



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

November 2012

Thoughts In Solitude

Living in solitude, silence and simplicity is the hallmark of the eremitical life. Solitude is setting oneself in an environment of separation from community living. At its best, solitude brings with it a desired aloneness but not loneliness. The aloneness begets a certain emptiness that leads to silence. Silence stills a listening heart in order to be penetrated by the Word of God. Simplicity empties oneself of distractions and separates one from worldly cares. With solitude, silence, and simplicity, peace and unexpected joy follows when it is lived intentionally in the presence of God. This is a rare and uncommon vocation, a gift of grace, given to a hermit.

This gift of grace speaks of a lifestyle lived in the presence of God, seeking constant union with Him in prayer. The hermit lives in the power of prayer, speaking to God, or listening for God's voice. Each day can be punctuated by psalms and hymns of praise and thanksgiving. Whether in the garden, at the computer, studying Sacred Scripture, or attending the sick, the hermit is at prayer. The hermit's prayer encompasses all of creation and all peoples. The hermit places him/her self at the heart of creation and there prays for the world.

Hermits may appear to be living on the fringes of society, but because the hermit is truly living in the presence of God, he or she is not on the margin but at the very center of Christian existence. The separateness of the eremitical life is a challenge to many who would see this isolation as a wasted life, an opting out of society, not sharing the lives of others, lacking in discipleship to further the Kingdom of God. There is no attempt at evangelization, nor any outward preaching of the Word of God. Obviously no one enters a hermitage to preach. Yet the eremitical life speaks emphatically of the values of the Christian life. If the Christian life is about union with God, and continuing the mission of Christ, his preaching of the Kingdom of God, then the eremitical life has a message for everyone.

A secular may ask how does the eremitical life have anything to do with me? A personal challenge can arise because the life style of the hermit may question so much of another's lifestyle. Lives can often be tainted by greed,

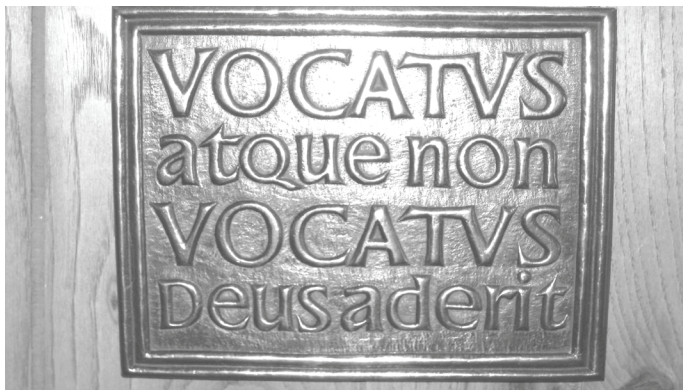
accumulating wealth, seeking for success at any cost, worrying over security, or building up a good name or reputation. All this can be encouraged by the cultural media surrounding us. We can be caught in a web of modern technology that easily leads to isolation from the present moment. The very questions eremitical life raises preach about Christian values. What is at the forefront of our lives? What are our priorities? Are they ultimately seeking God above all things, finding Christ in our sister and brother, ushering in a healing balm to alleviate their suffering from disease or injustice?

Preaching the Word of God always requires fidelity to the Gospel and personal conversion. The eremitical life fulfills these criteria. As to the Gospel, all of Christian life is about union with a loving God. When we learn of the hermit life, we find this way of living questions our own life style. It shows us a call that brings into our midst a lively faith, a selfless love that builds the Kingdom of God.

After years in community life as a Trappist, Thomas Merton sought the eremitical life. Merton retired to a hermitage on the property of Gethsemane Abbey. He described the hermit life as the need to withdraw from the babble of confusion around one in order to listen more patiently to the voice of conscience and the Holy Spirit. He adds that the hermit's prayers and fidelities will renew the life of the church. The life style of the hermit is one of radical self-offering where one begins to lose oneself in the silent presence of a loving God. It is a rare gift not given to everyone, demanding wholeness of mind and spirit, so one can take up the works of eternal life. Thus, eremitical life preaches the kingdom of God already begun in us and yet still awaiting us.



