



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

August 2013

Thoughts In Solitude

I have longed for the simple life but find that when I try to get away from it all, I end up taking it all with me. What causes such yearning to arise? First, it is a desire to escape, to leave the problems of this noisy society behind and live the simple life. Second, it is a desire to find the silence, solitude, and serenity that leads to a profoundly spiritual experience of being together with God.

The first problem is noise. There is external noise from highways, industrial noise, and technological noise. There is internal noise in the spirit as well. Stress, hurts, broken relationships, and lack of forgiveness impact the soul. Add to this the urgency driving us to perform.

In 1927, Max Ehrman wrote a poem titled, "Desiderata." It begins: "Go placidly amid the noise and haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence." Further on it reads: "Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexations to the spirit." The wee small voice of the Spirit says: "Be still and know that I am God."

Noise is a peace robber because it creates such a racket you cannot hear this still small voice. We also lose our serenity through fear and anxiety. We are forever trying to live up to an artificial level of performance that is impossible to attain. This yields frustration and dissatisfaction, destroying our hope. Proverbs 13:12 says: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick." I add, "Hope eliminated kills." Everybody is looking for peace. Our restless hearts are wandering to and fro seeking this elusive commodity. We try to cut back on scheduled activities but obligation piles on obligation. The life you lead is not your own but a performance carrying out other people's expectations. Failure to fulfill their plans leads to anxieties. Another thing that impacts my peace is interruptions. I tend to be a linear thinker so interruption is like pushing the "Reset" button and starting over.

Finding solitude is a major problem. I have known those who claim they would be happy living under a bridge alone. On the other hand, I have a good friend who, after his wife died, said, "I have never been alone and I don't want to be – it scares me!" Some people can't stand solitude. They crave people around them. They even sleep with the radio or TV on!

In an effort to get away from it all, some go on retreats. They simply trade one crowd for another. Life is still structured: up at a certain time, eat at a certain time, bed at a set time. They are just as regimented and driven as always. Jesus had peace always. He slept in the midst of the storm and yet could be alone with the Father in the midst of a crowd. The search for solitude, serenity and simplicity is highlighted in the song: "Simple Gifts"

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'Tis the gift to be free, 'tis the gift to come down where you ought to be. And when we find ourselves in the place just right, it will be in the valley of love and delight." This 150 year old church hymn speaks of simplicity, humility, freedom and repentance. When this is achieved, we will find ourselves at peace in God's perfect will.

We have discussed the four S's: Silence, Serenity, Solitude and Simplicity. We sum up with a fifth – Surrender. Without giving ourselves up and relying totally on the grace of God, we cannot achieve the serenity we seek. Surrendering to God begins with a decision....deciding here and now to let God have His way with me. Beyond this initial decision are the daily disciplines of reading and studying God's word; talking to Him in prayer, and listening for His response. Memorizing Scripture and keeping a daily journal are additional aids in our search. The way to escape the complexities and vexations of life is to know God, spend time with Him, and submit to His direction. The soul that enjoys this silence, solitude, serenity, simplicity and surrender to God reminds me of another old hymn: "I come to the garden alone..."

You cannot come as a group, a church or denomination, not even as a family, but alone. Another hymn says: "All to Jesus I surrender ... all to Him I freely give." Surrendering starts anytime we choose ... even now.



**John Bircher
Cincinnati, OH**



*A Word
From
Still Wood*



This summer it seems like we have been serenaded by more bird songs than we can recall from past years. Perhaps we are simply been more aware? Or has the increased rainfall kept them calling throughout our woods more frequently? Whatever the reason, it has been a musical season, making us much more mindful of all the feathered activity fluttering about us.

We watched a pair of cardinals nest in one of the Great Laurels, hovering about with anxious chirps and whistles whenever we walked too close to their nestlings. Robins built a nest beneath our deck and would bravely out-stare our cats who would peer down at them through the slats. Carolina Wrens kept rebuilding in the hanging pot by our front door despite our attempts to discourage them. Everywhere we looked, birds flit by with twigs, strings, grass, mud, and bits of moss to weave into the most extraordinary homes for their young.

They remind us of how we prepare each issue of **RB** but with this one crucial difference. Instead of our going out to find material to build an issue, everything comes to us via mail, email, phone or fax. Whenever a reader tells us how much they gain from the newsletter, we know whom to thank. You! Your contributions are what make **RB** a most authentic expression of hermit life in the twenty-first century.

We are pleased to say that in this issue we are listing the names of several experienced spiritual guides who are willing to offer their services to readers of **RB**. They are listed on page five. Our own special gratitude goes out to them for we have listened to laments since the earliest days of our ministry about how difficult it can be for solitaires to find appropriate spiritual assistance.

