



# Raven's Bread

*Food for Those in Solitude*

*Online Edition*

*May 2013*

## Thoughts On Solitude

How do hermits live present to the Divine Presence in the **Present Moment**? We don't have to try to live in the "now" – it's all we have and all we need! It's God happening – only God is. Not just a good philosophy to live by but the only game in town because it is the reality of God happening in each present moment weal and woe (both/and). "Everything is going (our) way"...remember that ancient song? I sing it every morning as I push my pile of old bones out of bed, because it is "going God's way."

When our ego resists "God's way" as the only way, we sweat blood (fear) like Christ's ego did when he resisted his Father's love in the garden of Gethsemane. As soon as he aligned "his way" with "his Father's way" everything was transformed within him. His ego was still suffering and perhaps in the dark (the Father's absence), but he was not making it worse by resisting it. Finally, he knew for certain his divine love...had trumped his ego victoriously: "this day you shall be with me" and "Father, forgive their ignorance of not knowing who they really are."

I think Christ was trying to show us that it is not easy for our rational mind with "ego pre-occupation" to wrap itself around that beautiful mystery of letting go and surrendering to the love of the Present Moment.

45 years ago, Thomas Merton, in his letter to Pope Paul VI, reminded the human family that the rational explanations and answers about reality are not going to suffice for our true happiness. Only the experiential knowledge (contemplative wisdom) of how loveable each of us is to our good God, as we are, irrespective of what is right about us (virtuousness) or what is wrong about us (sinfulness), can possibly bring us the happiness and fulfillment that God created us for and desires that we experience even "now" a foretaste of seeing

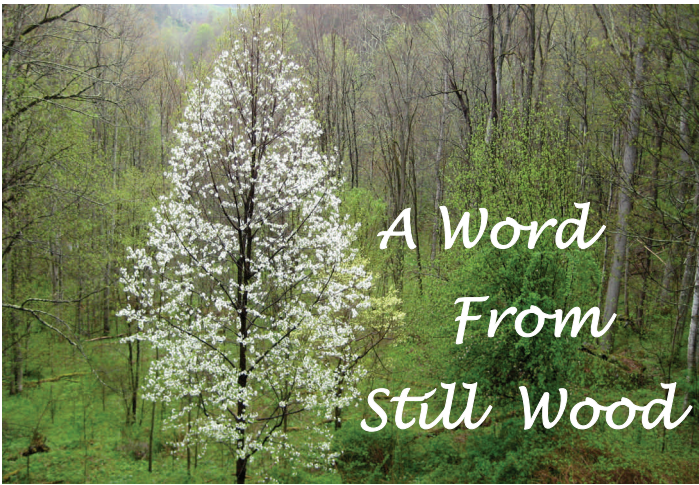
God face to face. To do that, Merton, in his letter to the Pope and the human family, encourages us to explore the "**desert area of our heart**" which is God happening there with each breath we take: living **in** us **as** us. Merton took seriously St. Paul's ideal to "pray always" as the heart of his monasticism and the essence of Christ's Good News to awaken to the love affair God is initiating in us from moment to moment as He pours Himself out and gives Himself away to each of us as the immediacy of who we really are: a unique manifestation of himself.

The practical way Merton lived up to the ideal to "pray always" was expressed in his famous proverb: "how I pray is to breathe." He breathed in God's spirit of love and breathed out his love back to Him. With each breath we take, God is sustaining us in existence with His love and re-creating us into Himself: "I live no longer (I = ego), but Christ lives **in** me" and **as** me.

Merton's urgent contemplative imperative for the whole human family, more than 50 years ago, seems to be just beginning to be uncovered as precious treasure today despite the Church's trivia campaigns. That said, in a 2006 message to the Swiss Bishops, Pope Benedict XVI made sure they knew that the essence of Christianity was not about morality or obeying commandments and observances but about a "personal and intimate love relationship with God." Contemplation. Everyone, including hermits, was created for that same ideal. Rarely does any Pope encourage what Richard Rohr calls "second half of life people."



