



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

November 2014

Thoughts In Solitude

Is there something we need to face?

When we know that what is given in our lives is an expression of the Divine Seed, we express it in thought, word and deed. When we reach a place of knowing that everything we receive is given by God then we speak from the place of our firsthand knowledge of faith. When we speak with authority from our faith, the words spoken or written are happily sovereign. The happiness or blessing is nothing added, but rather an expression of what is already there and the sovereignty comes from leaving no doubt between the action and the worry of the effect of the action. This is the *no will* (via negativa) of Meister Eckhart.

In the words of two very different spiritual women we read the same message. Ayya Khema, a Theravada nun, offers us a short and practical way to practice *no will*. Her shorthand practice is "Recognize, No Blame, Change." This practical approach is quite similar to Julian of Norwich's message of the three wounds, "Contrition, Kind Compassion, Yearn for God." Julian gives us the hard facts of this practice when she calls them "wounds" whereas Ayya Khema states them more dispassionately. Very simply these saintly women direct us to the life and practice of *no will* especially when we make a mistake, are offended or hurt. They offer a 1,2,3 approach to understanding and practicing *no will*.

The three steps are 1) Recognize and be contrite, 2) Don't contrive a will, God's will or any other will for such a contrivance leads to blame, praise and harm, and finally, 3) Change, go with God, Dharma; remember everything is of God, Dharma.

It's a simple, clear practice but it's tough because our will or what we might call God's will blames, praises and harms and there we stay stuck spinning our spiritual wheel in the mud of some constructed me.

For the spiritual adept it is this gap between the thought, word and action on one side and the change or spiritual leap on the other side where *no will* occurs. Why

does this happen? Here is a little story for clarification.

A teacher went to visit one of his students in hospital. The student was a Buddhist monk who had permanently damaged his knees making it impossible for him to ever sit crossed-legged on the floor again. It was a big loss for him since sitting was part of his main spiritual practice.

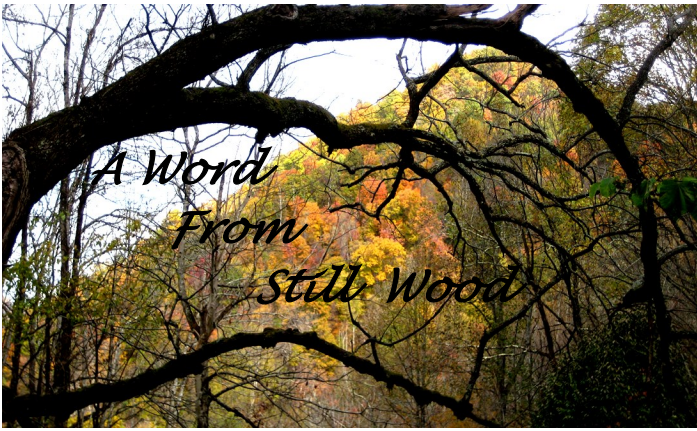
When the student saw his teacher he began to whine and moan and cry out to his teacher, "This shouldn't have happened! This shouldn't have happened!"

His teacher replied, "If it shouldn't have happened, it wouldn't have happened. But it did happen!"

Consolation, although sometimes necessary, is not a spiritual teaching. This student needed to face what had happened and his teacher leapt over the student's will, and all other contrived wills of moaning, groaning and whining in an attempt to help the student let go of his hard luck story. The student's striving for something else, more or less, was indicative of the will still being at the wheel. The teacher attempted to help the student to drop it and face the situation directly without any idea or contrivance between what happened and his experience of what happened. When we are full of self-will or any idea of will there is no room for Dharma, no room for Truth. In this simple example the student did not want to face Dharma which is quite common even for spiritual adepts. He might have been under the false impression that God was somewhere else, or he might have had an idea of how God should be. He didn't like what happened and thought a spiritual life should be different than what was happening.

