



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

February 2020

Thoughts In Solitude

In aloneness we learn to share in a basic way in the emptiness and lost-ness that modern people often know but also try to block out and ignore. The solitary, though spending much time alone is *never* alone in the sense of being alienated from humanity, unaware of its sorrows and agonies and unmindful of his/her responsibility to bring persons, known and unknown, to the mercy of God through prayer. As 'watchmen upon the walls' the solitaires are at the point where the forces of evil and the redemptive power of God meet. This means that the solitary must be a still center who does not react to others' reactions.

The eremitical vocation, therefore, as those not personally called by God to such a way sometimes imagine, cannot be the desire to seek one's own salvation nor to contract out of the spread of the Gospel of the Body of Christ. On the contrary, the vocation lies at the very center of the heart of the Church for, as the Vatican II 'Constitution on Liturgy' decrees: 'It belongs to the Church to be both human and divine, visible but rich in invisible realities, fervent in action yet fully contemplative, present in this world and yet a stranger to it; but in such a way that that which is to her in any way human is ordered, is submitted to what is divine.'

The function of the charisma of the solitary life is to express openly this interior aspect of the mystery of the Church which is its intimate and personal relationship with Christ, a sharing in his passion and his glory. In the heart of the Church, therefore, the life of the hermit is exposed to the Spirit by whose power the fullness of his gifts are made fruitful for all humanity. In the measure that the hermit allows the Spirit free action within his (her) being, the ascetic is enabled to intercede for all the brothers and sisters to whom one already manifests on earth the presence of the kingdom of God.

For the solitary, the words of St. Antony, the father of hermits, become a living reality: 'My life is with my neighbor.' So the solitary is in the forefront of the fray, with no other arms than prayer and penitence. Although alone, the hermit is one with all those brothers and sisters who in their way labor to hasten the coming of the kingdom. The

solitary is, according to Evagrius, separated from all and united to all.

In some of the Anglican communities today there are those who are seeking ways and means to express both the corporate and the individual desire for greater solitude and silence, more prayer and a deeper participation in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. We can find at least one reason why this should be so in an extract from the religious article by Angela Tilby in *The Times* of 24 August 1974:

"If the negative aspects of the cross are embraced and accepted, then the possibility of authentic living is opened. If our society is going to be plunged into chaos and turmoil then triumphalistic answers will prove shallow. Those who urge on the revolution will find that they have betrayed their own past. In losing their ability to repent and grieve they will find they have lost their humanity. Those who have tried to shore up the defences of society will find themselves judged by those who could not live up to false standards. In terms of the Church's role within society the cross is not a banner to be waved in social or political causes, it is rather a judgement against any of these causes being identified with the coming kingdom. The Church must be freed, painfully, from its fantasies of power and influence in order to become what it is called to be—the common humanity which bears witness by its own suffering to the redemptive cross of Christ."

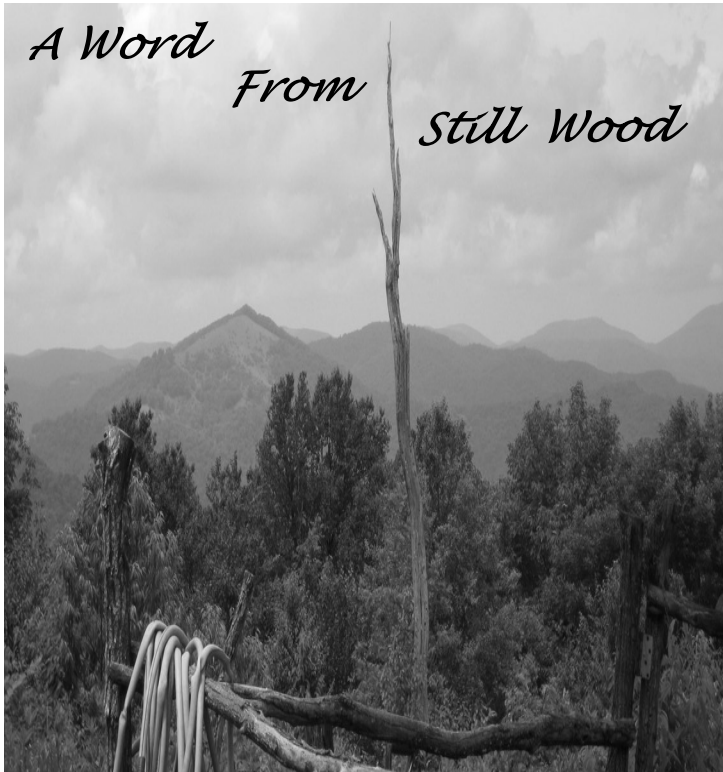
Another quotation by Canon A. M. Allchin says this of the solitary life: "The life of the hermit reproduces in our own time the supreme paradox that it is in the moment of utmost isolation and complete apparent uselessness, in the desolation of the cross, that the Lord is able to bring about the atonement and reconciliation of humanity with God. We see here that the cross is life giving, and we see here something of the 'mounting of the cross' which is at the heart of monastic life.