**Anonymous Hermit  
East Texas, USA**



## A Word From Still Wood

Since we were last in touch, a number of important events have occurred. For the Christian community, the Lent-Easter cycle of the Church year is in full swing celebrating the wonder of life overcoming death. In the northern hemisphere, nature is joining the celebration as spring is (finally!) overcoming a long-lasting season of cold and snow. Here at Still Wood, the woodlands are leafing out, birds are tuning up their love songs, and flowers are proving they can bloom even amid unexpected snowfalls!

Those in the Roman Catholic community have witnessed the nearly unprecedented retirement of one pope and the election of a new person to occupy the Chair of Peter. The new Holy Father Francis seems to be fostering an upsurge of hope (not just for Catholics) by his simple lifestyle and ready warmth. We welcome Benedict, Pope Emeritus, to the ranks of prayerful solitaries and promise our prayers in support of Pope Francis as he models a new way of being the Shepherd of so many scattered and wounded sheep.

In our last **“Word”**, we asked what more **Raven’s Bread** could do to foster hermit life? The Lord took us at our word by “arranging” Paul’s move from full to part-time employment, enabling him to give more time to our hermit ministry. What initially dismayed us, we can now see clearly as divine gift. We both appreciate having a more solitary rhythm to our day and being able to implement some new ideas for service to **RB** readers.

One of our **RB** readers in New Zealand suggested that a small Franciscan group in the UK contact us about cooperating with them in their virtual TV ministry that airs via the internet! Will wonders never cease! We are currently broadcasting a weekly hour-long program about hermit life which concludes with a participative prayer service. After the live broadcast, the program is put on YouTube where it is available any time to interested viewers. Details and links are posted on page seven of this issue. We hope many of you will join us in our weekly discussion about hermit life and shared prayer. You can simply go to YouTube and type in Karen and Paul Fredette and lo, we will pop up!

Re suggestions for “hermit helping hermit,” we received the following: we could utilize email to respond to hermits feeling the need for an understanding heart from time to time; we can help readers thirsting for spiritual guidance connect with other **RB** readers gifted in that field who would be willing to offer assistance via telephone or Skype. We already offer that service from Still Wood but would be glad to know of other trained spiritual directors from among our readership whom we can recommend to share in this ministry.

A new blog, *“Where God is Found”* has been launched to enable discussion focused on finding God in everyday life. Quotations from Karen’s latest book serve as a spring board to suggest appropriate topics for sharing and to keep contributors “on message”. The blog link is [karenkarperfredette.simplesite.com](http://karenkarperfredette.simplesite.com). We look forward to enriching “conversations”!

Thank you to all who are sending us book suggestions and reviews for **RB’s Book Notes**. Also, our sincere thanks to those of you have contributed to our Native American friend. He is very grateful to receive those sacred items for the services which mean so much to him. New life is abounding in our woods, in our life and in our hearts as we contemplate more suggestions for supporting one another, hermit-to-hermit. Most of all, let us always and everywhere pray for one another.

*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 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) ; email: [pkfredette@frontier.com](mailto:pkfredette@frontier.com)  
Blog: [karenkarperfredette.simplesite.com](http://karenkarperfredette.simplesite.com)

# BULLETIN BOARD

### *Proposed Hermit Laura*

*New Creation Monastery* is sponsoring the foundation of a hermit laura in Porter (Stanly County), NC, a small town where only a few churches and houses remain. Many open spaces within the county are available in addition to houses for rent or for sale at low prices. Perhaps some *Raven's Bread* readers might consider relocating to Porter to found a modern Laura. (A Lutheran nursing home is nearby!)

**Contact: Fr. John Vianney Hoover**  
**1309 Duncan Gardens Drive**  
**Charlotte, NC 28206 (or)**  
**Call: 704-344-0934**

### *Raven's Rest is now open!* **The Silence ... the Solitude ... the Solace of God ... awaits you at Still Wood!**

A furnished retreat apartment with a view of the mountains across the Spring Creek valley. Two rooms with private entrance designed for individuals seeking time alone with God.

