



# Raven's Bread

*Food for Those in Solitude*

Online Edition

August 2021

## Thoughts on Solitude

I'm sitting on the bridge over Beaver Creek, the threshold from here to there. The waters flow swiftly below me as I reread what I'd written about retreat and its role in our modern lives—before the world changed so quickly.

In a strange synchronicity, I submitted the books' first draft on December 31, 2019, the same day reports of a strange illness trickled out of China. Now as I make the finishing touches, in Canada we're in roughly the third month of an unprecedented experiment in collective, involuntary retreat.

When I was writing this book there was no crisis. I was courting possibility, exploring how our retreats—to make space for nature, spirit, imagination and embodiment—give our lives amplitude and meaning.

Our current emergency is not a retreat, because it's unsought. Yet as I revisit this book, I'm struck to find ideas from our chosen retreats apply in times of crisis—including this raw moment, when many have been forced to step back from active and social lives amid fear, instability and tragedy.

"In difficult times you should always carry something beautiful in your mind," wrote Blaise Pascal in the mid 1600's, touching on a guiding impulse for our retreats. Humans long to connect with beauty, truth, nature and spirit, with larger forces beyond our understanding. Doing so helps us amplify the good—and to endure much.

A retreat is one way to bring the beauty and light inside, like a gem we can pull out anytime, anywhere. A physical retreat, transformed by imagination and memory, becomes a sustaining place, an inner sanctuary. Every retreat is a retreat to the self—not necessarily a place, but a state of mind and heart.

Now the neglected half of reality, the receptive and solitary, has come to the fore. For some, this forced pause may be space for choice: to focus in-

ward, develop calm and connect to what we love—which comes before our actions, and is action.

The desert hermits, among the other companions of this book, knew that a retreat is not an escape, but a way to wisdom. We need a rethink, personal and planetary. Our radical attention is needed to protect what has meaning for us, what is sacred and holy—in the sense of *halig*, from the old English, meaning healthy, whole, uninjured.

Historically, retreat has often been a corrective, and a way to invent brave new ideas—its ancient fruit. The pandemic has underlined that we are all interconnected. We are all vulnerable. May these difficult days hold space to reflect, to connect to our vast inner resources and help create the kind of world we want to live in once the pandemic has passed.

For all its powers, I most value retreat for the experience of exploring emptiness, which I find stimulating and challenging. I love the heightened receptivity, the not-knowing and the strange alchemy that leads to transformation. How it schools us in the active surrender life often requires.

At its essence, any retreat, whether voluntary or a pause imposed by life, is an encounter with the unknown—which is limitless possibility. What are we on the threshold of?

I watch the quicksilver waters of the creek pour unpredictable as ever, though flowing within familiar banks. Words surface that seem to speak to our retreats, and our lives. "All is experiment and adventure," Virginia Woolf writes in *The Waves*. "We are forever mixing ourselves with unknown quantities."



Epilogue from  
IN PRAISE OF RETREAT  
By Kirsteen MacLeod



Anniversaries are always significant, especially when they are commemorating events that are joyous or meaningful. 2021 marks the twenty-fifth year of the publication of **Raven's Bread**. Incidentally it also is our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary! As we consider this, we know it is not a mere coincidence. One of the most enriching part of our life here in the Smoky Mountains has be our connection with all you who make up the **Raven's Bread** community.

Your contributions—prayerful, written, and financial, have made it possible to keep up with the newsletter over the years. As you know, we rely totally on your donations, (gifts from God through beloved ones) and it is what keeps us

working to give you the best we can, as time permits and needs change.

These days we are most thankful for your prayers that someone special would decide to live here in **Raven's Rest** and assist us with upkeep and maintenance and help with this ministry as well. Finally, a wonderful gentleman from Wisconsin, Peter Reinl, an authentic "monk in the world" attracted to deeper solitude and **Raven's Bread Ministries** contacted us through email. Throughout these recent months of prayer, emails, Zoom meetings, and an in-person visit in early June, we have mutually discerned that Pete is a "good fit" in assisting with our life and work here at Still Wood. You will hear from him directly in the November issue of **R.B.** In the meantime, welcome him in your hearts. He is due to arrive here on August 14th.

In early July, Karen was invited to be interviewed in an hour-long program called "Intersections", conducted by Prof. Hitendra Wadhwa, a teacher of leadership at the Columbia School of Business in New York City. Karen's initial response was simply, "Why me?" However, Dr. Hitendra explained that he was drawn to interview her largely due to an article in the November 28th, 2020 issue of the New York Times which described our ministerial outreach to folks foundering in the new world of solitude/loneliness/alienation. Together, they explored the difference between isolation and solitude; how one can work through loneliness into a state of prayerful presence; and shared personal experiences. A number of you are new subscribers to **Raven's Bread** since viewing this interview. Interested readers can find it on YouTube under the title "Intersections".

