



# Raven's Bread

*Food for Those in Solitude*

Online Edition

November 2020

## Thoughts From Solitude

The beauty of the Raven's Bread community is its vast diversity — every type of person, every type of motive in every conceivable place. Yet surely there is something that holds us together beside solitariness. The Sunday readings a few weeks ago suggest that our commonality is that we are all “seeking God”. The theme of all the readings was *Nearness*. Isaiah said, “Seek the Lord while God may be found; call on God while God is *near*. The Psalmist declared that “the Lord is *near* to all who call.” And St. Paul insisted that Christ is so *near* to us that “life means Christ.”

Yet throughout scripture we hear an antiphonal cry — that of being abandoned by God, of God being remote. The Christian in holding that God is Creator does not mean that God made the world ages ago and then went on vacation. Rather, in every moment God is continuously creting, undergirding, and holding in being every single thing that exists. Spirit is lie electricity undergirding a light, and the moment the electricity stops, there is no light — so with life. The mere fact that we exist means that it is IMPOSSIBLE for God NOT to be near us, for it is IN God that we live, and move, and have our being. To declare that God is absent is a self-contradiction, for it is impossible for God NOT to be near us simply because we exist. Thus to experience God as absent is not something that God does but something we fail to do — to seek the God who is near.

As a Trappist monk, we seek God through *contemplation*. Find a place where we can be alone.

Take deep breathes, blowing out the distractions and breathing in the peace, becoming lost in the depth of silence. A mantra [e.g. “Give me peace”] can give our mind something to do to keep it out of the way. As we become emptied, we experience being grounded by something not ourselves — the sustaining edge of God. The feel is that of stillness, supported, dependent, undergirded, upheld, rooted, centered, grounded, lost in the mystery that is our foundation.

This contemplation through *emptiness*, but there is also a reverse side — contemplation as opening ourselves in order to be *filled*. I find this by sitting in the garden at the monastery. It is a matter of letting go, opening our senses to the sounds of water, the calling of birds, the smell of mint, the warm touch of sun. Breathe it all in — the delicious abundance of the Divine gifts everywhere. Here we feel blessed, loved, gifted, accepted, filled, and embrace in Presence. As the psalmist sings, “My cup overflows.” Yet St. Paul calls this only “the first installment” of God's huge generosity. Yes, seek the Lord while God can be found, for God NEAR — very near!



Rev. W. Paul Jones

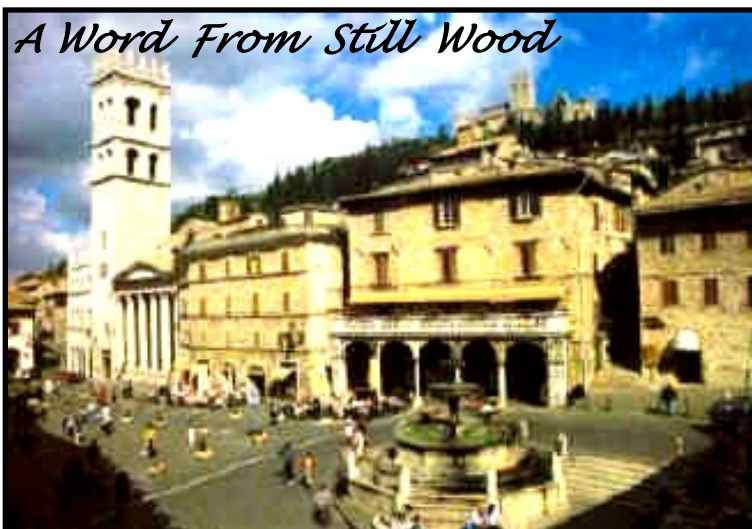
Author of

A Season in the Desert, Making Time Holy

and

A Table in the Desert, Making Space Holy

## *A Word From Still Wood*



One of our most amazing gifts as humans is our power to dream; our ability to imagine a future where something good and wonderful will happen. We can live with vigor and work with tireless energy as long as we have a meaningful goal. When we were children our dream was often of Christmas coming ever closer or of summer vacation setting us free from class work.

As many of you may know, we (Karen & Paul) had a dream of visiting the medieval city of Assisi together. Karen had already made two study pilgrimages to this center of Franciscan spirituality. One of the many things which struck her about this small town was that it was still a fortified city, surrounded by high stone walls, pierced by eight gates. Eight! You can enter this incredible town from almost any direction and by many means—

motorcycle; van; wheelchair; truck; car or bus, but the best way is by climbing up the slope of Mount Subasio, which has supported Assisi for over fifteen hundred years, on your own eager feet. You step through an ancient gate onto a cobbled street which will eventually lead you to the central Piazza where a fountain has flung sweet water toward the sky for over eight hundred years.

Yes, there are numberless churches of surpassing splendor throughout the city but the Piazza is still the heart of Assisi. In 2017, we dreamed of walking hand-in-hand through this living, singing, prayerful place; our eyes alight with the joy of a dream fulfilled. Together we expected to explore the town where Francis and Clare had grown up, climbing up and down the narrow streets (there are no level ones!), slipping into cool, dim churches, and glorying in the grand views of the Umbrian valley from the ancient fort looming above the town. We looked forward to sharing sunrises with flocks of larks soaring about and hastening to the Piazza to watch the pigeons swarming in for their noonday feast of tossed corn.

But, again, as many of you already know, our dream did not come true. Yes, we rode the train into the station in the lower city; we visited the chapel of the Little Portion...and went from there to the emergency room of the hospital where Karen was admitted at once, suffering from double pneumonia. She was soon transferred to the ICU of a larger facility in Foligno where she spent two weeks. Paul found some time to tour Assisi when not at the hospital but it was hardly the dream we'd envisioned for years.

