



# Raven's Bread

*Food for Those in Solitude*

*Online Edition*

*August 2014*

## Thoughts In Solitude

In the image of walking and talking in the garden in the quiet of the evening, a sense of the original call of humanity being that of coming home to one's own heart is portrayed. One learns that without coming home to oneself one cannot be prepared for meeting and embracing creation and other human beings.

In attentive solitude our small self gradually melts so that the great self may emerge. The infinite energy of Divine love shared with each of us teaches us that it is only falling into this love that will make us free. Self-forgetting is the currency of intimacy with God. In the embrace of Love, self-forgetting arises not from negative asceticism but rather from the desire to be flooded with God.

Relinquishing egoic striving becomes a daily practice of letting go, so that the greater energy of Love can emerge. We can however often harbor poorly informed notions of emptiness. In genuine self-emptying we are being drawn into freedom. Letting go is not a single absolute action, but a progressive sequence. Solitude is that reservoir within us that desires to receive the abundance of Love so that what is purely our own striving may flow away. In embracing solitude we are humbled by the magnificence of the Love we are offered.

In such an experience of solitude of heart a resting place for the weary traveler in today's world will be formed. Love of God alone happens in and through every encounter.

A flow of tears often greets such an overwhelming gift of compassionate presence, and the anguish of the heart is eased. In solitude of heart we learn the great beneficence of God. The Jewish mystical writ-

er, Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907—1972) has poetically described this process of unlearning and awakening in his books *Man is Not Alone* and *God in Search of Man*.

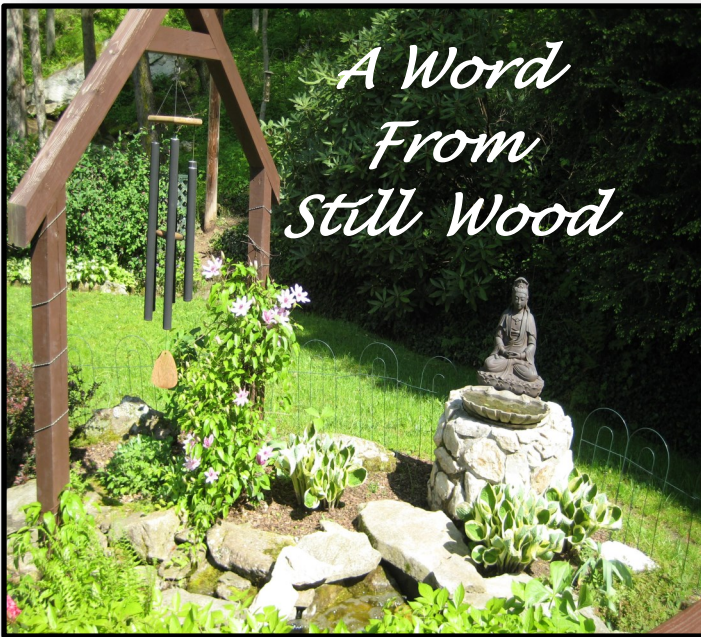
The process involves moving from knowing God mostly as object, something to be worshipped or praised, to learning to know God as subject: "*He [God] appears as One Who demands, as One Who acts, Whose intention is to give righteousness and peace rather than to receive homage or adoration, Whose desire is to bestow rather than to obtain.*" (Heschel)

In Heschel's mysticism God is in search of each person. No one's journey is irrelevant to God. It is at the well of solitude that we can learn of our place in God's dream for the world. It is difficult to wean ourselves away from the demands of the cultural acceleration in which we live and in which we self-violate in response to cultural pressures. The gift arising from embracing solitude is to learn that we have access to spiritual affirmation from within. Although culturally we become habituated to acquisition and production, the embrace of solitude enables us to fall from the grip of this frame of mind and to fall into the arms of God. Solitude is a practice of dwelling in God's benevolence.



Excerpted with permission from  
***Embracing Solitude, Women and New Monasticism***  
by Bernadette Flanagan (Raven's Bread reader)  
Dublin, Ireland

See "Book Notes" May 2014 for brief Review.



*“Once upon a midnight dreary,  
while I pondered weak and weary,  
While I nodded, nearly napping,  
suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of some one gently rapping,  
rapping at my chamber door...”*  
Edgar Allen Poe

Many of us, we're sure, recognize this chilling opening to Poe's famous narrative poem, *The Raven*? Reading it alone in an isolated hermitage as night falls, one instinctively shudders, especially if some unexplained noise is heard in this same instant! Poe's raven, who quoth "Nevermore." at opportune moments during the poet's musings, angered and disturbed him. We are left with the sense that the raven bore woeful tidings that weighed on the heart of the hapless poet. from then on.

