



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

November 2013

Thoughts In Solitude

I have deliberately chosen to spend some days of annual leave in solitude and silence where I am able to experience a level of freedom to simply "be". I find God in nature as I remove withered plants and sweep up leaves in my garden, experiencing the death and decay of autumn and the approach of winter. I go back into the close confines of my little oratory where I experience being held within the Heart of Jesus. I am reminded of the presence of Mary, and surrounded by images of the holy ones I revere. In physical solitude I am able to expand beyond the confines of my "enclosure" into the vibrant awareness of all my spiritual companions. Silence is essential for listening and for "tuning" our souls so they harmonize with the symphony of the universe and the Communion of Saints.

I'd like to pluck a few "strings" of my Carmelite tradition. In our silence we stand alongside the prophets of the Old Testament. Elijah stood before the face of God in order to pray on behalf of the people and in order to speak to the people on behalf of God. Elijah also withdrew into the silence of the desert. At Horeb, after experiencing the fire and earthquake, during which he hid in the cave, he came out and heard the "sound of sheer silence." We, too, stand before the face of God like Elijah in silence to hear His Word. Sometimes that silence can be deafening!

In the family of Carmel, we are especially dedicated to Our Lady which means sharing in her silent pondering and reflection. The Incarnation was brought about within the silence and hiddenness of Mary's womb. St. John of the Cross wrote: "The Father spoke one Word who was His Son and this word He is always speaking in eternal silence. It is in silence that the soul must hear it." Our daily life has to be pregnant with silence in order for God's Word to be born in our lives.

St. Therese of Lisieux was drawn to silence from her childhood. She would play at hermits with her cousin, Marie, keeping silence as they went about their tasks. When she was at school preparing for her First Communion, she says that "on holidays when I was left to my own devices... I got behind my bed where there was an empty space in which I could shut myself away with the curtains, and there...well, I used to think...about God and life and

eternity...". Silence didn't just happen for her after she entered the monastery. It is something that she had grown into, or which had grown within her.

Another Carmelite who grew into silence during her youth was Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity. Before she could enter the Carmel of Dijon, she wrote: "As I cannot break from the world and live in solitude, give me at least solitude of heart...Solitude and silence are so precious.... One can always enjoy interior solitude and silence, for what can distract a heart possessed by love? Noise reaches no further than the surface, deep down there is only Him!" That silence is not just physical solitude and absence of noise, but is something which we can practice as we go about our daily tasks. Blessed Elizabeth discovered that silence had a music all of its own, that can be found within the enclosure of our hearts.

This silence and interior solitude is something that can be shared with the world as we quietly keep our souls in the loving Heart of God. That experience is often perceived in darkness, the warm maternal darkness of the womb, the spousal night-time intimacy of the heart, or the night of abandonment or absence of the Beloved. Silent love and intimacy with the Beloved is experienced in the solitude of prayer yet also in our daily life in the world.

With Brother Lawrence of the Resurrection, I can take my solitude with me. I can do this when I am out and about in my car, cleaning the kitchen, cooking, or in my office at work. It is simple to be recollected, to bring myself before God by "keeping the soul's gaze fixed on God," to listen always for the music of heaven above the discordant noises that distract me. In short, silence, solitude and recollection form the atmosphere of the spiritual life of anyone living the eremitic charism, creating the ambience needed for that mutual loving gaze of the Lover and the Beloved.



**Heidi Cooper
Mansfield, UK**



A Word From Still Wood

We are approaching another new year, especially soon if we are following the old practice of beginning monastic Advent on November 12. When Karen joined the Poor Clares in 1959, she was quite surprised to discover that monasteries had extended the season of preparation for Christmas to six weeks to equal Lent, the time of special prayer preceding Holy Week and Easter. This year at Still Wood we will be glad to begin a new year as soon as possible since the past year has been particularly challenging and difficult for us.

Even so, there are many more things for which to be grateful. Since most of them are connected with **Raven's Bread Ministries**, we'll focus on these. We thank all of you who contribute to making each issue a "special" one. Your helpful information; your inspiring reflections and shared stories; your thoughtful exchanges in Raven's Forum enrich each issue substantially.

AND, so many of you have donated books for our prison inmate readers that we are able to offer some to all sixteen of them! We have also received thoughtful donations to assist with postage for these books.