The modest per diem, \$30 donation, covers all amenities. Retreatants are asked to bring their own food. Spiritual guidance is available upon request.

**Contact us: [pkfredette@frontier.com](mailto:pkfredette@frontier.com) (or)**  
**Phone: 828-622-3750**

### ARE YOU WILLING TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE.... of living in freely chosen solitude?

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:

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Sweden  
**Cell Phone:** +46 (0)70 747 23 53  
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**Website:** [www.solarisfilm.se](http://www.solarisfilm.se)

### Wood B. Hermit



**DON'T JUST DO SOMETHING!  
BE THERE.**

### **THE SATURDAY EVENING POST**

May/June 2013 Issue carries an article entitled "**The New Urban Hermit**". What does it mean to seek the contemplative life in a modern and increasingly connected world? by JACK EL-HAI. It is well done and we are pleased to have been interviewed for this article. Find it at your news stand or at:

**[saturdayeveningpost.com/hermit-resources](http://saturdayeveningpost.com/hermit-resources).**

*Books recommended by RB readers Adele Chatelain and Ephrem Compte***THE HERMIT FATHERS** by Fr. Samaan El-Souriany.

Adele Chatelain, (**RB** reader) writes: *This amazing book talks about the first hermits starting with St. Paul in the Egyptian Desert: "The great centre for monasticism was Egypt. By AD 400, Egypt was a land of hermits and monks. The prototype of the hermit life was St. Anthony, a Copt and a layman. The book goes on to describe the lives of twenty-eight Desert Fathers (and a few mothers, including Queen Annasimon, the Hermit). It also has a small but very valuable Q&A section at the back, along with a Glossary of Terms and a Bibliography. There's a map in the front with the names of the basic Coptic monasteries in Egypt as well as brief descriptions of other areas where hermits lived around the same time: Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine. We hear so much about western monasticism, we sometimes forget that there's a history and population of Christians in the Middle East, for that is where Christian eremiticism began.*

190pp. Paperback. 2008. Pub. by St. Shenourda Coptic Orthodox Monastery, ISBN: 978-0980517109, \$8.00.

**THE WORD IN THE DESERT. SCRIPTURE AND THE QUEST FOR HOLINESS IN EARLY CHRISTIAN MONASTICISM** by Douglas Burton-Christie (Recommended by RB reader, Ephrem Compte).

*New attention is focused on the quest for holiness by the strange, compelling, often obscure early desert fathers. Until now, little attention has been given to one of the most vital dimensions of their spirituality: their astute, penetrating interpretation of Scripture. Rooted in solitude, cultivated in an atmosphere of silence, oriented toward the practical appropriation of the sacred texts, the desert fathers' hermeneutic profoundly shaped every aspect of their lives and became a significant part of their legacy. This book explores the setting within which the early monastic movement emerged, the interpretive process at the center of the desert fathers' quest for holiness, and the intricate patterns of meaning woven into their words and their lives.*

352 pp. Paperback. 1993. Oxford University Press ISBN-13: 978-0195083330. \$40.00

In "**Word**" we described the **On-line TV ministry** in which we now participate. There is a live broadcast everyday at 3:00 PM EDT (US) and 8:00 PM GMT (UK). You can tune in at:

<http://www.livestream.com/doves4peace/>

Paul and Karen broadcast every *Tuesday* at this time. We present information on hermit life and conclude with a prayer service in which everyone is invited to participate. If you cannot tune in to the live broadcast, you can find our presentation on **Youtube**. Simply open **Youtube** and type in "Karen and Paul Fredette" and our past programs will be available to you. Enjoy and share the good word! *Thank you kindly.*



(borrowed from Friends of Silence)

We are all native speakers of the language of life. To talk with what lives, we have to listen patiently and quietly for a long time. We have to listen in a place where we can hear, where the sounds of the living world are louder than the sounds of the machine world. If we have the patience and the silence, we can begin to hear. If many of us listen, many of us will hear. We will learn the language of the living Earth, and it will become our language again.

From: **A FIELD GUIDE TO THE SOUL**  
By James Thornton