



# Raven's Bread

*Food for Those in Solitude*

Online Edition

August 2020

## Thoughts From Solitude

One of my favorite hermits was not really a hermit at all: Howard Thurman was a Black American, mystic, and Baptist minister who lived from 1899-1981. He was married with two children. He served as a pastor, chaplain, professor, and wrote many books, essays, and sermons. He has been called the spiritual director of the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King, Jr., was said to have carried Thurman's book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, in his pocket, wherever he went.

But Thurman was criticized by some as being irrelevant or a "backbencher" because he didn't attend any marches or demonstrations during those turbulent times. He saw himself less as an activist and more as a contemplative.

I wonder if a lot of us hermits and solitaries can relate to Thurman. We are also living through a time of great public pain, upheaval, and transformation – and I imagine that most of us, while we are moved and greatly concerned with all that is happening in our world – are probably not ministering to the sick, attending marches, or otherwise doing active ministry. Our call is different: to go into silence, to pray, to witness.

Thurman believed that the key to transformation of our public life was first to transcend the fear, deception, and anger in our inner lives. Or, as the hermit Seraphim of Sarov put it, "Acquire a peaceful spirit, and thousands around you will be saved." Hermits and solitaries can offer direction to others on this path toward inner transcendence and non-

violence. We can testify to the power of "centering down," as Thurman called it. We can sit and listen. We can share strategies and perseverance in facing the inner demons that may appear. We can stand with love as prayerful witnesses to human pain. We reassure our brothers and sisters that day by day, hour by hour, difficult and lonely times can be endured, and even offer moments of deep joy.

Thomas Merton wrote of the power and resistance of a vocation to solitude, but he also warned of the dangers of valuing our peace and quiet too much. In *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, he wrote: "Perhaps peace is not, after all, something you work for, or 'fight for.' It is indeed 'fighting for peace' that starts all the wars. ... If you yourself are at peace, then there is at least some peace in the world. ... But I am not speaking of quietism, because quietism is not peace, nor is it the way to peace."

Solitaries and hermits know something of the nature of peace, how simple and yet how challenging it can be.



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Lenten Reflections WJKress, 2017  
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## *A Word From Still Wood*

These days, our world elicits in us a swirl of emotions both from without and from within our very selves! We watch and listen as the society we once trusted to behave according to expected norms churns haphazardly and violently in ways strange and unexpected that frighten us and cause chronic anxiety. Memories of civil wars, genocide, the power of floods, tornados and hurricanes are all part of the world we have known for years.

But now, now we feel so helpless in the face of a threat we cannot see, or control, or fully defend ourselves against. And, for now, there are no experts, no geniuses, no sage guides to point us in the right direction or even show us the next step in this darkness threatening to overtake the planet.

Have you ever walked outdoors on a moonless night? The paths along our mountainside may be very familiar in daylight, but even on Trust Mountain, it can be dangerous and even sinister in the dark of night. We are reduced to dependence on a flashlight which we beam on the ground immediately before our feet. As we step into the circle of all the light we have, the light moves on, showing us the next bit of ground we must traverse. Let a nearby owl give a wild hoo-hoo, and we swing the light up into the surrounding trees, searching for the source of the sound that startled us. We stop moving forward. We might glimpse the gleaming eyes of that night hunter and take a deep breath, but the rabbit hiding under a nearby shrub still quivers.

As we re-focus on treading the path to our door, our heartbeats returning to normal, we may begin to wonder if the battery we are depending upon is fully charged; will it last long enough to get home? That rustling in the bushes...is it a possum? A browsing deer? A black bear? We attempt to calm our fears by waving our little light in every direction but standing still does not bring us any closer to our front door.

Our hands may be moist with sweat, our knees trembling, and our lungs hyperventilating, but there is only one useful thing we can do. Step forward, following the Light we have been given, trusting that the Way will be shown to us. Those of us who live in silence and solitude know that prayer is the Light we are meant to follow. What we can easily fail to realize is that we also become a Light for others who are also stumbling in the dark. The more surely and steadily we cling to the Holy One, the brighter our light shines, though we ourselves may be quite unaware. However, the fearful, the sick and dying, the angry and the abused, may see their own way a bit more clearly and can move forward with their lives, touched with a mysterious sense of security. Love surrounds them, holding them gently, and guiding them toward the open door through which the Light of Home shines forth. Yes, our world is in a very dark time, but we are asked to keep alive the flame of faith, and our eyes fixed on the Homeplace awaiting all of us.

*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](mailto: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](mailto:pkfredette@frontier.com) and the Blog for Lovers of Solitude: [www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog](http://www.ravensbreadministries.com/blog).**



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## TINY HOUSE AVAILABLE

My life has taken a turn and so my 4-yr-old custom-made tiny house is available for purchase. Located in Beaumont, KS; 160 sq. ft, 8 x 20 with a 10 X 8 deck and pergola. On trailer deck, mobile with hitch. Propane heat for refrigerator, 3 burner stove and oven, hot water heater. Two solar panels with inverter that power lights, water pump for sink; hot and cold shower, can charge small appliances. Composting toilet (Nature's Head). Seamed metal roof, very well insulated. Water storage 20 gallons. Double pane windows. Futon that sleeps two, retractable table, shades with an R factor. Professional wood working inside. Storage for clothes and cabinets. Insured for \$94,000 replacement value and selling for \$60,000.

Contact: [kathryndamiano1@gmail.com](mailto:kathryndamiano1@gmail.com)

## CHECK THIS OUT!

New Podcast : ***Orthodox Christian Daily Prayer and Hours***. Now available on iTunes, Anchor, Breaker, Overcast, Pocket Casts, Radio Public, Spotify podcast apps and websites. Just search for it by name on the site or in the app! It is free to use and all the contents are high quality audio of texts from the prayer book and Book of Hours. I have intended that it can be a help and comfort to those whose path in life has brought them to the fellowship of the Raven's Bread community. **Michael Besh**

**"Above all,  
Trust in the slow work of God"**

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.



## BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



### SHAPED BY THE END YOU LIVE FOR, Thomas Merton's Monastic Spirituality

by Bonnie B. Thurston (A Raven's Bread Reader)

*A gifted writer and impeccable scholar, Ms. Thurston invites the reader to join her as she mulls over the meaning of Merton's monastic experience and wisdom. But be forewarned. You will be left to ponder the question suggested by the title: What is the end you live for?*

166 pp. \$19.95 pkb. Liturgical Press, 2020

ISBN: 978-0-8146-8807-6

### ON SOLITUDE, CONSCIENCE, LOVE AND OUR INNER AND OUTER LIVES (READING AUGUSTINE),

by Ron Haflidson; Series Editor: Miles Hollingworth

*For Augustine, solitude is a moral necessity that everyone must retreat into regularly. He addresses the subtleties of interior solitude which has been very nearly overlooked by modern studies of his works. In this deeply perceptive and rich book, Ron has opened a door through which many will want to enter and marvel.*

160 pp. \$24.95. pkb. Bloomsbury Academic, July 2019

ISBN -10: 0567682684, ISBN -13: 978-0567682680

### AT THE CENTER OF ALL BEAUTY; Solitude and the Creative Life

by Fenton Johnson

*A profound meditation on accepting, and celebrating, one's solitude, whether freely sought or imposed by circumstances. Johnson delves into the lives and works of nearly a dozen iconic "solitaries" he considers his kindred spirits.*

244 pp. \$15.95. pkb. W. W. Norton & Company. March 2020

ASIN: BO7TK5QYCD