Speaking of donations, we thank all of you who have tucked something **extra** into your renewals for it is these gifts that make it possible to send **RB** to everyone who requests it. And, also thanks to your generosity, we have not had to pass on rising publication costs to those who find even \$10.00 a stretch in our continued poor world economy. The drastic cut in our own income when Paul unexpectedly lost his job last February has made us value

your generosity even more. The blessing hidden in that loss was our availability to offer weekly broadcasts on the **Doves4Peace** channel on Livestream. With our presentations also posted on YouTube, many who cannot catch the live program have been following them there. Your responses to our extended study on hermit life, and now our discussions about the life and times of Clare of Assisi, (Francis, included!) have been very heartening as we venture into this new medium.

Thanks, too, for keeping an eye on your renewal date, printed on the upper left side of your address. We remind you that you now have the option of receiving **RB** as a pdf file attached to an email, if you are concerned about "going green" and saving on postage, as well as paper. Just let us know if you wish to change over.

We approach the holiday season with grateful hearts, rejoicing that our ministry to hermits and other religious solitaries continues to flourish and glad that since Lady Poverty, (the topic for this issue), has taken up her abode with us, we are learning again that Our Father blesses us each day with the "sufficiency" that St. Paul proclaimed should content God's servants. Perhaps that is the most precious lesson of this past year – contentment! Once we taste the sweetness hidden in that blessed state, what more do we need or want? May the coming Holy Days bless each one of you with a heart full of sweet content!

*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.

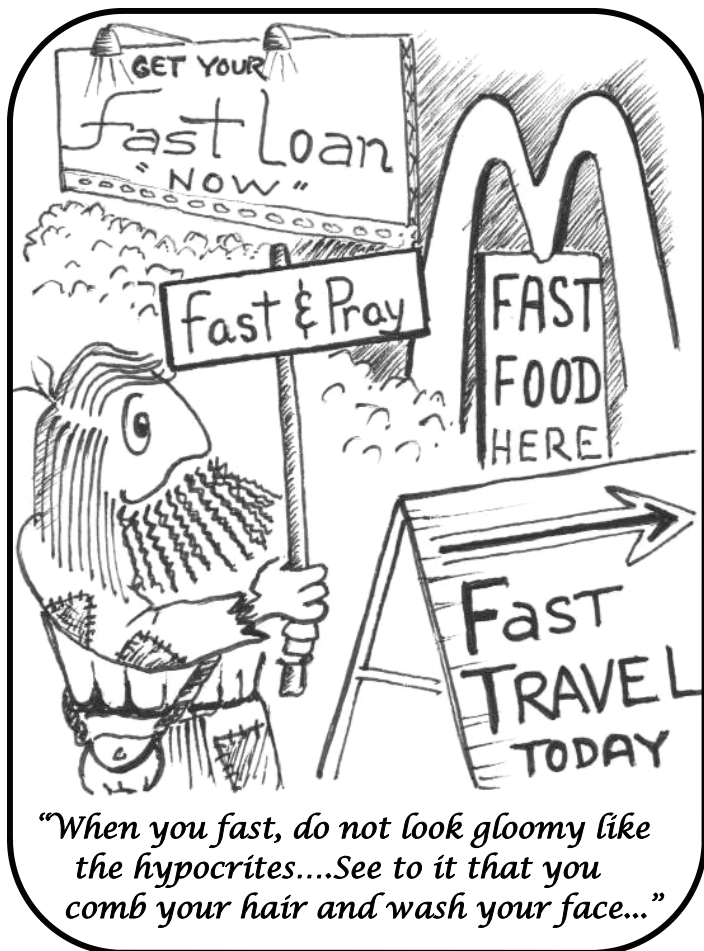
Please send your written contributions, address changes, and subscription donations to:
Raven's Bread Ministries, 18065 NC 209 Hwy, Hot Springs, NC 28743 or via Paypal at our website.*

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

Wood B. Hermit



I live in the woods out of necessity. I get out of bed in the middle of the night because it is imperative that I hear the silence of the night, aloud, and with my face on the floor, say psalms, alone in the silence of the night...

The silence of the forest is my bride and the sweet dark warmth of the whole world is my love and out of the heart of that dark warmth comes the secret that is heard only in the silence...

***Dancing in the Waters of Life** by Thomas Merton*

Discussion Topic for February 2014

Over time many readers have commented on the challenges of "Cooking for One." By February, we will have moved through the holiday season, and it would be a perfect time to share some of your favorite recipes be they holiday or ordinary fare.

Submit by January 1, 2014
(Limit to 300 Words, please)

Books by Karen Karper Fredette
& Paul A. Fredette

**Where GOD is Ever Found,
From Cloister to Couple,
A Woman's Autumn Journey**
\$18.95 ea. Soft cover 250pp.

**Where GOD Begins to Be, A Woman's
Journey into Solitude**
\$12.95 ea. Soft cover 120pp.

**Consider the Ravens, On Contemporary
Hermit Life**
\$17.95 ea. Soft cover 254pp.

Clare: Her Light and Her Song
\$25.95 ea. Soft cover 400pp.