The raven has long been a symbol or messenger of the Divine. Yet, we don't easily regard this dark bird as an alternate for the dove "with, ah, bright wings" (G. M Hopkins) that we identify as the Holy Spirit. Both symbols, though, are found in the Old and New Testaments with only subtle variations in their

roles. The Spirit is the One who surprises us, inspires us and also nourishes us. And we find the raven feeding Elijah, protecting St. Benedict from poison and named as the guardian and provider for hermits.

Ravens are social, curious, playful, monogamous, omnivorous, and also one of the most highly intelligent creatures in the animal kingdom, surpassing even the brightest dogs (or cats!) We need these attributes ourselves to live our solitary life successfully. Which of these characteristics would you consider most necessary at this point in *your* hermit journey?

Recently, **Raven's Bread Ministries** was featured in a story about hermits in *The Wall Street Journal* (6/19 issue)!!! This occasioned a mini-stampede to **RB's** website which received 2477 hits the next day and resulted in a number of new readers, retreatants and directees. WELCOME ALL! !

The Spirit has summoned us to another step in faith which, we hope, will benefit all of you. The Resources (hard to find articles and studies on eremitic life) listed on our website are now offered without a set price, allowing you to donate whatever you want to contribute for the various items you select.

Good news for those of you who have enjoyed one of Karen's earlier books, "**Where God Begins to Be, A Woman's Journey into Solitude.**" It is now available in e-book format which can be downloaded onto digital readers, smart phones, and computers. This little book, composed of vignettes from Karen's years in Colt Run holler, has enjoyed consistent popularity since it was first published in 1994 and chosen for the Catholic Book of the Month club.

The topic for this issue's discussion (work) did not move many of you to share your thoughts. You have all been so good about "feeding" **Raven's Bread** that we usually have a hard time choosing among your offerings. Do we need to remind you that it is *your* contributions which make **RB** so unique and authentic? Ravens, as noted above, are omnivorous so please feel free to send in anything which may serve to nourish your brothers and sisters in the their hidden nests. Blessings!

*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](mailto: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.

The annual donation suggested is \$10.00 in the USA or \$12.00 US for readers outside the States. Please send payment in US funds (PayPal converts foreign currency to US dollars). Any extra donations are used to subsidize subscriptions for hermits who cannot afford even a modest offering.

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](mailto:pkfredette@frontier.com) and Blog for Lovers of Solitude: [www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog](http://www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog) .

*It's not clinical,  
it's not professional,  
it's not educational. . .*

*It's relational:*

*Become Present to the Presence*

## ***Raven's Rest Hermitage***

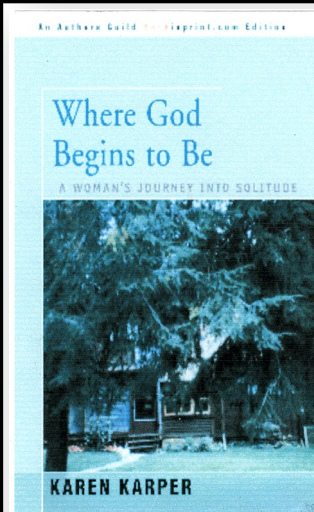
*Come to the Mountain  
Meet the Lord  
in Silence and Solitude.*



Fully furnished two room apartment  
with view of the Smokies;  
private entrance;  
Bedroom, full bath, kitchenette and sitting room.  
Bring your own food.  
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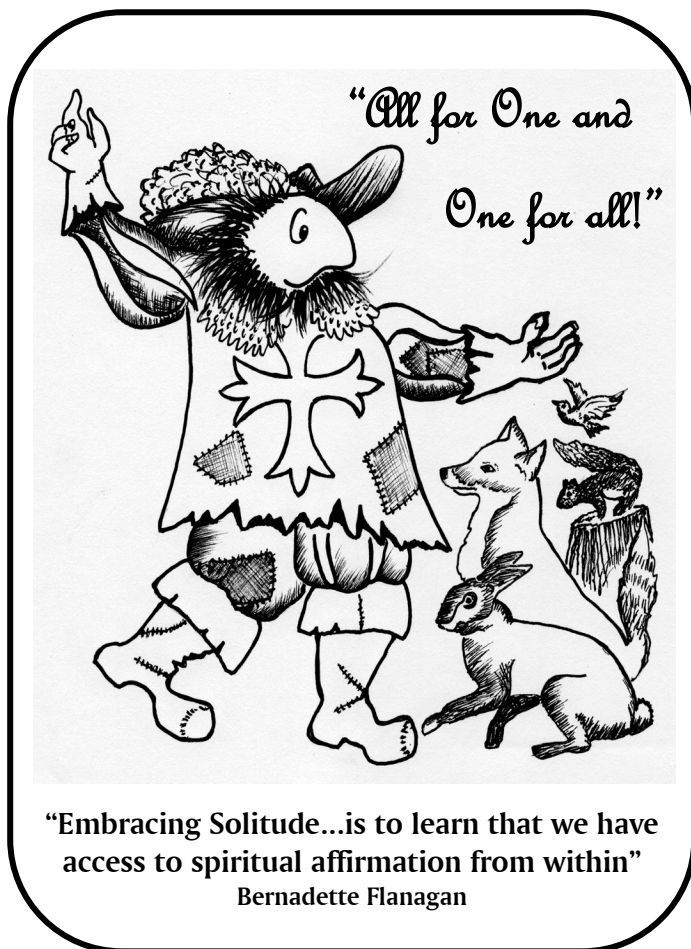
Paul & Karen Fredette at:  
pkfredette@frontier.com  
Tel: 828-622-3750