The work of God occurs in the gap. But it is not claimed by the ego as "GOD'S WILL" since we do not know what that is even though we think we do. We know it by what is given much like the student. It is there in what is given that we practice. What shows up

Continued on p. 3



With autumn sweeping in, we see changes every day in the surrounding mountains. One day is misty and mysterious, another is crisp with curled leaves dancing against a deep blue sky. The peaks color first with the “color line” rolling down to the warmer foot. It all seems as choreographed as a theater production, as we enjoy front row seats for the annual show.

Perhaps we are noticing the changes more because this past year has been one of many changes for **Raven’s Bread Ministries**. There are increasing numbers of “hits” to the website and blog, averaging 1600 per day this month, a huge increase over last year at this time! So, we are planning upgrades to both, to make them more attractive and easier to use. This should be in place by year’s end.

We are pleased to announce that the weekly presentations we have broadcast over the Internet Livestream Channel and posted on YouTube are now available on DVD’s, or on CD’s in MP3 format thanks in huge measure to an **RB** reader who offered to try her hand at the job of transferring the YouTube videos to disks. She has done a marvelous job despite the amateur quality of the original videos. We are delighted with the more professional appearance of the final product that she achieved! Details for ordering are on the Bulletin Board. These disks are available for “whatever you can donate,” in accord with the Franciscan spirituality that guides **RB**.

Now, all our other **Resources** are also offered for “whatever you can donate.” To some, this may sound foolhardy,

but we view this ministry as our gift to you. Whatever comes back is always used to make sure that all lovers of solitude can afford the information and/or encouragement we provide.

When the website is fully revised, you will notice that there is no set price for subscriptions to the newsletter either. We hope that this stepping out in trust will be just one more way that we can serve both you and the Lord more completely.

Since the start, we have never expended money on publicity, but **Raven’s Bread** has grown from just two hundred subscribers that Fr. Bede Jagoe handed on to us in 1997 to over 1200 and still counting as of this mailing! In the view of many, we have become the “Go to” source for media people wanting to do stories on hermits. As a result, **Raven’s Bread** has been mentioned in many major news outlets like Newsweek in 2007, CBS Evening News in 2009, the *Wall Street Journal* this past June and a second appearance in the *National Catholic Reporter* this fall! Many seekers of guidance for their journey into solitude have found us through such publications.

And speaking of guidance, our offer of spiritual direction by phone or Skype is being taken up more frequently. For this, also, there is no set “price” but a sliding scale so that anyone who wants this ministry can receive it.

We have wondered at this recent upsurge of interest in **Raven’s Bread** and are reminded of the story of the Hundredth Monkey. Perhaps we have reached the point where our readership has “tipped the scale”, achieving what some might call a “critical mass”. Or perhaps one of our many new readers is that all-important hundredth monkey! If so, welcome to our tree!

The ultimate “reason” for **RB’s** growth is, of course, the Lord who is using our paltry efforts in the service of His divine plan to nourish His beloved hermits and solitaries around the world. It is an exciting time, one that calls for all we have to give. We are pleased by this growth and hope that the quality of what we offer is worthy of its goal. You DO realize, don’t you, that YOU are what makes **RB** so authentic? We merely assemble the treasures that you send us.

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

In Grateful Memory of Fr. Bede Jagoe, OP



We are saddened to announce the death, on August 4th of the founder of this newsletter Fr. Bede, who had lived as a hermit while missioned to Nigeria. In the early '90's, once back in the States, he saw the need for a means of communication among the increasing number of hermits, as well as a source for accurate information about this rare lifestyle. He began to publish a small quarterly called "Marabou", after a solitary stork common in Nigeria, a name which in French, means hermit. When a change in assignments made it impossible to continue this project, he graciously handed it over to us but maintained a fatherly interest in the health and well-being of his brain-child. Fr. Bede was beloved by many for his great sense of humor, his love of "things Irish" and his willingness to listen and help others in need. In his eightieth year, he was laid to rest in All Saints Cemetery, in Des Plaines, IL. We trust his promise of continued interest in **RB** will win all of his beloved hermits the grace of his loving support from the heavenly realms.