Most of us are still stunned by the changes that the Covid pandemic has brought to our daily lives. We still wonder whether life will ever get back to "normal"? Slowly, and at times sadly, we realize that "No, it won't". Just watching the mind-numbing statistics of people who have contracted this strange illness continue to rise, and the sad reality of the several millions of people who have died from Covid 19, has changed us individually, as a nation and as a planetary community. Right now we harbor strong doubts about when or even "if" we will see the end of this perilous period. At the same time, many of us are realizing in a new way, how connected we all are. When folks in India were without oxygen, our world responded, sending them massive amounts of this most vital human need. When the emergency was met, we **all** breathed a sigh of relief.

Perhaps Covid is teaching us all crucial lessons at a critical moment: that we are one human race on this beautiful planet...and the planet requires all of us to care for one another. Blessings, dear friends.

*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).



# BULLETIN BOARD



Wood B. Hermit

## ANOTHER SEARCH

Seeking an able-bodied hermit to park own tiny house on secluded area of our 8-acre rural property in exchange for part-time chore and maintenance duties.

Near Lehighton, PA (zip 18235)

We're especially eager to hear from someone who requires an autoimmune-disorder friendly diet (autoimmune protocol/AIP) for mutual assistance with this condition.

Contact: [epierson@ptd.net](mailto:epierson@ptd.net)

## Raven's Bread LENDING LIBRARY

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I am indeed going to prepare a place for you,  
and then I shall come back to take you with me,  
that where I am you also may be.

John 14:3

## The Art of Being Alone (and Not Lonely)

Thursday, July 15  
11 AM ET | 8 AM PT



HITENDRA WADHWA  
Leadership Expert  
Founder of Mentora Institute



KAREN KAPER FREDETTE  
Contemporary Hermit and Former Nun



## Raven's Bread RESOURCES

Rare and/or "difficult to find" resources about eremitic life can be ordered through the *Raven's Bread* website or a listing with prices can be requested through the mail. Printed Resources can be sent as individual booklets via postal mail or as .pdf files attached to an email. Nearly 50 resources available.

To view this Podcast of July 15, 2021  
go to the link below:  
<https://www.hitendra.com>webcast>





**BOOKS RECOMMENDATIONS  
BY R.B. READERS**



**THE SEEKER AND THE MONK: EVERY DAY CONVERSATIONS WITH THOMAS MERTON**

by Sofronia Scott

*Sofronia Scott met Thomas Merton, like so many of us, through his journals, many years after his death. Eventually she would read every word he wrote, absorb and reflect on his wisdom, and come to view him as a friend. This book takes the reader on a journey of a posthumous relationship—one of friend speaking to friend. The reader is quickly absorbed in “their” conversation. It feels as though they are sitting outside his hermitage discussing all manner of topics from nature, prayer, silence to race, war, & love. Deprived of our imposed sainthood, and given the gift of deep human connection, Merton comes alive. Scott even chides him sometimes. Seeing Merton in this way opens doors to anyone drawn to contemplation in a lived, busy world.*

202pp. \$17.99 Broadleaf Books 2021

**ISBN-978-1506464961 (Recommended by Bella Erakko)**

**THE MONK WITHIN: EMBRACING A SACRED WAY OF LIFE**

by Beverly Lanzetta

*Written by one of America’s most impressive spiritual figures and writers, this book yields something meaningful for persons of virtually every faith tradition.... Insightful, inspiring and moving.*

408 pp. \$14.79 Blue Sapphire Books 2018

**ISBN-10: 0984061657 ISBN-13: 978-0984061655 (Recommended by Peter Reinl)**

**MAKING ALL THINGS NEW: AN INVITATION TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE**

by Henri J. M. Nouwen

*In this quietly written call to follow the way of Christian spirituality, Nouwen emphasizes the necessity for a personal program of contemplative solitude and for the individual’s involvement in a community of like-seeing Christians.*

96 pp. hbk..HarperOne, Reissue Edition Sept 2009

**ISBN-10: 006066326X ISBN- 13: 978-006066326X (Recommended by John Petrenka)**

**THE POWER OF SOLITUDE**

**THERE IS POWER IN SOLITUDE—NOT JUST PHYSICALLY AND IN TERMS OF ALONENESS AND SILENCE—BUT THE SOLITUDE OF BEING ONE’S OWN PERSON, OF NOT STEPPING OUTSIDE OUR BOUNDARIES IN AN ATTEMPT TO BE LIKED, UNDERSTOOD, AND ACCREDITED FOR WHAT WE DO. RATHER, BY DRAWING ON THE RESOURCES OF OUR INTERIOR LIFE, WE ARE GIVEN THE STRENGTH TO FOLLOW, IN HUMILITY, THE PATH TOWARD WHICH WE ARE CALLED. IN THIS, INTEGRITY OF BEING, WISDOM, MASTERY AND MATURITY DEVELOP.**

**Beverly Lanzetta**