Coming Soon!

One of your favorite book offerings will be coming out as an e-book in September! It will be available in Nook, Kindle and other e-versions. Watch for it on your favorite book site.

## Wood B. Hermit



**A NEW BOOK BY A RAVEN'S BREAD READER!****DESERT ECOLOGY: LESSONS AND VISIONS**

by Diane G. Woodcock

*How better to describe the desert than in the precise words of an eloquent and acutely sensitive poet? Diana Woodcock's new and admirable collection presents this land, not as dry and barren but bursting with exotic beauty if one but has the eyes to see— as our poet so reverently reveals. This chapbook is “an entrancing untamed song of the wild that mustn't be missed.” (L. M. Browning)*

Paperback 2014. Finishing Line Press, P. O. Box 1626, Georgetown, KY 40324 \$14.00

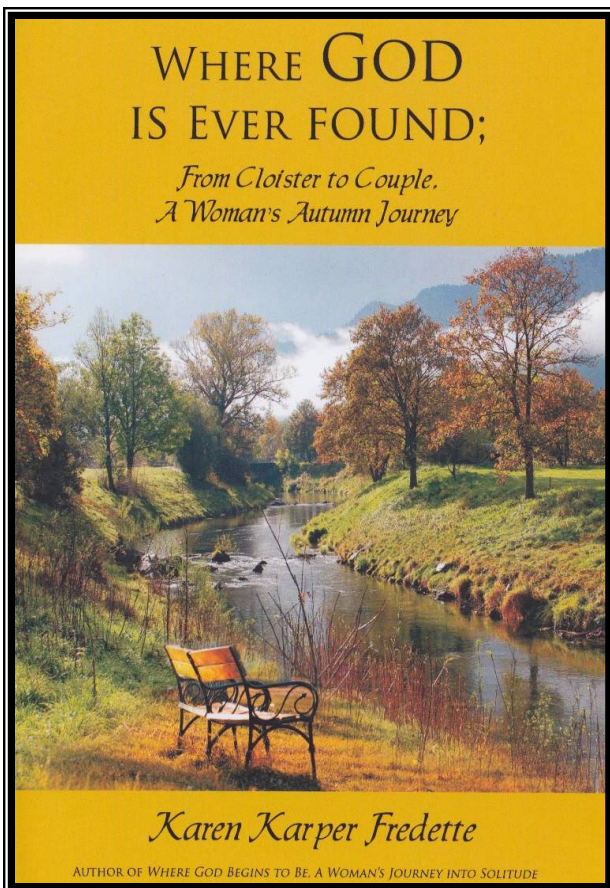
**THE PROPHET ELIJAH IN JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS**

by Rabbi Asher Finkel, Ph.D., The Reverend James Boyce, O. Carm., Ph.D. &amp; The Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell, D. Phil.

*In both Jewish and Christian traditions, Elijah is a model for profound prayer, peacemaking and hope in fulfillment of God's plan for his people. The impact of this towering figure on Jewish and Christian communities through the ages cannot be overestimated. At the end of his life, he “was taken up to God” and for many, he is expected to return to prepare for the Final Coming of Christ. This study is part of a series of papers which bespeaks the re-vision, the re-orientation to which the Second Vatican council, in its declaration on the Jews summons Christian thought and action.*

54pp. Paperback. The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ 07079

Order from Fr. Lawrence Frizzell via email: lawrence.frizzell@shu.edu

***YOUTUBE VIDEOS***

You are invited to view the videos of our weekly Livestream broadcasts which are now available on *YouTube*. Type in: Karen & Paul Fredette and all the programs beginning March 2013 will appear thanks to David Holmes. The March to August 2013 programs are based on **Consider the Ravens**. These are followed by presentations focused on Clare & Francis of Assisi, using Karen's biography of St. Clare as the main source of the material presented. The most recent series of programs, entitled "***A Hermit's Journal***" reflects on Karen's initial experience of hermit life in 1989 in Colt Run Hollow, West Virginia.

**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**