Order @ www.ravensbreadministries.com/ Book
Page (Use PayPal)
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*You have traveled too fast over false ground;
Now your soul has come to take you back.*

*Take refuge in your senses, open up
To all the small miracles you rushed through.*

*Become inclined to watch the way of rain
When it falls slow and free.*

*Imitate the habit of twilight,
Taking time to open the well of color
That fostered the brightness of day.*

*Draw alongside the silence of stone
Until its calmness can claim you.*

TO BLESS THE SPACE BETWEEN US
By John O'Donohue

**SOUNDING SOLITUDE: An Approach to Transformation in Christ By Love**

by Sr. Mary Paul Cutri, O.C.D.

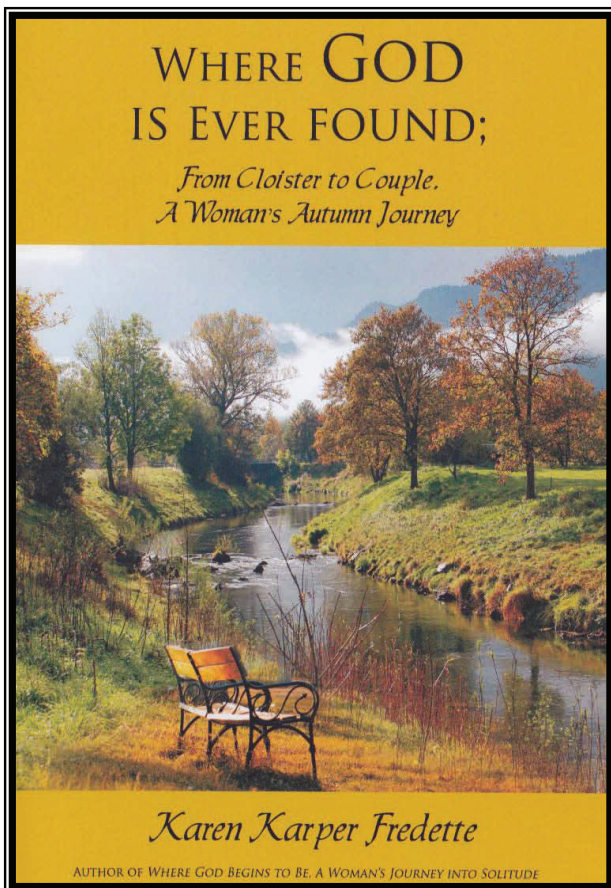
Once you read this book, solitude will not be a solitude of emptiness; love will be near. When solitude brings us to God, God brings us into new vision. We willingly wade into the waters of solitude, eager to see as never before, to see as we are seen; to taste the fruits of prayer.

159pp. Paperback 2010. **ICS Publications**, Washington, DC. ISBN: 978-0-235216-81-3Order from www.icspublications.org, \$15.95**BY RB READERS****GOOD LIVING IN HARD TIMES, The Art of Contentment** by Stafford Whiteaker

According to the author, if we fully experience our self and our relationships, we are fortunate, and will feel a consciousness of the eternal. Whiteaker takes us through all the simple moments and moods of our day, teaching us once again that contentment arises when we what we have is enough. Then we become truly free.

282pp. Paperback 2012. Published by **O Books**, Winchester, UK and Washington, USA.ISBN: 978 1 78099 316 4; Order from www.o-books.net, UK £14.99; US \$24.95**TAMED BY THE DESERT, POEMS** by Diana Woodcock.

Diana's poetry takes us out into the desert and instructs us in its flora and fauna. But these rich and distinctive poems do more; they invite us into a well-stocked and meditative mind that is not afraid to ponder infinity. In Woodcock's world, Meister Eckhart, Ethiopian hedgehogs and broad-faced sandcats are all neighbors under the same enormous sky. She places extreme value on the sacred in life and calls us to the Source of it all.

Paperback. 2013; Finishing Line Press; Order from www.finishinglinepress.com \$14.00**YOUTUBE VIDEOS**

You are invited to view the videos of our weekly Livestream broadcasts which are now available on *You-Tube*. Type in: Karen & Paul Fredette and all the programs from last March will pop up, thanks to David Holmes. The programs from March to August are based on "Consider the Ravens". The more recent presentations are focused on Clare & Francis of Assisi, using Karen's biography of St. Clare as the main source of the material we share. DVD's will soon be available.

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