**Bede Jago, OP
Chicago, IL**



A Word From Still Wood

There is a famous quotation that Carl G. Jung treasured so much, he placed it over the lintel of his front door and later had it carved onto his tomb stone. *“Called or not called, God is present.”* Paul and I have this wise saying on a plaque in our living room. Recently, I pondered that despite all the twists and turns of my life, God has always been present. Having completed the manuscript for *Where God is Ever Found; From Cloister to Couple, A Woman’s Autumn Journey*, I see even more clearly how God has always been present, whether I called Him or not. He has guided every stage of my life journey, from my earliest days to my autumn years.

Many of you have read my earlier work, *Where God Begins to Be, A Woman’s Journey into Solitude*, and have asked for another book that would cover my transition from West Virginia hermit to hermit/wife in the mountains of North Carolina. Frankly, I resisted the idea for many years. I suspected it would prove not only very difficult but would require even more soul searching than my earlier work. The longer I resisted the idea, however, the more I felt God’s hand at my back, gently but firmly pushing me toward the computer. Who can say “No!” to God? Moses tried; Hosea tried; Jonah ran away and Jeremiah complained. Did any of them NOT do what the Lord asked? No-o-o! If these great ones could not escape, how could little me ever expect to do so.

So-o-o three years ago I began the struggle to write the book I didn’t intend to write. Several versions landed in the waste basket until I found a method and style that worked. Initially, I had planned a small book of vignettes with reflections, but there was so much material this time that the book grew and grew and grew. I incorporated incidents from my childhood, my years in the monastery, my time at Colt Run and my present life. And, of course, I could not leave Paul out of the story!

Numerous threads weave in and out of the telling, including our call to serve hermits worldwide through Raven’s Bread Ministries and finding our place in the church as a ministering couple. We are certain that some will find what I have written controversial or at least difficult – hermits are always problematic, it seems! I have taken a risk in telling our story openly and honestly, but it has surely been a greater risk to *live* it! We have walked along many unforeseen paths and the journey is not yet ended. We hope that by sharing our story, we may encourage you to *live your story*, no matter how unconventional.

This new book is more than a sequel to “Where God Begins to Be.” It gleans “God-rich” moments from all four stages in my life (and from Paul’s) that embody a great truth: wherever love is found, God is also found.

We are delighted to offer you the option to pre-order an autographed copy of *Where God is Ever Found* directly from us as support for **Raven’s Bread Ministries**. As always, it is your generosity that has keeps the Raven flying. We do not make a living from this ministry, it is a service freely given. Whatever you donate – for this newsletter or our books - is used to support the ministry.

Already we are aware that the holiday season is at hand. Have you noticed that it now seems to begin with Halloween? We wish you a very special celebration, a very spiritual “hallowing” of the Coming of the Lord for Thanksgiving, Advent, Christmas and New Year’s. As hermits, we are meant to welcome the Lord back into festivities which seem to have lost their original meaning. Let us share God’s gift of abundant Love, knowing that *“where charity and love abide, there God is ever found!”*

*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 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

BULLETINXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXBOARD

DOCUMENTARY

Seeking subjects for a one hour TV documentary on living alone. It will focus on the trend towards living without partner or family; the socio-economic and cultural reasons behind this shift including the history of hermits. Looking for a contemporary hermit to serve as an example of the historical context of this way of life.

Contact: Scott Harper, Producer/Director; *Flying Solo*;
Sunday Night Ent Inc for CBC-TV
www.sundaynight.ca ; 416 919 4829 Toronto, ONT

