



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

February 2012

Thoughts In Solitude

A sense of wonder is an exquisite gift from God. At a high level, wonder is experienced in the worship of God. It keeps us in awe of him and keeps us respectful of ourselves and of others. How are we influenced by wonder? How are we uniquely wonderful? How do we see our surroundings as *wonder-filled*?

Wonder touches that which lies unknown in the heart. Although we are unable to put this into words, it changes the way we look at things. We experience a deeper realm through eyes washed clear and hearts renewed in love. Something unsightly to us becomes uniquely beautiful. We look at something we have seen a thousand times and it glows with new meaning. We place that which makes us weep in the love of God. In time, eyes cleansed by tears can sparkle with delight. It is said that tears in the eyes cause rainbows in the soul. Wonder is a movement of the soul. We are attentive to the wordlessness, the stillness, and the simplicity in our lives. They reflect a bit of the mysterious wisdom of God.

We delight in our inward journey to him. Jesus is at our center. Jesus is our God and he is all good. We are reflections of his goodness when we see it in ourselves and in others. God created us, he lives in us, and he delights in us. How do we find delight in us?

When we are alone and silent we discover many things. Wonder is a far cry from a lazy, laid-back, or unmotivated orientation toward life. Actually, it is a call to be more alert, more vigilant, and fully awake. We are fully aware because of inner peace. When we feel disturbed about someone, we need to step back and ponder each person as a wonderful mystery, a mystery to learn about slowly; reverently; with care, tenderness, prayer, and pain. What is ever learned completely? Only in quiet waters do things mirror themselves without distortion.

Where do we find authentic inner peace? The only true peace is the peace of Christ. Jesus is our anchor at the still point within ourselves. When we are in the inner space that surrounds our anchor, we are silent and wait. Jesus, the God-man, is someone far beyond anything we have known or can imagine. Yet, he is very present at the center of our inner cloistered space. We ponder him with

great awe. We pray to him with great love. Everything in our lives flows in and out of prayer in our inner cloister. Praying brings positive energy to our living and also balances that which is light and dark in our days and years. Amid all that flows in and out of our lives, our inner cloister remains silent and calm, free of the world's rabble. Our inner cloister is preserved for God alone. It is a refuge where nothing comes between Christ and us.

We pass through the door of our inner cloister in silent wonder and focus on our God who gives us an interior stability of mind and heart. To enjoy God's presence in the present moment, as if the moment stands alone, is a rare grace. Ah, how often do our minds dwell on what has happened in the past or on what we think might happen in the future. What do such thoughts do to our inner peace? Living in the present moment is inwardly contemplative and outwardly expressed by the way we love and live in our current circumstances. By being in the here and now, we do not withdraw into a world of what we should have done or dwell on daydreams or flights of fancy. We are attentive to time beyond the busy-bee flurry of doing many things to make up for the past or make sure we will be on God's good side in the future.

Living in a "be it done unto me according to your word" mode widens our sense of wonder. We slow down and gently learn what we do not particularly want to know. How often do hurry, noise, or crowds stifle the soul's health? A slow walk is healthier and more rewarding than a "pedal to the metal" mentality. Blessings from a walk through life are much greater than blessings from a race with life.

The Holy is found in everything. God, who is so beyond us, is within us, within others, and within the contours of every day. We are content with the plateaus of life. Although nothing seems to be happening, there is movement toward the vast and silent mystery we call the divine.



**From: *A Precious Gift, Spiritual Life, Spring 2011*
Carolyn Humphreys, Paramount, CA**



Somehow, it did not feel right for us to simply savor your insights without offering the words which inspire *our* lives and ministries. Both of us found our “word” many years ago. Paul wrote his on his ordination card in 1978: “*May the Lord preserve in us a burning love for the world and a great gentleness. May God grant us the courage to be compassionate, the strength to do justice, and the grace to persevere to the end in the fullness of humanity.*” (from T. de Chardin) Karen found her heart’s desire summed up in “Ash Wednesday” by T.S.Eliot: “*Spirit of the fountain, spirit*

of the garden, suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood – teach us to care and not to care. Teach us to sit still even among these rocks...”