This passing year of 2020, too, has seen countless unfulfilled hopes; broken dreams; heartbreaking losses and dismaying events no one could have imagined even last November. We are learning slowly to cope with the events that are scattering our dreams and plans, our hopes and even our very lives to the four winds. Yet, we can still dream of joy and kindness; of love and compassion as we share struggles and griefs with family, friends, and neighbors around the world. Something new is aborning that draws all of us closer everyday as once a Child, birthed in poverty, brought Love's radiance into a darkened world.

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



# BULLETIN BOARD



## R.I.P

We are saddened to announce the death of hermit Father Charles Brandt on October 27, 2020. Fr. Brandt was one of the originators of contemporary eremitic life back in the 1950's. He lived for many years in British Columbia where, through writings and talks, he promoted the preservation of large sections of natural river and forest land.

May he pray for us all!

## Wood B. Hermit



*"May God break my heart  
so deeply the whole world falls in."  
Mother Teresa*



## BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



### ADVENT: THE ONCE AND FUTURE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST by Fleming Rutledge

*Advent, says the author, is not for the faint of heart. As the midnight of the Christian year, the season of Advent is rife with dark, gritty realities. In this book, with her trademark wit and wisdom, Rutledge explores Advent as a time of rich paradoxes, a season celebrating at once Christ's incarnation and his second coming. She masterfully unfolds the ethical and future-oriented significance of Advent for all people.*

426 pp. \$26.45 pkb. Eerdmans 2018

ISBN-10: 0802876196 ISBN-13: 978-0802876195

### THE TWELVE DEGREES OF SILENCE by Marie-Aimee de Jesus, ocd;

Edited with Introduction and Reflections by Lucinda M. Vardney

*Written by a 19th century Carmelite nun who spent five years in silence working to produce what is one of the finest spiritual books ever written for women struggling to live a holy life in the modern world. It is brilliantly edited by Lucinda Vardney and meant to be read s-l-o-w-l-y and thoughtfully in silent solitude.*

80 pp. \$12.95. pkb. Novalis 2014

ISBN-10: 2896465456, ISBN-13: 978-2896465453

### SOLITARY: A BIOGRAPHY (National Book Award Finalist; Pulitzer Prize Finalist) by Albert Woodfox

*In beautifully poetic language that starkly contrasts the world he's describing, Woodfox awes and inspires. He illustrates the power of the human spirit, while illuminating the dire need for prison reform. Solitary is a beautiful blend of passion, terror and hope that everyone needs to experience.*

448 pp. \$11.49. pkb. Grove Press. 2019

ISBN-10: 0802148301 ISBN-13: 978-0802148308



## *A Final Reflection*



God brought me to your website. I have never seen a ministry like yours and it has helped free my heart even more. My husband and I moved to the Sierra mountains last year. There are two beautiful ravens who live in an old ponderosa pine here. Those ravens have been very important to me. They've held a special meaning for me. Now, God brought me to your website. I feel a deep confirmation and peace that I am Being who He has made me to Be.

I have always heard Jesus' deep, intimate, unworldly calling in my heart. He is my Eternal Source. I have always loved the solitude He brings me to — I am never alone and sense my connection to Him the strongest there. I want to remain in that state of heaven on earth when I am around others, and have had to learn to practice good boundaries in my life to keep my relationship with Him my priority. Not for religious reasons, but because when I am in Him, I am in Perfect Love, and learning and listening to what really matters.

I can only be in the world for short segment of time. I have struggled at physical church my whole life because the focus can be more external than who I am. My husband I finally found a kind, loving, introspective and more balanced church recently though. Still church is not nearly as important to me as they say its supposed to be. That used to guilt trip me, but God has strengthened me to not let it trip me anymore. I am who I am, and there is an Eternal Spiritual Church for all who will enter. That's where I want to be — in the Spirit even when the physical seems so loud. The conditions of religion have plagued my life in the past. It has been a long inside out road of letting God help me receive His strength into my pain and shame to overcome this. And still through it all I always had His Constant Love. No matter how much I have grown, that Perfect Love that we share has always been the same. It's in the times of solitude, and coming away with Him that has revealed this to me. I knew it as a child, and I know it now 50 years later despite all the interruptions in between. Solitude is timeless — where there are no interruptions, and we can hear God's tender voice. That's what it's about. His Irresistible Love that calmly recalls us to who we truly are in Christ.

My husband, Manny, and I are very happy in this home God has given us — very clearly we were guided here. He and I are both contented introverts who practice listening to Jesus' Spirit guiding us internally. Social distancing really hasn't changed our lives much. Except I wish that I could see my precious daughters. But we give each other Holy Spirit hugs daily.

There are not too many people who are true introverts. I love who I am. And God has a purpose for us — to remind others of who they truly are when we are free from the power playing of this world, and the external drive of our own egos. Last year Jesus told me, "You don't need to seek approval outside of you. When Christ lives inside of you." That has given me so much confidence and inner strength in knowing I am who He wants me to be — and I am who I want to be. He has given me songs to comfort and guide me. I have collected them and play them on the ukulele. I only sing them in solitude. I am not comfortable singing them in front of people. But I have been guided to create a website for them. I recently published it, and I would like to share it with you. They come from my Alone time with Him and what He gives me. It's about Belovedness. The website is called **Hislovnkindness.com**. I hope it blesses you as your website has blessed me — very much.

*Christa Rose, Sierra Nevada Mtns.*



For the February 2021 Issue  
 What ways, do you, (or can you) as  
 a solitary or hermit, *really celebrate*  
 your holy days, holidays and special  
 days, with exuberant joy?

Word limit: 300  
 Due by January 10th, 2021

