



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

May 2019

Thoughts In Solitude

I live alone. I live physically separated from others. This is solitude. It is voluntarily removing oneself for a lengthy period of time from the mainstream of societal interaction. Why?

No one can know, with absolute certainty, that hunger for solitude is driven solely by the Spirit. We have an infinite number of ways of deceiving ourselves.

There is always the caveat—that the hermit has withdrawn because of unresolved personal issues. In that case, solitude offers an opportunity for reflection and renewal and reentry. But if it is a vocational call, those same issues will be resolved within the solitude, and the solitude itself will deepen.

No one should attempt solitude in emotional isolation. Deep friendships are essential; and good spiritual direction, if it can be found, is invaluable. The solitary is not in isolation, but rather in the hidden heart of community.

Solitude, by definition, invites one inward. Those voluntarily entering it will repeatedly and frequently ask if they are engaged in non-Christ-like navel gazing, and forgoing the kingdom of God. The answer will never be resolutely clear.

I have lived alone for seven years, but it is an aloneness contained within a bustling suburban community. My aloneness is not isolation. There are children playing in the streets; parents going to and from work; lawn mowers growling on weekends; barbecues going on. My aloneness is contained within that milieu.

It takes time to resolve the ideal with the reality. Many silent dwellers today must work for a living. They may live in apartments, rented rooms, or houses. Occasionally I will read of a man or woman who has gone into the mountains and lived a primitive life. Sometimes I hear that they come back, exhausted by the enormous physical labor required to sustain themselves in such an environment.

When I initially designed a solitary lifestyle, I chose a small brick house in a suburban community, to be near my children. It never occurred to me that I would find suburban living restrictive and contrary to the silence I sought. I assumed that four solid brick walls would provide me with the hermitage I wanted. Yet, as the initial

year passed, I began to feel trapped in this complex societal infrastructure, and I wanted to flee.

I dreamed of leaving the area, finding an acre or two and building a small four-room house. I searched the newspaper for ads, drove to distant places looking for this wilderness Shangri-La. I felt I could not become a real hermit without it. I was being stifled by neighbors constantly wanting to chat, cars going up and down the street, the telephone ringing, and friends' insistence that I maintain some social contact with them.

I ended up buying an RV. I was my "hermitage on wheels." I abandoned the monetarily simple life, and complicated it by adding a second house. Then I drove all over the country. Altogether I spent nearly three months on the road in my quest for absolute solitude in a wilderness setting.

Only then did I come to a deeper understanding of solitude. When I came home from my last trip, exhausted and lonely, my home finally became a hermitage. A dwelling becomes solitary when its owner believes it is so. A solitary dwelling is the place where one can relax into deepest silence. The purpose of solitude is to invite quietness into your self. If you are constantly stressed, fretful, worried, or exhausted, then your current situation is not the right place for solitude.

It was my idealism—my wanting to be an austere hermit—that made me disparage my home. In wanting to please God, and gain some assurance that I was being faithful to what I perceived as a call to solitude, I saw only one expression of aloneness. That of the wilderness dweller. The desert father. The woman chopping wood for a snowbound winter. The little house on the prairie. I came home from my last RV experience desperate for the solitude and security of my own dwelling place. It

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Excerpted from Silent Dwellers
By Barbara Erakko Taylor



*A Word
From
Still Wood*

As we relish the magic of new seasons, spring in the northern hemisphere, autumn in the southern, we are confronted with major changes in nature; changes which may seem sudden but which have been in the making for months. They appear to burst upon us, like the cherry tree blossoming in this photo taken from our deck.

For many of us, winter has offered silence, solitude, waiting-in-hope. We could not see the bulbs underground reaching for the sky; nor could we tell how buds on the tips of branches were swelling little by little. Similarly, we cannot always see the changes at work in our own selves during what seems like “dead” weeks or months.

However, nascent creativity is often nourished during the “rest” that precedes it. Fresh vitality enables us to dig into our depths from which artistic endeavors arise. Here at Still Wood we have delved into the life and culture of the Smokies which stretches back to the early 1700’s and even further, when we include Cherokee traditions.

Our first endeavors were short stories and photography. Recently, we have been working on a fictional series illustrated with Paul’s sketches. The *Legend of Lovada Branch* seeks to portray how a deeply spiritual community of elders, independent of denominational differences, influence the lives of many who are unaware of their existence.

We, as solitaries, write or draw or sing, not for popularity but to allow the Light penetrating our lives to shine out as through stained glass windows and awaken others to the beauty, hope, and goodness that surrounds us.

The richness we discover and seek to share here at Still Wood is nourished by the prayer-care of all you. We hope that *Raven’s Bread*, in turn, encourages you to realize the creative possibilities that prayer, soli-

tude, and silence are wakening in you. *Raven’s Bread* will happily make mention of your efforts on the Bulletin Board, in the book section or as a submitted article, poem or sketch. Before the next issue comes out, Paul will reach the milestone of his 70th birthday and full retirement from work in community mental health and developmental disabilities. More than ever we will rely on God’s providential care in your generous support and timely donations to continue our ministry to you all.

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

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was as though I finally bonded to my hermitage. I realized how much the hermit needs to “nest” by not moving about excessively. I settled in for a winter of consolation.

Solitude implies not only a dwelling but a state of mind.

I relish and enjoy time with others. I have been called “the sociable hermit.” Ironically, lengthy solitude often invokes a verbal avalanche when I find myself with a dear and treasured friend, or at a rare social occasion. I sound like the windup energizer non-stop-talking bunny. Solitaries, I suppose, are not always introverts. But I wind down quickly, by social standards, and look fatigued and worn two hours later.

