



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

November 2016

Thoughts In Solitude

"Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything." Abba Moses

"This great insight that the whole world is mysteriously summed up in my own self, that I am God's world in miniature, is a great gift." —from "I Am a Little World?" in Martin Smith, A Season for the Spirit

Can we make a difference in the world by going inside ourselves?

The question has come to mind repeatedly in the past year. On the one hand, I've been following a yearning for even greater solitude and interiority than I've known before. At the same time, I cannot escape the wise counsel from St. Teresa of Avila that the proper end of our inner experience is "good works and good works alone." Somehow, for me at least, the deep dive inside must bear fruit outside.

One way to do this is sequentially: we start by going inside in contemplation, and then turn outward into active service. But I see another way too, and it may be better suited to the solitary calling. In short, we impact the world from within the depths of our souls.

Here's what I mean. When writing about a world event, I do what any writer does: I learn about it, read reputable sources, check facts. Far beyond that, though, I take the event into my deepest self, identifying with the humanity I share with those involved, allowing my heart to be (in Parker Palmer's phrase) "broken open" to the suffering and conflict in the world. Somewhere in this process, insight blooms — a depth of observation that all the research in the world could never bring me.

Loosely speaking, I go sit in my cell, and my cell teaches me everything.

This isn't just about writing. Whenever we invite the world's *Sturm und Drang* inside, it gives us an opportunity to identify with others from within ourselves. If, as Martin Smith writes, each of us is a "little world" — a mirror or microcosm of the human race— our innermost response

can tell us something about the world's response. We get a tiny but empathic glimpse of the suffering beyond us.

From here come the "good works." We can reflect our unique insights back out in a way that connects, carries love, and bears fruit. If moved to external action, we can serve others where they're at, because we've *felt* where they're at.

Caution is advised. In our social media culture, the world's crises come at us superficially and relentlessly: if we simply open our filters and let them in without reflection, their sheer weight can crush us. More important, it's all too easy for this "mirroring" to devolve into narcissism. We might assume that *everything* we feel and experience is what the world feels and experiences — an exact match. So we respond with "I know what you mean" and offer solutions ideal for us but not for others.

Our safeguard against this narcissism, I think, lies in our own spiritual practices — the very ones that, slowly and over years, have drawn us out of ourselves and into a proper perspective on self and the world. These practices, in other words, have given us *humility*: a crystal clear assessment of our strengths, our weaknesses, our small place in the universe, and the Divine Spirit who tends it all.

If we maintain our practices and our humility, if we live into both the depth of our inner life and the cautions listed above, we can offer a unique and precious gift: deep, empathic wisdom in a world that knows so little of it. We change the world outside by going inside.



By John Backman

*An Associate of an Episcopal monastery;
A spiritual director and author*



A Word From Still Wood

In "Thoughts in Solitude" for November, John Backman offers us insight into the topic for this issue; namely, how do we harmonize our call to solitude with our obligation to love our neighbor? Knowing of the world's pain is not enough. We must allow it to enter our deepest self, touch us, humble us, and eventually be reconfigured into the one flow of grace. It is not something we DO but a mystery we ALLOW to happen to us and through us. Why should we care so much? Kathleen Raine, in her poem, *Northumbrian Sequence IV*, wrestles with this question until she intuits the answer: "Let in the wound, Let in the pain, Let in your child tonight.." By incubating the fears, anxieties and terrors of our world, we acknowledge these are *our* children, not just the miseries of others "out there". "If we connect with the stillness within, we move beyond our active minds and emotions, and discover great depths of lasting peace and contentment in universal serenity," wrote Eckhart Tolle. We must simply wait until we gradually become fully conscious, in tune with life, so we can reconcile within ourselves a disintegrating village, a fractured humanity, even what seems like a splintering universe.

Part of this "allowing" is fostering forgiveness during this Year of Mercy. Recently we came across a prayer which epitomizes such an attitude. "O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us; remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to this suffering – our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this, and when they come to judgement let all the fruits which we have borne be their forgiveness." (An unknown prisoner in the Ravensbruck concentration camp.)

This issue contains the 2016 Survey which we promised you. We eagerly look forward to receiving your responses. For those of you who prefer to respond on-line, please use the following link:

<http://www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog/2016-survey/>

As soon as your responses are collated, we will publish the results in issues of *RB* for everyone to share. (Fear not! No one's name or circumstances will be disclosed in the Survey reports.) Eventually, we will publish a booklet of the assembled results. Thank you in advance for your great cooperation! And a special prayer of gratitude to Sister Sheila Richardson for collating the raw data. We also wish to thank everyone who has so generously contributed to the support of Raven's Bread Ministries this past year. The Survey will put some extra strain on our budget so if

you haven't renewed your subscription lately, you might wish to include a donation with your returned Survey. ☺

The picture above is of the unconquered winter sun shining through the now bare branches of our "grandfather walnut" promising us renewed life, and reminding us of the words from John 1:16: "From his fullness we have all received, grace following upon grace." May all of you be graced by contentment throughout the holiday season and a renewed hope for 2017!