Another reader has sent us information about a diocese that is receptive to hermits – a rare find indeed!

Fuller information also appears on page five. A Swedish film maker is working on a documentary on people around the world who are choosing lives of solitude and would like to be in touch with any **RB** reader who would be willing to work with him. Fuller information will be found on page five.

A number of readers are reaching out for some spiritual companionship, one of whom is living a life sentence in solitary confinement. We know of other **RB** readers who are also imprisoned and for whom an occasional letter can mean that they are not totally forgotten. If anyone is interested in “visiting these imprisoned,” we will be glad to provide some names.

We have continued our weekly internet presentations on hermit life, winding up with a series on the Beatitudes. Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM, points out that these can be considered to the second half of life what the Ten Commandments are to the first. Since eremitic life is normally a “latter-day” vocation, the Beatitudes offer us a perfect template upon which to build our spirituality as hermits. We have grown much ourselves as we have delved deeply into how be poor in spirit, how to mourn, to be meek, to hunger for holiness, to be merciful, single-hearted and peace-makers, as well as to be willing to accept the misunderstanding (persecution) which comes our way. Eventually, we hope to offer some DVD's which will collect our programs into convenient units.

Our column this month seems much like a “**Raven's Nest**”, woven of the many materials which compose this August issue. May you all feel as blessed as we have by this sharing!

*With our grateful love,
Karen & Paul*

Raven's Bread is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in eremitical life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. This newsletter affirms and supports people living in solitude. It is a collaborative effort, written for and by hermits themselves and is sent by postal mail or by email.

Please send your written contributions, address changes, and subscription donations to:
Raven's Bread Ministries, 18065 NC 209 Hwy, Hot Springs, NC 28743 or via Paypal at our website.*

Our phone number is: 828 622 3750, The annual donation is \$10.00 in the USA or \$12.00 US for readers outside the States. Please send payment in US funds (PayPal can convert foreign currency to US dollars). Any extra donations will be used to subsidize subscriptions for hermits who cannot afford the full cost.

Raven's Bread derives it's name from the experience of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 17: 1-6. where a raven sent by God nourished him during his months of solitude at the Wadi Cherith (The Cutting Place).

*Our website is :[Http://www.ravensbreadministries.com](http://www.ravensbreadministries.com) ; email: pkfredette@frontier.com
Blog: karenkarperfredette.simplesite.com



Hermits Helping Hermits

SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE AVAILABLE:

Sr. Barbara Hazzard, OSB of Oakland, CA: I am not a formal hermit but there is a good amount of hermit in me. I have been a spiritual director for many years and would be available for anyone living in the Bay Area. I don't have Skype but I have had directees by phone, although I prefer personal presence. I recently retired (whatever that means!). If anyone wishes to get in touch with me, they may contact me via email: barhazz@aol.com.

David J. Innocenti, Desert Life Ministry in Los Angeles, CA: offers his services as a spiritual director, saying: I have had training and much experience in pastoral counseling and spiritual guidance. I was ordained as a Carmelite priest almost forty years ago. I have no computer, hence no email nor any texting – a true 21st century dinosaur! – but I have unlimited long- distance calling service and will freely return all calls. People can reach me at: **(323) 460-4071**.

Sr. Janet Strong, er.dio of Beit Mery Hermitage in Yakima, WA: You can give my contact information to anyone who is looking for a spiritual director, etc. I have been a spiritual guide for thirty years and can do it by Skype or by phone. Thanks for all you and Paul do to bring bread and meat to our hidden places. *Contact: 5403 Morningside Drive, Yakima, WA 98901; Tel: 509-576-0931; Cell: 509-954-5929*

Mary Jean Wethington called *RB* to say she is available as a “Spiritual Advocate” by postal mail. Her address is: *8151 St. Rd. 48, Aurora, IN 47001*

Paul & Karen Fredette at Still Wood are experienced spiritual guides and are available via phone or Skype, as well as in person to individuals who come to *Raven's Rest* for a solitary retreat. Contact information: *Tel: 828-622-3750; email: pkfredette@frontier.com; 18065 NC 209 Hwy, Hot Springs, NC 28743*

Yakima Diocese welcomes hermits:

Sr. Janet Strong writes that Bp. Joseph Tyson of the Yakima, WA. is supportive of eremitical life and open to receiving hermits in his diocese. He gave Sr. Janet permission to let it be known through *Raven's Bread*. Contact her at: *Beit Mery Hermitage, 5403 Morningside Drive, Yakima, WA 98901-1646; Tel: 509-576-0931; or email: hermitage@beitmery.org.*

