



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

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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 Site offers an **ABBREVIATED** version of our full printed newsletter, which also includes a **Bulletin Board**, a **Reader Forum** featuring responses to a quarterly discussion topic, and a **Letters** section from the readership.

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

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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. If you enjoy this free online service, we encourage you to make a donation to ***Raven's Bread Ministries***.

To E-mail ***Raven's Bread*** directly click on this link: pkfredette@earthlink.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 On Solitude** zzzzzz

Excerpted from "The Call of Solitude"

by Ester Buchholz

<http://cms.psychologytoday.com/articles>

Now, more than ever, we need our solitude. Being alone gives us the power to regulate and adjust our lives. It can teach us fortitude and the ability to satisfy our own needs. A restorer of energy, the stillness of alone experiences provides us with much needed rest. It brings forth our longing to explore, our curiosity about the unknown, our will to be an individual, our hopes for freedom. Alonetime is fuel for life...

Both the need to be alone and to engage others are essential to human happiness and survival, with equally provocative claims. Mother nature gives aloneness a high priority: sleep is nature's way of ensuring solitude. But given the rise in the number of sleep disorder clinics and the sale of soporific drugs, even this one fundamental outlet for aloneness is in trouble...

In the past century, the way we have handled aloneness has changed dramatically. "Alone" did not always mean the absence of others. The word was coined in medieval times, and originally signified a completeness in one's singular being. In religious terminology, "solitude" typically meant the experience of oneness with God. Yet all the current meanings of "alone" imply a lack of something. Invariably, solitude meets with social questioning, if not censure. Even worse, people associate going it alone with antisocial pursuits and unnecessary risk taking. Perhaps most striking, solitude conjures up pangs of loneliness.

Loneliness is indeed the most obvious risk of aloneness. The very idea of solitude may

evoke deep childhood fears of abandonment and neglect, and cause some people to rush to connectedness. But I do not believe that loneliness can be totally banished from life, nor that it should be. Like anxiety or guilt it's part of the human condition. It tells us that we are not being understood and are perhaps too isolated from community and connection. Surprisingly, it can also tell us that we are not taking time to be in contact with our inner selves - to be alone...

During an excursion to the Monasterio de Santa Maria de Pedralbes in Spain, I entered the large and mostly undecorated main sanctuary and was stunned by the quiet. How does the search for God overlap with the search for solitude? Religion must provide time for prayer and meditation. And the relationship of the individual to God is one solution to the paradox of aloneness and relatedness.

The life of the ancient solitary monk has much to convey to us about needs for alonetime and social engagement. Both monastery and monk stem from the same Greek word, meaning "alone" or "single." Interestingly, the word "convent" comes from the Latin "convenire," which means to meet together. The origins of these two words, monastery and convent, poetically combine the two basic human needs to be alone and to be together.

Contemplation is often described as the preferred mode for achieving spiritual peace which is why journeys on the way to truth or salvation are undertaken alone. Religious pilgrimages in the old sense still occur today, but they are briefer; we even see in people's recreational walks and runs attempts to escape the hectic pace of life and rid the mind of excess. These sojourns, of course, do not equal the many-month hikes of ancient times. But Buddhists continue to live in a state of pilgrimage, because they view life as a series of present moments that call us to a state of non-attachment and yet, at the same time, unity with God.

For religion to have its greatest appeal, it must allow time for solitude. The book of Genesis lays this foundation. Within the creation story, God established Saturday, the Shabbat, as a day of rest, set aside from all others. The shabbat was a time to contemplate one's life and the scriptures. We can do the same whether we take a day of rest for ourselves, or an hour of quiet prayer, or even a few minutes of quiet meditation. Whether in a remote faraway stillness or in the very center of a community, the hermit or itinerant monk resides in us all.

A Word from Still Wood

High summer in the Appalachians where the shade is deep in the woods and the sun hot and bright on the tilted pasture land...where daily showers drench the slopes, nourishing the myriad life-forms harbored there. Mists rise from behind hidden ridges giving the Smokies their name, their mystery, and their lush vegetation. No where is there a richer profusion of trees, herbs, and wildflowers than in these mountains, the most ancient on the surface of our planet.

The fullness of summer this year includes extraordinary heat and humidity, as we hear is true of much of the US. Seeking both shade and refreshment of heart, we often wander down a short path to commune with Petra, a great boulder that juts ten feet from the forest floor. We stand there, gazing up at the lichen and moss covered surface of this towering monolith and then pad around behind it where the surface kindly dips down to a mere 18 inches. She invites us to climb up and perch on her broad lap, lay our hands on her curiously warm skin, and absorb her age-old wisdom. She has been a part of this mountain for a long, long time and seen many changes, including the shifts that lifted her from deep underground to her present position overlooking our home.

