



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

May 2012

Thoughts In Solitude

Much of life is lived in the valley, but for each of us there are special moments. T. S. Eliot speaks about time being "made through that moment," or "the point of intersection of the timeless." Kelty says that at least once in a lifetime, one's entire life is dependent on a moment. It is often only later that one understands that all other moments were preparation for this moment, from which one's meaning flows. On such moments, one risks one's life. Almost all saints share that timeless moment into and from which their meaningful time flowed. The popularity of the camera rests in the desire to halt time by containing it in a special moment. So it is that Christianity rests on a powerful sense of memory.

The life of Moses serves as an example. His powerful moment occurred in Egypt when he saw a Hebrew slave being beaten. In a moment, his instant response was anger sufficient to kill the Egyptian and bury him in the sand. How long would that take? Perhaps half an hour? Probably less. But he was captured by that moment, and while he tried to run from that moment, he couldn't, for he was branded. Thus he spent the rest of his life seeking liberation for his people. And what was the end, which flowed back to give meaning to the whole? It was when God led Moses to a mountain. It was there that he caught a glimpse of the Promised Land, the goal to which these many years had been dedicated. But he himself would never enter that land. With tear-streaked eyes, how long could he endure the pain of looking? Perhaps half an hour? Here we have the life of one of the great ones, whose life flowed from two events of "timeless time" that totaled less than one hour in length but that had infinite depth.

The "present" is a timeless moment, an invisible line between past and future. This present has the power to redeem the past and the wisdom to discern the novelty impinging from the future. This capacity helps us understand why many of the saints regarded "contemplation" as the highest form of spirituality. An aid in becoming contemplative is repeating continuously a word or phrase (mantra) as a way to empty the mind of both past and future. It is a process of slowing, saying the mantra only

as fast as one needs in order to keep the mind occupied. And as the slowing continues, it moves toward a timeless moment, and one's soul is centered at rest. This moment is invaded by the thundering of silence, as one is interpenetrated in the "Nothingness" of a contentless "now." While time and thought are ingredients of the "flow" of time, here in the "now" is a feeling that is warm, intense, and full.

Such centering not only can give birth to a calm center (soul), but it can establish a lifestyle in which a person can be intensely focused in the here and now, whatever one is doing. One can sense such a centered person, identifiable by an openness to otherness. Contemplative persons invite what is "now before them" to enter them so they are absorbed by it — for example, a flower, tree, or another person. What happens is a profound mutuality, an immersion. Here it is that life becomes an openness to the world's speaking out, whether in crying out, calling out, singing out, or hoping forth.

This timeless present is living in the tension between memory and vision. And the way this is done renders each person unique, just as Scripture testifies that each "star differs from star in glory" (1 Cor. 15:41). Christian hermits, in attempting to be God-like, attempt to stay only in the present moment, as does God. In being neither past nor future, one lives, at least in foretaste, the immensity of the eternal. My spiritual director lives in this way — for hours on end he remains in the presence of God. His way of expressing time is, "I'm just passing through." His description of me is that I become immersed in everything along the path. Hopefully there is a place for both of us in approaching time.



**From: A SEASON IN THE DESERT, MAKING TIME HOLY
Fr. W. Paul Jones,
Pittsburg, MO**



The “word” for this time of the year is New Life! We, in the northern hemisphere, have just to look outside the window to see New Life burgeoning forth in nature. Here at Still Wood, we have been watching a cloud of delicate green creeping up the slopes across the valley. It is amazing to see how much difference a few hundred feet in elevation can mean. We trekked up the logging road behind our house a few weeks ago with Neill and Cynda capering around us. Plants which were already in full bloom at home like trilliums, wild geraniums and purple valerian weren’t even visible when we reached the four thousand foot level. Instead, we discovered a re-run of wild flowers and blossoming shrubs which had already had their day at our house, offering us an extension of spring’s beauty!

It reminds us that nothing is “out of season” – that somewhere in the world spring is always springing, the sun is always rising, and a hermit is always praising the Lord. Nothing is ever really ended; life is always beginning. Living in conscious awareness of this can keep us from being trapped in a rigid “either/or” mindset, or tensing up under the burden of “now or never.” It is always Now. It is always “both/and.” What a fresh vision!

We try to foster this vision in the pages of *Raven’s Bread* where everyone’s insights and experiences are welcome. In a world where many define themselves by who they are *not* and what they are against, we wish to dwell on who we *are*, and what we are *for*.

We are for silence, solitude and simplicity in the multiple styles in which these can be lived and expressed. Whether Buddhist or Anglican, Taoist, or Roman Catholic, or none of the above...we can still be living a life with genuine hermit values at the core. By gathering together these such different expressions of shared values, like so many wildflowers in spring, the image of hermit life grows richer, more aromatic, more colorful. It becomes a mosaic, alive with multiple designs. Just consider the various ways of praying the Liturgy of the Hours submitted to this issue. What a treasure from which to draw for our personal lives!

We welcome and applaud all of you who write into *Raven’s Bread* to share your insights and experiences. Thanks to you, *RB* is recognized as a leading voice speaking for genuine contemporary eremitic life. As editors, we choose to limit our own reflections in order to feature your insights, your stories, and your contributions on the growing phenomenon of hermit life.

