 9pp. \$4.00

Note: "Marabou" founder, Fr. Bede Jagoe OP, brought this to our attention and asked us to credit Fr. Tom Johnston OP who offered it to him.

"A Briefly Annotated Bibliography of Books on Solitude" prepared by an RB reader. 4pp. \$2.00

Websites of Interest:

www.heandi.qc.ca
www.mediaspaul.qc.ca
www.umilta.net/eremit.html
www.chrmysticaloutreach.com
www.commstanth.org
www.hermitary.com
<http://solitary.pilgrims.users.btopenworld.com>

Books for the Soul Catalogue:

Mediaspaul, 250 rue Saint-Francois Nord, Sherbrooke, QC J1E2B9 Canada



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