Petra always helps us put our "problems" in perspective. Given the millenia she has endured, does it matter so much that we are behind in our daily schedule; that workmen have disappointed us yet once again; or that our careful budget has been blown to bits by a broken tooth that needs a crown?

We're certain Petra laughed softly over our excitement that ***Raven's Bread*** received a mention in **Newsweek** magazine. A thirty-second blip of "fame" doesn't count for much in the larger scheme of our planet's existence. But that "blip" has resulted in nearly a hundred new subscribers joining our rolls. We welcome you, dear friends, and hope you will find some word of wisdom among the sharings in **RB's** pages. That is our true wealth - the generous sharing by our readers of their own insights and hard-won knowledge of what it takes to enter deeply into solitary living. Can we ever thank you adequately?

Soon, we may be calling on you for even more such contributions! One fortuitous result of the **Newsweek** piece is an invitation by a Catholic publisher to write a book about hermit life! Since some of you suggested that this might be a good way to mark **RB's**

tenth anniversary, we had already been entertaining this idea. The results of the Survey to which many of you responded will form part of the material we plan to use. As the book outline firms up, we may ask some of you to contribute an essay or reflection on a particular topic. We will keep you posted as things develop. In the meantime, let us praise the God who cares for both age-old mountains and the human children whose lives pass briefly in the shadow of Petra and her sisters.

**With Grateful love,
Karen & Paul**

**There is a difference between being a solitary person
and a lonely person,
and believing in God makes the difference.
Choosing to be alone with God gives you that connection.
Diana Vreeland (*American Fashion Designer*)**

Discussion Topics for November 2005 Issue:

How do hermits, whose interactions with others are so limited, deal with the death of a loved one? How have others mourned and coped with their grief?

Deadline: October 1, 2005

**Solitude is the furnace of transformation.
Without solitude we remain victims of our society
and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self.
*Henri J.M. Nouwen (Teacher/Author)***

zzz ECO-HERMITS (continued) zzz

By Janet Diehl

The maintenance of balance is important in the eremitical life. Orthodox religions have spiritual directors whose task is to assist hermits and religious to evaluate themselves honestly, and not to escape into self-delusion or fantasy. Physical activity, healthy diet, suitable clothing and accommodation, good study habits, a sense of humor and emotional stability are essential.

I tended to avoid radio and television until I heard the Dalai Lama say in an interview that he listened to all the world news services each morning so that he would be able to pray specifically for all the current situations. Radio, and the internet, are now the main means by which I keep myself informed. I also have a colour TV set which I use less and less for daily programs. A video-recorder enables me to watch selected items in my own time, and to record items which may be of interest to others, especially the Permaculture community.

The following quotes come from a film called "Freedom or Madness?" televised in 1998. A number of Australian hermits from a variety of spiritual traditions were interviewed.

"In some cultures, the hermit was seen as an essential part of the social structure of a community, and was kept (supported) by the village." (Celtic Tradition)

"Living alone...provides one with the opportunity to feel very close to others, close to people in heart and soul."

"To open my heart and soul to people, to be fully in community with them."

"In many societies the hermit is a kind of spiritual barometer."

"People have said to me, 'I'm not really religious, but it's nice to know that you are there.'"

"The hermit life does not seem to some very productive. We pray in faith, we pray because it seems to right thing to do, we let go of any idea of spiritual reward..."

"If you think that by becoming a hermit you can get away from yourself, you couldn't be more wrong..."

"God takes the initiative, and you become more and more receptive. It's a process of surrender..."

"I think prayer is the most political and most subversive force on this planet!"

Orthodox traditions maintain that it is not possible to become a hermit unless one has first spent a period of time in a religious order, becoming accustomed to the necessary disciplines, rituals, and theology. Not all belief systems, however, support a worldview in which the boundaries between life-forms are dissolved, and humans are no more important than anything else for the divine is reflected and revered by all beings.

I and others like me have gradually developed an idiosyncratic lifestyle through ideological convictions; to show solidarity with the oppressed and exploited earth and all her inhabitants; and through personal experience of the dissolving boundaries between inner and outer worlds, and between ourselves and other life-forms. All of which makes it easier, in fact imperative, to live, or to spend long periods of time, alone.