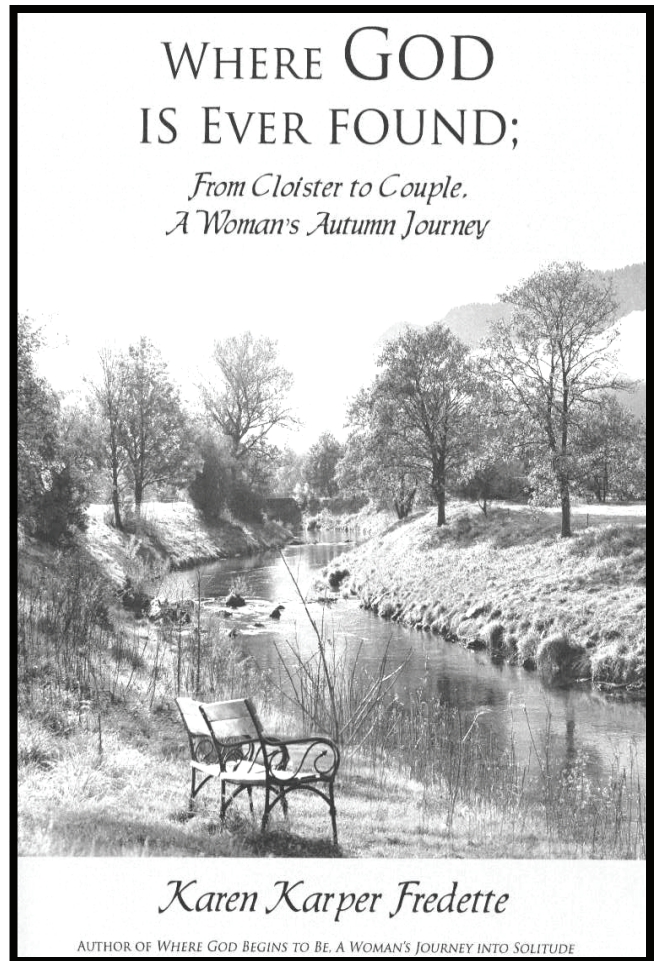
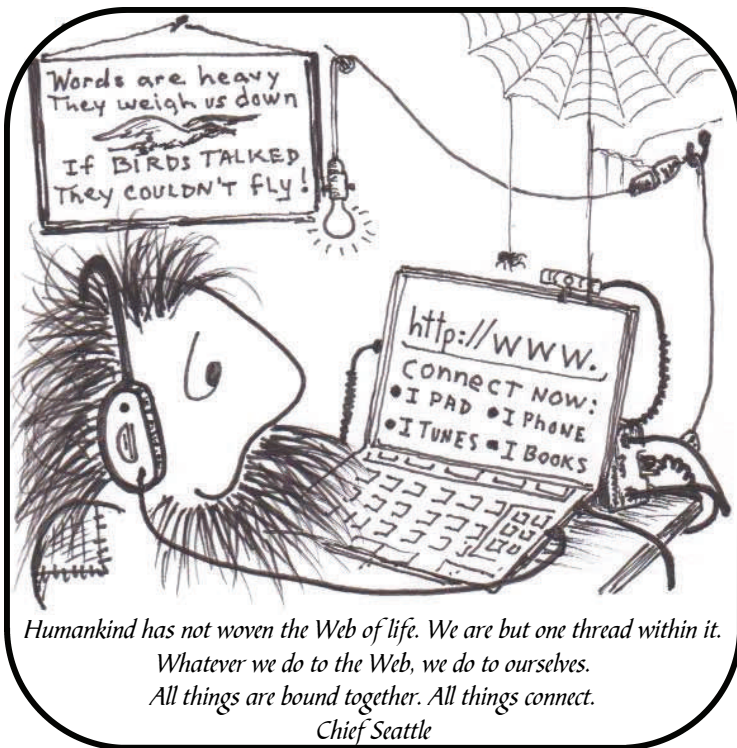
Looking to buy property set aside for prayer or that is in a setting conducive to quiet, prayerful life. Will consider a few acres with house & hermitage.

Contact: Kathleen Johnson
 15104 Susita, St. San Diego, CA 92129
home463@aol.com 858-205-0208

I am a Wellesley College student, applying for the Watson Fellowship. My project is "Redefining Success" through alternative ways of living, including hermit life. I would like to observe and join in such a life for a period of time.