Excerpted from:

Solitude and Communion, Papers on the Hermit Life

Edited by A. M. Allchin



*A Word
From
Still Wood*

In a recent issue of AARP Magazine, we were intrigued by the main article entitled: *“Is There a Cure for Loneliness?”* We delved into the six page essay which chronicled all the harm done to the human person when he or she is assaulted by a disease called loneliness. The author described studies showing that even a person’s blood cells act differently when suffering from a sense of social isolation.

Additionally, a person dealing with loneliness is apt to feel they are a social failure. No one should ever feel lonely...should they? Scientists study many forms of treatment for this debilitating affliction with the implication that the end of loneliness can be found at the pharmacy.

Oh, really? We suspect that each and every one of our ravens have had their bouts with loneliness and struggled through until they reached a point at which being alone was welcome because it allowed them to deepen the primary relationship in their lives—with the ground of their being, with The Other, The Presence, the Lord.

One of our readers serendipitously shared this quote from the poet, Marianne Moore: “The only cure for loneliness is solitude.” Only when we willingly accept loneliness, without fear or shame or remorse, can we begin to experience that it is a land of treasures. Our vision is cleansed; our hearing is sharpened; our sense of time is altered. We are no longer caught up in longing for something—anything—different from what IS right now. What IS does not need to be changed. It is exactly as it should be and the strength we need to embrace it is also at hand. We are freed to join our sisters and brothers in their struggles, such as all those in Australia who have seen their land swept by fire; those in the Middle East who live in fear of bombs suddenly falling out of the sky; all school children who must practice “active shooter drills”; the many who live in areas where floods or tornadoes or hurricanes are a repeated menace. In truth all of us, alone or in a crowd, live in fear of harm, expected or unexpected. Our hermitage provides us, not with safety, but with the sweet assurance that no matter what may happen, it will be for our good.

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

Wood B. Hermit



IN MIND AND HEART

Please be mindful in your prayer of Raven's Bread readers who are currently incarcerated in correctional facilities throughout the world, especially those who have chosen to make of their solitary confinement an intentional embrace of solitude and silence and prayer. They need our support.

Paul & Karen

A NEW BLOG BY CAROLYN HUMPHREYS Contemplative Christianity

Moments of Rest & Reflection with the Gentle Heart of Jesus

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BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



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by Richard Rohr

Francis of Assisi found an "alternative way" to follow Jesus disregarding power and privilege, embracing the hard and narrow Way of Jesus. Rohr shows the true saint—one who might be laughing to find himself in hundreds of birdbaths around the world..

320 pp. \$12.90 pbk. Franciscan Media, 2016

ISBN-10:1632531402 ISBN-13: 978-1632531407

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by Mark Nepo

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456 pp. \$17.06 pbk. Red Wheel, January 2020

ISBN-10: 1590035003 ISBN-13: 978-1590035009

ALL ALONG YOU WERE BLOOMING, Thoughts for Boundless Living

by Morgan Harper Nichols

A celebration of hope; an encounter with grace; a healing of wounds—a great awakening in the midst of winter's gloom; a gifted collection of poetry and prose.

192 pp. \$15.29 hbk, Zondervan, January 2020

ISBN-10: 0310454077 ISBN-13: 978-0310454076