*With our grateful love,
Karen & Paul*

Raven's Bread is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in solitary life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. It affirms and encourages people living in solitude. As a collaborative effort, it is written for and by hermits themselves, and 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.

BULLETIN#####
#####**BOARD**

Hermit Paradise
Property for Sale in Ontario, Canada

In bush area—seven acres plus—very quiet, treed lot used solely as a hermitage by present owner for 26 years. Very functional cedar cabin with hardwood flooring, electricity, septic and air-tight wood stove. Garden with mature perennial shrubs and grapevines. Rocky quarry area and hill with panoramic view of fields below. (Another building could be situated in this lovely spot or elsewhere.) A drilled well producing 3 gal. per minute is equipped with heat line to prevent freezing. New roof and deck added this past summer. Could be used as a retreat or even for bow-hunting?

**Apply to “Hermit Sister”
% of Raven’s Bread Ministries
18065 NC 209 Hwy.
Hot Springs, NC 28743**

We will forward all letters to “Hermit Sister”. K&P

CELEBRATING
FRATER M. CHARLES BRANDT, ERM
(First hermit ordained a priest in the 20th Century)

On Saturday, November 5th, 2016, at St. Patrick’s Parish, Campbell River, BC, (Canada), The Most Reverend Gary Gordon, Bishop of Victoria and Bishop Emeritus of Victoria, Remi J. DeRoo, STD, will officiate at the celebration commemorating Fr. Charles Brandt’s

**50th Anniversary to the Sacred Priesthood
And the Consecration to the Hermit Life
By then Bishop, Rev. Remi J. DeRoo.**

Bless you, Frater Charles, for pioneering eremitical life and for your long years of fidelity!

From all of us here at Raven’s Bread



*Our warmest Best Wishes
and most fervent Prayers
to all the readership of
Raven’s Bread
throughout this Holiday Season
and the New Year of 2017.
Thank you all for “being there!”*



*It's not religious,
Or professional,
Or even educational. . .*

It's relational:

Just be 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

Tell a friend

BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS

WATCHING THE RIVER FLOW BY: SELECTED POEMS by Ph.D. Robert Trabold. *Bob Trabold's poetry mirrors the rich life he leads — a life of contemplative reflection combined with solitary pilgrimages to places of prayer around the world. His work is powerful yet gentle, centering on the spiritual core and peaceful aspects of all that flows through his life. He conveys profound insights through liquid poems, meditations and haikus permeated by a deep spirituality.*

132 pp., hdbk. \$28.95; pbk. \$11.99 Kindle \$1.99;
Published by BALBOA PRESS, 2016

ISBN-10: 1504362691; ISBN-13: 978-1504362696

CONTEMPLATIVE DRAWING & THE GIFTS OF MERCY by sister alies therese

These reflections on mercy coupled with powerful line drawings in vibrant color offer us another way to expand our prayer. Sr. Wendy Beckett, the "art nun" of the UK, writes: "Anybody sensible enough to have bought this book is holding a treasure in their hands, a highly unusual treasure by a highly unusual woman. Sr. Alies Therese is a vowed Catholic solitary whose days are formed around prayer, art, and writing. In this small volume, the visual gifts first strike our attention: a sequence of enchanting contemplative "doodles", brilliant in color, made during prayer and communicating prayer. Each is paired with a meditation on some aspect of mercy. The discussion is varied; (ie. mercy & loneliness, mercy & tenderness, mercy & eco-stuff, mercy & laughter) but they all share two characteristics. They are firstly beautifully practical for Sister Alies is well aware of the irritating, pressurizing, constant practicalities of normal life. Secondly, and even more valuable, is the depth of insight into Gospel truths that these unpretentious little talks offer us. As a grace note at the end of each meditation comes an insight by one of the GIRLFIRENDS, a group of women of all ages, all backgrounds, all types, who meet weekly to read Scripture, make art, laugh and share.

72 pp., pbk. \$16.99; Published by Tate Publishing and Enterprises, 2016

ISBN-10: 1682070158; ISBN-13: 978-1682070154.

*(Both of these books are authored by **Raven's Bread Readers** and are available through Amazon.com or Barnes & Noble.com)*