When we married, we agreed to pray these thoughts together until we found ourselves drawn to something else. Nearly sixteen years later, we still close our morning quiet time by reciting these words together for we still find new and deeper meanings in them. They teach us how to tend to ministry while keeping us centered in the solitude of our home. They also sustain the continual developments that shape and color a living solitude.

As always we appreciate your supportive letters and contributions expressing how much you value *Raven’s Bread* ministries. We are also grateful for your generous forbearance as we negotiate the new methods of production and delivery that time and numbers require. Many of you will be receiving *RB* via email for the first time. You send us food to nourish your companions in solitude; we assemble it for the “ravens” who carry it to the silent and courageous souls who await it. Thank you for being there!

*With 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 seeks to affirm and support people living in solitude. *Raven’s Bread* is a collaborative effort and thus depends on the shared reflections, stories, news, notices, letters and information from hermits themselves. 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: [Http://www.ravensbreadministries.com](http://www.ravensbreadministries.com)

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.) Readers can request to receive the newsletter as a PDF attachment to email instead of postal service. Any extra donations will be used to subsidize subscriptions for hermits who cannot afford the full cost.

Raven’s Bread derives its 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).

Hermits Up Front and Personal

S look back on the unfolding episodes of my life and the one constant was *striving*. Once I felt a desire, a spiritual urging and drawing-toward the mystery of Love, and found a concrete way to live it, I hurtled myself into *that* lifestyle. This included becoming a Christian, becoming a Catholic, becoming a hermitess.

The harder I ran *into* the expression of my love – the farther the pendulum would eventually swing taking me back out. In those “out” moments, I never really abandoned my desire, my yearning – only the outward manifestation of it.

In recent years, I have worked with a small group of men and women in my town committed to reducing racism. Of course, our group contains both white members and people of color. One day, exhausted by so much “trying”, I turned to one of our African American members and said, “I need a white break.” She lovingly laughed – and I realized the depth of my racism. I could walk away any time I wanted; she had to walk the walk every day.

In like manner, I have wanted a hermit-break, a Catholic break, a Christian-break. And the real source of the dilemma has always been this: I run too hard, too fast, too “mentally” toward my *vision* of sanctity.

Luckily for me, the years flowing by and aging me have helped more than any concerted effort on my part. As I sat in my favorite chair this morning, having slept way past any reasonable time to arise, reading with a cup of tea at hand, I could feel that soft tugging back toward the hearth of the hermit.

Perhaps age and solitude are finally meshing in a kind way. I *like* who I am, where I am, how I am. I like it not because it serves my ego to like it, but because it feels grace infused. I think of all the struggle and striving, all the schedules and intentions, all the determination to *be* a hermit of great faith. For me, the greater the intent – the greater the fall.

Now I find comfort in being a fallen hermit. Failure resides in the ego; grace in the soul. I have had to go through decades of failure to finally surrender to the grace of the soul, always waiting, ever present.

Am I hermitess today? Completely...and not at all.

Bella Erakko, Hannibal, MO

S regard myself as completely recovered and healed from my own previous chemical substance addictions. I am no longer “in recovery.” I’m recovered and gratefully free from the use of mind-altering substances. The 12 step programs and approaches in which I participated—worked! But I am by no means recovered from the thought patterns and stance to life found in Western science and technology, my previous career. I could not really begin my healing journey until I walked away from some of the human thinking errors embedded in the Western approach to knowledge. I regard myself as *healing from science*.