Contact: Dana Y Lee dlee4@wellesley.edu

Wood B. Hermit



WHERE GOD IS EVER FOUND;

*From Cloister to Couple,
 A Woman's Autumn Journey*

Karen Karper Fredette

AUTHOR OF WHERE GOD BEGINS TO BE, A WOMAN'S JOURNEY INTO SOLITUDE

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Hermits Up Front and Personal

(Continuation of the *Mystery Critter* from August issue) I can't wait outside forever with the door open so I gingerly go back inside, creep into the bedroom and look for *it*. Nothing. I look everywhere. I'm stumped until I look at the ladder. On the top rung huddled into a little ball is *the critter*. Not moving. "Oh, my gosh, it's dead! How could I have killed it?" I poke it with a broom until *it* sits up and jumps (almost flies) off the ladder onto the wall and then starts running all over the place. I feel *it's* scared and just wants to get back into the attic so I step back and leave *it* alone. This is exactly what *it* does. Am I going back into my bed to sleep with this gaping hole over my head and a *critter* running about up there? I think not! So I grab coat, hat, gloves and lamp and trudge outside in the snow (of course, tonight there is also a snow-storm.) I go to a little cabin nearby where I turn on the heater and try to sleep a couple hours wrapped in everything I can find. I call my neighbor in the morning and describe *the critter* to him. Long, thin, grey back, white tummy, long skinny tail, sort of cute. He thinks it is a weasel, a carnivore, so not interested in peanut butter. It wants live food. He suggests I borrow someone's cat (he obviously doesn't know cats), put live bait in the trap (obviously he doesn't know *me* either), or call an agency that traps animals humanely. I call and ask if they'll come out. "Have you looked outside?" I look. "Yes, there's a massive ice-storm. I guess you won't come out today?" I guessed right. "It's looking for food. If it finds none, it will go away. Just be patient." *He* doesn't know *me* either! He suggests I get a smaller, humane trap and put some hamburger in it. Okay. It's my turn to drive into town in the storm on unplowed, icy roads. I get the right trap, some beef chunks, and lots of advice about catching weasels. (Very hard.) After I set the trap, I decide to sleep in the other cabin. Next morning, I creep into the house, up to the loft and there it is! A cute little *critter* in my trap looks back at me. Now what do I do with it? My car is stuck in the drive. I worry. Is the trap too small? Might the *critter* be hurt? Can *it* somehow get out? My neighbor shows up so I hand him the cage and *critter*. "Take him for a drive and release him." He looks closer and announces "It's a chipmunk!" That night I snuggle down to sleep after resetting the trap (just in case) with meat *and* peanut butter *and* sunflower seeds. Suddenly I think of my little *critter* out there in the freezing cold, far away from its nest and food supply. Have I sent it to its death? I didn't think this through... so I do so the rest of the night. When my neighbor comes back in the morning, he announces, "It wasn't a chipmunk, it was a flying squirrel!" and proceeds to tell me how cute they are. I sink even lower. "You've only done what you had to do." That doesn't help much. I'm sleeping soundly now but just to be on the safe side, there's a trap in my attic.

Marion Foot, Perth, ONT



BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



A SIMPLIFIED LIFE: A Contemporary Hermit's Experience of Solitude and Silence by Verena Schiller. *As increasing numbers of people try to make sense of their lives in the face of unlooked for change, this direct and compelling memoir by someone who has voluntarily embraced a life of radical simplicity and solitude carries a real message. What makes a young, Cambridge educated woman seek, first a religious order and then life as a hermit on the tip of the Lleyn Peninsula for more than forty years?*

128pp. Paperback. 2010. Canterbury Press. ISBN-10: 1848250258 & ISBN-13: 978-1848250253. \$16.50

THE LIFE OF MILAREPA by Tsangnyon Heruka.

Translated by Andrew Quintman, Introduction by Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

One of the most beloved stories of the Tibetan people, this is also a great literary example of the contemplative life. It offers a personal and moving introduction to Tibetan Buddhism as well as being a detailed guide to the search for liberation. Tracing the path of a great sinner who became a great saint, it presents a quest for purification and buddhahood in a single lifetime. A powerfully evocative narrative, it is full of magic, miracles, suspense and humor!

304 pp. Paperback. 2010. Penguin Classics. ISBN-10: 0143106228, ISBN-13: 978-0143106227. \$10.88

DIALOGUES WITH SILENCE by Thomas Merton.

This text combines Thomas Merton's prayers and his flowing, Zen-like sketches. It provides an introduction to the artistic and purely contemplative side of Merton and offers a glimpse into a lesser-known side of one of the most influential spiritual writers of modern times.

208pp. Paperback. 2002. SPCK Publishing. ISBN-10: 0281054908; ISBN-13: 978-0282054909. \$13.00

[All of the above available through Amazon.com](#)