We are still surprised by the frequency of phone calls or emails from the media wanting to know more about contemporary hermit life. They say they’ve been told to contact *Raven’s Bread Ministries* if they wish to get the “real story.” We share what we can always adding that our mailing list is confidential. More than once we have turned away journalists wanting a list of hermits living in a particular area. They would have to do their own research if they wanted names. We willingly share the treasure, but not the identity of the miners.

Recently a writer impressed us stating that he intended to write an article about the “real hermit” of the twenty-first century, not the caricature of the bearded old man peering out of his cave. We were pleased to help him see how eremitical life is blooming anew in a world which sorely needs such hidden souls whose prayers provide the “glue” that holds humanity together in love. Spring is everywhere; the sun is always rising; and hermits are an ever new story. Look for the latest in the Saturday Evening Post this summer!

*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 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.**

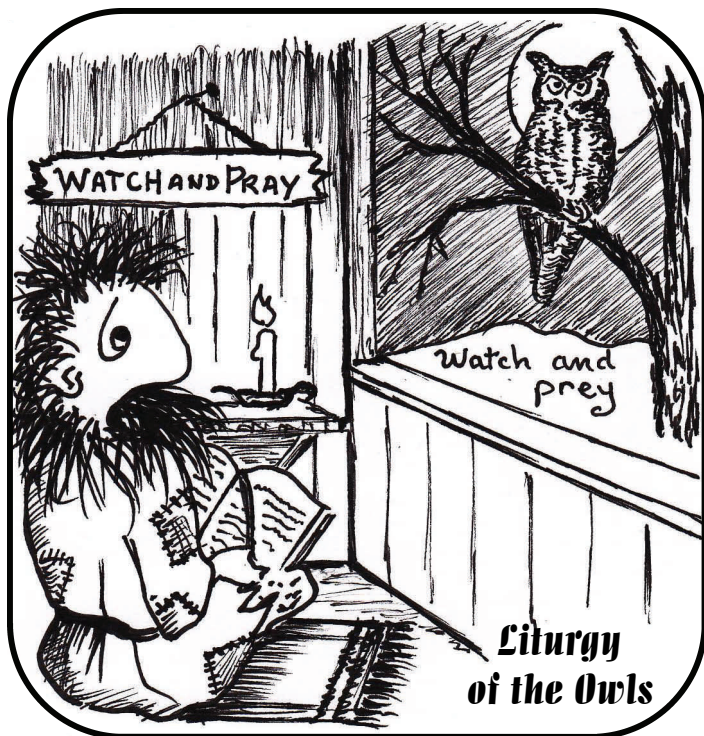
**Please send your written contributions, address changes, and subscription donations to:
Raven’s Bread Ministries, 18065 NC 209 Hwy, Hot Springs, NC 28743 or via Paypal at our website.***

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 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).**

***Our website is :[Http://www.ravensbreadministries.com](http://www.ravensbreadministries.com)**

Wood B. Hermit



The Zion Hermit-Monks of Mount Carmel
P. O. Box 222
Bowie, AZ 85605

The monks are an independent non-profit organization not affiliated with the Catholic Diocese of Tucson consisting of two priests who switched to hermitage life about forty years ago. The Carmelites know of them but their spiritual mentor for this life-style is a former French priest known as Abshicktananda, so the "flavor" of their lifestyle is more Eastern.

THREE CHEERS!!!

Fr. Eugene Stockton is pleased to announce that his book, The Deep Within, Towards An Archetypal Theology, (reviewed **RB** February 2012) is now available in the States for \$20.00 through:

GREYDON PRESS
2251 Arbor Blvd.
Dayton, OH 65639
PH. 937-297-0185



BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



CELEBRATING TIME ALONE, Stories of Splendid Solitude by Lionel Fisher.

For six years, the author lived alone on a remote Pacific Northwest beach, where he had ample time to reflect on using solitude to become a happier, more fulfilled person. In a writing style at once eloquent and down to earth, Fisher interweaves his own experiences with the stories of others to affirm the life-changing benefits of being alone.

224pp. Ppb. 2001, Atria Books/Beyond Words, ISBN 1-58270-049-4 Order through Amazon.com

STILLNESS, DAILY GIFTS OF SOLITUDE by Richard Mahler.

Mahler spent ninety days totally alone as caretaker of a mountain ranch with no electricity, a wood stove and short wave radio for emergencies. From the diary of those days, he has fashioned a book that is part memoir, part adventure story, part spiritual reflection and part self-help on how we can incorporate silence and solitude into our daily lives.

166pp. Ppb. Red Wheel/Weiser, LLC. 368 Congress St., Boston MA, 02210 www.redwheelweiser.com, \$21.95.

By Raven's Bread Readers:

CANDLES IN THE WIND poems and prayers by Karen Whittingham.

This is a collection of original poems interspersed with cherished prayers from faith traditions which have formed the poet—and the poetry—through the practice of living and breathing with each prayer.

63pp., Ppb. & e-book from www.Lulu.com; ISBN: 978-1-105-05694-9

MYSTICS IN THE MAKING: LAY WOMEN IN TODAY'S CHURCH by Carolyn Humphreys.

This is a spiritual feast for contemporary lay women seeking to experience mystical intimacy with God. Throughout its pages, the threads of ordinary living are woven into a tapestry of supernatural opportunities to live a transcendent life.

204pp. GracewingUK. Available in US from Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago, IL 1-800-933-1800 & amazon.com