Documentary on living in self-chosen solitude

Jesper Wachtmeister announces: I am a Swedish filmmaker looking for men and women who live in freely chosen solitude for a documentary about what is involved in venturing into hermit life. You can be located anywhere in the world, in either urban or rural, or wilderness settings. Your reasons for choosing this way of life can be personal, philosophical, religious, or cultural. I am looking for individuals willing to allow themselves and their manner of living to be both interviewed and filmed. The small film crew consists only of myself and a single photographer. I am eager to hear from solitaries interested in making their vocation better understood and appreciated. Please Contact: **Jesper Wachtmeister Solaris Filmproduktion**

Långa Raden 517893 Drottningholm Sweden

Cell: +46 (0)70 747 23 53 Email: jesper@solarisfilm.se

Website: www.solarisfilm.se

**A NEW RB RESOURCE****SOLITUDE AND COMMUNITY, HERMITS AND THE WESTERN MONASTIC TRADITION**

by Paul Howard, OblSB

*This fascinating and well-researched monograph by one of our **Raven's Bread** readers is a welcome addition to the list of **Resources** and hard-to-find materials that we offer on our website. Well foot-noted with a special section on Thomas Merton's influence on the revival of eremitical life, this easy to read study also offers a valuable bibliography of books, articles and websites.*

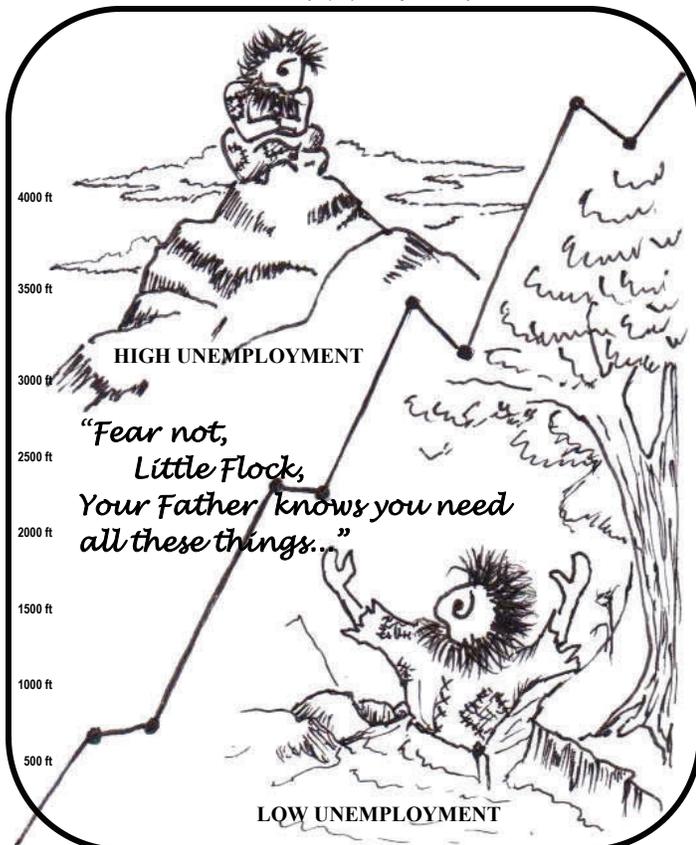
32pp. Booklet 2008. Published by **Raven's Bread Ministries**. Order through RBM via

email: pkfrdette@frontier.com, PH: 828 622 3750 or mail: 18065 NC 209 Hwy, Hot Springs, NC 28743

SOLITUDE AND COMPASSION: THE PATH TO THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL by Gus Gordon.

A meditation on becoming fully human, learning to become close to your inner self on the Christ path, enriched with insights from the Buddha. Richard Rohr says of this book: "The only authors worth reading are those who have done their homework – the homework of their own life and the study of other great minds and hearts." Gus Gordon has done both. He has learned from both Jesus and the Buddha how to use solitude to nurture compassion, freeing up the divine energy within to live in solidarity with others, experiencing the peace in a life you share with others. Both solitude and solidarity are essential to the spiritual journey. Gordon, who divides his time between monastic life and providing food for the poor, has expressed a paradoxical view of the spiritual life that allows the apparent tension between spiritual contemplation and social action to reside in mystery.

200 pp. Paperback. 2009. Orbis Books ISBN-13: 978-1570758300; ISBN-10: 1570758301. \$18.00

Wood B. Hermit
**Discussion Topic for November 2013
(Print Edition Only)**

Whatever our spiritual tradition or religious affiliation, the words: "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for the kingdom of God is theirs" reach deeply into the soul of every hermit.

What do they say to you?

Submit by Oct. 1, 2013.

(Limit to 300 words, please)

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you find this website helpful to you and have comments, and/or suggestions for making it more relevant to the needs of hermits and religious solitaries of any faith tradition (or none), please use the "**CONTACT US**" feature to express your thoughts and opinions...and thanks...and may you be blessed now and forever.

Karen & Paul