I have not yet learned how to carry solitude and silence into the marketplace of life. For me, society is an intoxicating party—and perhaps it always will be. But home is home. Solitude is the dwelling that sustains and nurtures me, even in times of felt loneliness.

A reminder from your editors:

It is now May on our lush green mountain, rain and sunshine, trees in bloom and wild flower blossoms everywhere. We are still looking to invite long-term use of our “efficiency hermitage” on the lower level in exchange for assistance with maintenance and upkeep. If you or someone you know might find solitary life in the Smokey Mountains appealing, please contact us for details.

Email: pkfredette@frontier.com

Phone: 828 622 3750

Introducing:

THE LEGEND OF LOVADA BRANCH

BOOK ONE: THE COVE

and

BOOK TWO: PANTHER GAP

The New Smokey Mountain series

Written by Karen Karper Fredette

&

Illustrated by Paul A. Fredette

Available through Amazon.com

Pbk. \$15.99; ebook. \$9.99

Order direct from author:

\$10.99 plus \$2.00 shipping

via email: pkfredette@frontier.com

News! We are upgrading the Raven’s Bread website (ravensbreadministries.com). The Blog attached to the site is now divided into two sections—The RB conversation among hermits is continuing and a new portion dedicated to a Lovada Branch discussion has been established. Enjoy!

Raven's Rest Hermitage

Come to the Mountain

Meet the Lord

in Silence and Solitude



A fully furnished two room apartment with a view of the Smokies; private entrance; bedroom, full bath, kitchenette and sitting room. Bring your own food. Pay what you can. Walk wooded trails over private property. Experienced spiritual guides available.

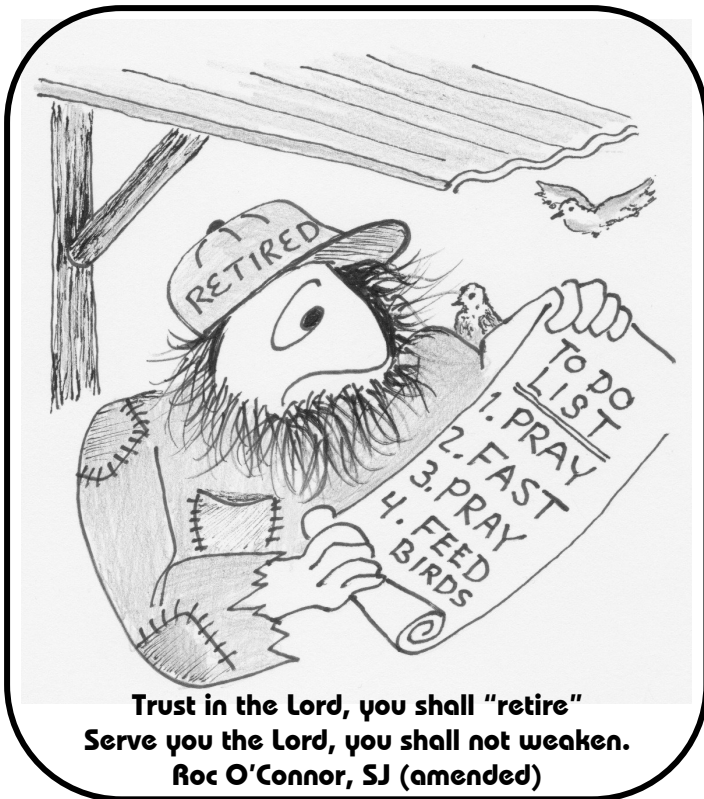
Contact:

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Tell a friend

Wood B. Hermit



Trust in the Lord, you shall "retire"
Serve you the Lord, you shall not weaken.
Roc O'Connor, SJ (amended)

New Hermit Blog

by Carolyn Humphreys, OCDS

<https://contemplativechristianityorg.wordpress.com>

RB readers are welcome to read it, share it with others and be a "follower" by clicking the blue box. Followers will receive posts directly to their email in-box.

God's deepest justice then, is justice to divine integrity. God must always be God, regardless of the circumstance. Since God's nature is love and generosity, this means quite simply that God's justice is mercy, forgiveness and generosity.

+ *Duns Scotus*



BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



THE UNIVERSAL CHRIST: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For and Believe by Richard Rohr (*Raven's Bread* reader)

This book articulates the fullness of the Christ Mystery as expressed in John's Prologue like no other. This can be a life-changing inner experience of the Universal Christ at the center of our own being and the heart of all beings. This IS the spiritual journey and the road to peace between all peoples and religions. It is the healing balm our world needs, especially now.

272 pp. \$20.00 pbk. SPCK Publishing, 2019

ISBN-10: 0281078629 ISBN-13: 978-0281078622

DESERT SOLITAIRE: A Season in the Wilderness (Edward Abbey Collection) by Edward Abbey

First published in 1968, this book is one of Abbey's most critically acclaimed works and marks his first foray into the world of nonfiction. It is an account of Abbey's seasons as a ranger at Arches National Park and reflects on the nature of the desert plateau, on our remaining wilderness and the future of a civilization that cannot reconcile itself to living in the natural world.

354 pp. \$27.00 hbk. RosettaBooks, 2011

ISBN: 0345326490

SILENCE: The Mystery of Wholeness by Robert Sardello

In beautifully rich prose, the author invites us to experience silence as a companion presence, a creative heart-felt experience that renews, restores and deepens the body's response to the internal and external world. Reading this book, one soon learns to equate silence not with the vacuum of outer space but with the rich depths of the soul.

152 pp. \$12.00 pbk, North Atlantic Books, 2008

ISBN-10: 1556437935 ISBN-13: 978-1556437939