To be continued

**When we are unable to find tranquility within
ourselves;
it is useless to seek it elsewhere.
Rochefoucauld
(French Philosopher)**

"A Suggestion"

Trying to get in touch with another subscriber to Raven's Bread? Want contact from a subscriber or solitary in your area? Aware of opportunities that may be of interest to subscribers/solitaries? Have you a service to offer or product to sell? 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.

Hermit Resources Available from *Raven's Bread* August 2005

(all prices include postage)

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Annotated Readings in Spirituality - by Sharon Jeanne Smith **21pp. \$5.00**

Solitude & Union: A Select Bibliography on the Hermit Way of Life by Cecilia W. Wilms **26pp. \$5.00**

Annotated Books on Solitude - **4pp. \$2.00**

JURIDICAL COMMENTARIES

Commentary on Canon 603 from "The Law of Consecrated Life" by Jean Beyer SJ, 1988 Translated from the French by W. Becker, 1992 **10pp. \$2.50**

Hermits: The Juridical Implications of Canon 603 by Helen L. Macdonald, Researcher Novalis: St. Paul University, Ottawa, ONT **24pp. \$5.00**

Statutes for Hermits by The Bishops of France (1989)

12 pp. \$2.50

HERMIT RULES

Rules for Hermits (Spanish & English) by Padre Justo, O.P. **9pp. \$2.50**

Eremitic Rule of Life **30pp. \$5.00**

Franciscan Plan of Life in Hermitage **4pp. \$2.00**

Topical Outline for Plan of Eremitical Life **3pp. \$2.00**

HERMIT SURVEYS

Raven's Bread Survey 2001 - Compiled Responses **23pp. \$5.00**

Marabou Questionnaire 1996 - **9pp. \$2.50**

ARTICLES & COMMENTARIES

Notes to Guide the Beginning Hermit by A Hermit of Mercy **15pp. \$3.00**

Lay Hermits by Rev. Eugene Stockton **8pp. \$2.50**

NCR 2004 "Sacristans of Emptiness" by Rich Heffern **6pp. \$2.50**

Discernment Criteria - "Marabou" 1996 - **6pp. \$2.00**

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

Where God Begins To Be A Woman's Journey into Solitude by Karen Karper

An Authors Guild Back inprint.com edition

To order online, click on this link: www.book.orders@iuniverse.com

Autographed copies (\$12.95 plus \$2.50 postage & handling) are available from:

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Fellowship of Solitaries

Comprised of and open to religious solitaries 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 Solitaries directly click on this link: solitaries@onetel.com

To access the website of Fellowship of Solitaries click on this link:

<http://www.solitaries.org.uk/>

Raven's Rest

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

Retreatants Welcome. Now scheduling for September and October 2005 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:

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BOOK NOTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

DESERT DISCIPLESHIP: AN INTRODUCTION TO RATIONAL EREMITICISM

by Rev. Robert Gannon.

A study first printed in 1978 and re-published in 2004.

Computer-generated, spiral-bound, 151 pp. \$40.00 (\$35.00 + p&h). ISBN 1-896971-36-9.

Available from Gift Shop, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Sask. Canada S0K 2Y0

THE VALUE OF SOLITUDE: THE ETHICS AND SPIRITUALITY OF ALONENESS IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

by John D. Barbour.

From the early Christian and medieval periods to the 20th century, Barbour examines the solitary experience of such writers as Augustine, Petrarch, Montaigne, Thoreau, and Paul Auster. Solitude helps these authors to re-orient their lives according to their moral ideals and spiritual aspirations.

2004. Hardcover 240 pp. \$46.27. University of Virginia Press.

INVITING SILENCE, UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES OF MEDITATION

by Gunilla Norris.

This thoughtful and poetic manual explains the universal principles of meditation practice and mindful living.

2004. Softcover, \$12.95. BlueBridge. Can be ordered through Paulist Press Book Center.

Tel: 1-877-545-8815.orders @paulistpressbookcenter.com.

OUT OF SOLITUDE, THREE MEDITATIONS ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

by Henri J. Nouwen.

Drawing on three moments in the life of Jesus, Nouwen invites us to reflect on the tension between our desire for solitude and the demands of contemporary life.

2004. Softcover, \$7.95. Ave Maria Press. Can be ordered through Paulist Press Book Center.

Tel: 1-877-545-8815.orders @paulistpressbookcenter.com.

WEBSITES OF POSSIBLE INTEREST:

www.marlowhermitage.net



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