Healing from science means that I have had to examine the materialistic, rational, logical, intellectual, superior, male-oriented and fundamentally separative mindset that I inherited from my training and subsequent career in engineering. Western science would not be possible without the intense *subject-object* separation it imposes on the world. The popular notion of “ego” really means separation. If we have a problem of “ego” in our lives, it is exactly the same thinking pattern that Western science and technology operate from. I was part of the sputnik generation of the late 1950’s, inspired by the false promise of a fundamentally better world through science and technology. I internalized the stance of Western science as a personal identity, not realizing that what we call “science” is only a tool or a system of knowledge—not a proper purpose or a healthy orientation to one’s life in human terms. It is only one way of knowing—and a narrow one at that. I was not alone in this. When I finally left that profession, I was horrified to find that much of the world was addicting itself to science and its fruits. I was shocked to see so many others attracted by the so-called Western scientific thinking pattern. When we internalize the skepticism, literalness, and narrowness of the scientific method, it injures authentic faith. Loss of authentic faith is a cause of the addictions epidemic.

I regard myself as still in healing from the Euro-centric Western Worldview. The source of the hubris and harm fueling the addictions epidemic in today’s society lies there. And so do the deep roots of my own substance addiction. I am not anti-science and technology; they are simply tools we must all tolerate. But I certainly see that the authentic meaning, purpose and peace the world is seeking will not come from the emphasis on technology and technological thinking that engulfs us now. I do not put science and technology on a pedestal as so many do. Rather, I look for a time when scientists and technologists themselves will personally join a path of awakening, freedom and love in some form. Only when that happens will Western science gradually evolve into an indigenous or holistic science. When that happens, the deep immaturity of our knowledge system will come to its own childhood’s end. This is my personal story, but I’ll bet this understanding might prove to be useful for a few more of us if permission were given to look at things in this way.

Bro. Richard Simonelli, Interfaith Contemplative Order of Sarada, Nederland, CO

PLEASE NOTE

Both the front page article by Carolyn Humphreys and the article by Richard Simonelli on page 3 are “excerpts.” If you are interested in reading the full articles, please contact us (see last page of website) and we will forward them to you by surface mail or as a PDF attachment to your email.

Paul & Karen

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Discussion Topic for May 2012

Do you pray the Liturgy of the Hours? If so, how do you adapt an essentially communal prayer for solitary recitation? Do you add or substitute another form of prayer?

Please submit by April 1, 2012

Wood B. Hermit



Your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Mt 6:8



BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



RULE FOR SOLITARIES

by GRIMLAICUS. Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Andrew Thornton, OSB *This first translation into English of a rule for enclosed monk-hermits written around the year 900 near Metz, reveals an experienced guide who draws on patristic and monastic sources to compile a “book of wisdom” for monks drawn to solitude. Basing his Rule on that of St. Benedict, Grimlaicus produces a valuable guide for hermits.* 180pp. Ppb. 2011, Cistercian Publications/ Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. \$24.95

By *Raven's Bread* Readers:

A DIFFERENT KIND OF CELL: THE STORY OF A MURDERER WHO BECAME A MONK

by W. Paul Jones. *Clayton Fountain, considered the most violent murderer in the US federal system was condemned to a life of solitary confinement in a specially constructed underground cell. Guilty of five murders, he arrives at an amazing transformation during which hermit Fr. Paul functions as Clayton's spiritual director. Accepted as a Family Brother of the Trappist monastery to which Fr. Paul belongs, Clayton affirmed, “If I can be forgiven, then no one is beyond the mercy of God.” He died in his cell which had been blessed as his hermitage.* 122pp., Ppb. W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. \$14.00; ISBN: 978-0-8028-6651-6 2011

THE DEEP WITHIN, TOWARDS AN ARCHETYPAL THEOLOGY

by Eugene Stockton. *This study looks at the influence of deep consciousness on a person's religious expression and how it might be harnessed and coordinated for one's spiritual wellbeing.* 115pp. Ppb. Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust. 2011. Contact:24 Great Western Hwy, Lawson, NSW Australia 2783 Tel: 02 4759 3654. email: olon@tpg.com.au