



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

May 2015

Thoughts In Solitude

Reading between the lines of the “Word from Still Wood” (Feb ‘15 Issue), I have the intuition that you are, like Wood B Hermit, playing before the Lord through thick and thin. I guess we really don’t have to wait until our storms pass to experience the Peace that surpasses the understanding that the world cannot give. Rather, we learn how to dance in the rain 24/7 ☺! Now is the acceptable time because it’s all we’ve got. There is only One Dancer and we are all being danced. How else could the painful effects of radiation be tolerated. Our presence is His presence.

Hermits need to hear this prayerful message again and again. Our contemplative prayer (intimacy with God) is a hermit’s primary contribution to the human family so we can all “wake up” to who we truly are: Christ by participation. Contemplative prayer is also the most efficacious way to heal and love each other in whom we see ourselves: “other Christs”. In observing the first and greatest commandment we are simultaneously observing the second commandment to love others especially our enemies. Loving them means willing good for them not necessarily liking what they do. This Law of Love is not an obligation imposed from outside us but a burning desire written in our hearts where God ultimately abides and delights us and himself within each of us.

Thomas Merton’s enclosed *Sublime Fire* (see page 3), is a succinct and radical expression of the primacy of our intimate union and love affair with God. Merton sees the various and difficult roles we play in life as secondary. He knew within himself that all of his voluminous and insightful words

(books) and thoughts about God could not trump his direct intimate love relationship with God in contemplative prayer. He was also aware that even the way he responsibly lived out his solitary monastic commitment which St. Francis considered the best way to preach Christ’s “Good News” could not hold a candle to his awareness of his intimate oneness and identification with Christ in prayer. “There is only Christ; he is everything and he is in everything.” (Col3:11)

Knowing who we really are is quintessential to understanding the heart of Christ’s “Good News.” At the moment it seems that most of us walk around addicted to our mistaken ego identity, living what Merton called “a lie”. Dr. Phil’s proverbial question is relevant: “Is that working for you?”

When we experience our True Self: Christ living in us as us, our ego self automatically sees itself as relative and takes it’s proper place in our life as a beautiful means to manifest both interiorly and exteriorly the Love that we already are as a True Self.

We no longer have to be concerned about nurturing a good, positive and loveable self-image (the psychological self) because we know it is a pure free “Gift” we receive from the Divine Indwelling at our birth without anyone else having to tell us or show us how loveable we are. However, when others do affirm us and show us how loveable we are, we know they are telling the Truth. ☺!



**Anonymous Hermit
East Texas, USA**



As we plan this issue, bright chartreuse is surging up the mountain slopes around us, flecked with the creamy foam of wild Dogwood, Locust and Carolina Silver Bells. And somewhere in these woods, the shy Lady's Slipper is about to bloom. Will we find it this year—that "orchid" of the Appalachians? We are always hoping for that gift. Perhaps beside the trillium patch? Along tumbling John's Branch? Someday

Speaking of hope and gifts, we want to thank all of you wonderful folks who are supporting *RB* so generously and faithfully with your donations, your sharing, your encouragement and appreciation! It counts for so much and urges us on to do our very best for you; to offer whatever you or we believe will be an assist in living your unique calling from the Lord. We truly appreciate your trust in our ministry, especially your active participation which makes *RB* so much more than just another publication about eremitical or solitary life in all its many forms. The conversation among the readers is both uplifting and inspiring. Don't you look forward to seeing who is sharing insights, ideas, and experiences from their own lived experience?

This is especially important during this period in history when spiritual living is undergoing tremendous changes. A reader recently sent us an article from *Harper's Magazine* which impressed us deeply: "Going It Alone, The Dignity and

Challenge of Solitude" by Fenton Johnson (April 2015). Look for it if you can and let us know what you think of it. We were a bit startled by some of the statistics quoted: "more than a quarter of U.S. households have only one resident. Other developed nations report even higher figures, as high as 60% in parts of Scandinavia." Johnson goes on to observe that "the call to solitude is universal...It requires only the commitment to sit down and still ourselves to our particular aloneness."

"Solitude and silence are positive gestures," he asserts, adding that "Solitaries possess the key to saving us from ourselves." Then he asks: "What is the usefulness of meditation, or of prayer? What is the usefulness of the solitary?" In his article, Johnson mentions Gethsemani several times, since it was near his childhood home in Kentucky. There were once 250 monks there. Now the numbers are down to 40 men, many of whom are pushing 70. Instead of lamenting this decline in monastic vocations, he asks: "Does ascetic practice require bricks and mortar? In our solitude, might we devise ways of supporting and disseminating ascetic virtues without monasteries?...Surely there is a vital place in our ramped-up world for simple contemplation of what is."