Is There Something.....Continued from p. 1

in the hermitage is the practice. And what is given is without justification. We do not need to justify what happened. Justification is the work of the mundane selfish mind and although it is of God it tends to interfere with faith; it is muddled. The mundane selfish mind diminishes faith and obstructs the spiritual adept from finding God in equal measure, everywhere. It is the essence of the story of Job and possibly the story of man of us.

This realization of *no will* is great, happy news. Whatever arises in the hermitage is given to awaken. The monk in hospital was a lucky monk; his teacher pricked his delusional bubble giving him a chance to be free, to leap into the lap of Buddha. Truth requires we know everything is of God right where we are. Everything else is but a dream, a bubble and a phantom. We work with it every day knowing it comes to awaken us.

by
YAO XIANG SHAKYA

*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.*

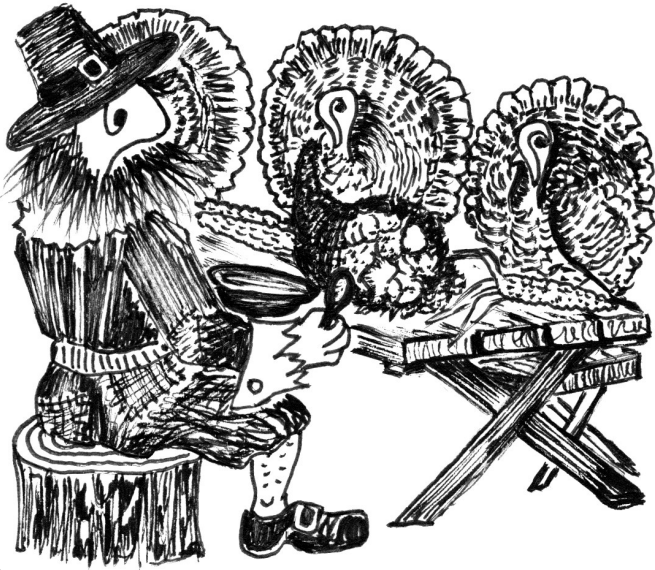


A fully furnished two room apartment
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Paul & Karen Fredette at:
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Wood B. Hermit

"Now Thank We all our God!"



"Via Gratuitatis"

When you come to the Red Sea
place in your life,
When in spite of all you can do,
There is no way back,
There is no way round
The only way is through.
Then trust in the Lord with a
Faith Supreme
Though the winds and the waves
ride high.
He will calm the storm,
He will still your heart,
As He says to your Soul,
'Go on.'

Anonymous

DVD's

of Paul & Karen's Presentations
now ready to order!

We are delighted to offer DVD's made from the weekly programs we have broadcast over Livestream Internet TV over the past year and a half.

The programs have all been posted on YouTube but since many readers do not have access to the internet or for those who might like all the presentations in easy-to-play order, we believe this new option will be appreciated.

SET ONE

Reflections on Contemporary Hermit Life

19 presentations on 4 DVD's, each containing 4 or 5 hour-long presentations—in regular DVD or MP4 format. Also available as audio tapes only, in MP3 format.

SET TWO

Reflections on Clare of Assisi

16 presentations on 4 DVD's with a wealth of photos and paintings from Assisi. The words of Clare, set to music by Sr. Briege O'Hare, OSC closes each program. Also available in MP4 format, and as audio tapes only recorded in MP3 format.

SET THREE

A Hermits Journal

Contains Reflections on excerpts from Karen's prayer journal from her first year as a hermit.

A Three Month Trial—10 programs on 3 disk

The Time Between—4 programs on 1 disk

Colt Run Holler—9 programs on 3 disks

Available as regular DVD's, in MP4 format, and as audio CD's in MP3 format.

You can request Sets or individual disks. We are asking that you make a donation according to your means. Thank you.

WHAT IS HIDDEN IN THE DARK?

A *Single Thread*, a small Sangha in IL will be offering a daily (Mon-Fri) practice of meditation, 5:30-6:30 AM & PM, from November 17 through December 21. We invite you to join us twice a day wherever you are. Online teachings & readings are available on request throughout the practice period.

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