Perhaps we aren't so unique after all. Maybe we are legion! We are quite simply what our modern age demands. When John Mullins writes (See Forum, p. 4) to warn us about seeking "a special spiritual identity", he is only wanting solitaries to embrace their hiddenness wholeheartedly lest we find *RB* a dead body good only for attracting carrion birds, as Thomas Merton observed.

We agree that there is a fine line between flaunting apparent success and offering a service that needs to be publicized so that seekers can find it. It is all too easy to fall off to either side unless we keep our eyes fixed on *RB's* goal: to minister to solitary seekers who wish to embrace solitude as a way of life, not only to achieve personal balance but as a means to care spiritually for the world around them.

Thank you for all your prayers for Karen. Please continue as we have a ways to go in our journey with Sister Lymphoma.

*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. It affirms and supports people living in solitude. As a collaborative effort, it is written for and by hermits themselves, delivered by postal mail or email. Please send your written contributions, address changes, and subscription donations to: pkfredette@frontier.com or 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.

An annual donation is appreciated, each giving according to their means. Please send payment in US dollars (PayPal converts foreign currency to US dollars). Anything extra goes into a fund to insure that all who want Raven's Bread can receive it.

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>; email: pkfredette@frontier.com and Blog for Lovers of Solitude: www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog.**

◆◆◆◆◆ *Sublime Fire* ◆◆◆◆◆
 By Thomas Merton

In practice, there is only one vocation: Intimacy with God—Contemplative union. Whether you teach, live in the cloister or nurse the sick, whether you are in religion or out of it, married or single, no matter who you are or what you are, you are called to the summit of perfection: you are called to interior life, perhaps to mystical prayer, to pass the fruits of your contemplation on to others.

If the sublime fire of infused love burns in your soul, it will inevitably send forth throughout the Church and the world an influence more tremendous than could be estimated by the radius reached by words or example.

Saint John of the Cross writes: “A very little of this pure love is more precious in the sight of God and of greater profit to the Church—even though the soul appear to be doing nothing—than are all other works put together.”



Wood B. Hermit



“Choosing reverence....
 conquering our need to conquer”
 Fenton Johnson

*It's not clinical,
 it's not professional,
 it's not educational. . .
 it's relational:
 Become Present to the Presence
 Raven's Rest Hermitage*



*Come to the Mountain
 Meet the Lord
 in Silence and Solitude*

A fully furnished two room apartment
 with view of the Smokies;
 private entrance;
 bedroom, full bath, kitchenette and sitting room.
 Bring your own food.
 Pay what you want.
 Walk wooded trails over private property.
 Experienced spiritual guides available.

Contact:
 Paul & Karen Fredette at:
 pkfredette@frontier.com
 Tel: 828-622-3750

Beginners

by Denise Levertov

From too much love of living,
Hope and desire set free,
Even the weariest river
Winds somewhere to the sea-

But we have only begun
to love the earth.

We have only begun
To imagine the fullness of life.

How could we tire of hope?
-so much is in bud.

How can desire fail
-we have only begun

To imagine justice and mercy,
only begun to envision

how it might be
to live as siblings with beast and flower,
not as oppressors.

Surely our river
Cannot already be hastening
into the sea of nonbeing?

Surely it cannot
Drag, in the silt,
All that is innocent?

Not yet, not yet -
There is too much broken
That must be mended.

Too much hurt we have done to each other
That cannot yet be forgiven.

We have only begun to know
The power that is in us if we would join
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.

So much is unfolding that must
complete its gesture,

so much is in bud



BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



GIOVANNI MARIA DE AGOSTINI *Wonder of the Century*

by David G. Thomas

Brother Paschal, a Raven's Bread reader, recently recommended this book as "a well researched book about a hermit-pilgrim. The legends and stories are many—this book clears up false ones and reinforces the facts. The truth is very inspiring and he seems genuine. He ended his days in Las Cruces, (Mesilla) New Mexico in 1869."

Published by Doc45 Publishing, P.O. Box 5044, Las Cruces, NM 88003.

Paperback. ISBN: 978-0-6922474-0-2

To obtain printed or ebooks, visit: www.doc45.com

SOUNDING SOLITUDE *An Approach to Transformation in Christ by Love*

by Sr. Mary Paul Cutri, OCD

Solitude is not foreign to anyone. It is a universal reality that permeates all our experiences. But why write a book about it? One answer: God. God is the one we seek in Solitude. Solitude, which is listening to God, a being with God, an attentiveness to God's word and wisdom, and a being-in-love with God, is worth the journey into it...When solitude brings us to God, God brings us into new vision. This book is directed to all who seek God and who long to "see" God and to know God's ways more truly. It is for those who are so eager to be transformed in Christ that they are willing to wade into the waters of solitude.

176 pp.; \$15.95; ISBN: 978-0-935216-81-3

ICS Publications, Washington, DC; www.icspublications.org