



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

February 2022

Thoughts on Solitude

Hermits do not distance themselves from humanity. Consider how someone surveys a Google map. There are two icons—an addition sign and a subtraction one. Clicking on the plus sign, one draws closer to the map revealing the details, topography, and if even closer, the streets and buildings at street level. If, on the other hand, the minus sign is employed, the viewer produces distance from said details while acquiring a more regional, national, and global perspective. Hermits choose the latter as the perspective in which to operate. From that vantage point, one views the planet and humanity significantly differently. Prayer is no longer for a community or neighborhood. Instead, it is said on behalf of a world where national boundaries are nonexistent, and people's futures are not limited by political or military results but experienced as one human family.

Rather than isolating oneself, a hermit takes a much broader approach to mandates of service and prayer. Whereas a local parish will invest in the street-level vicinities of a city, hermits recognize their call to be a macrocosmic one. Neither expression of spiritual life is better than the other. As mentioned in numerous writings on the eremitical life, spiritual personalities, a deeper sense of union with divinity, and a call to contemplation are the compelling forces behind a person's choice to be a hermit.

The nature of eremitical practice seems to be misunderstood as being for an elite spiritual minority whose concerns remain rather ethereal and esoteric for everyone else. While the rest of humanity barely holds on to the spiritual roller coaster, which seems to be conscripted

by nature, hermits get off the ride onto a coveted stable ground.

This is far from an accurate appraisal of eremitical life. The difference between hermits and anyone else who isn't is simply this: hermits use their multi-sensorial and cognitive experience to interpret ordinary life as extraordinary. Hermits choose to live without any need for racing through life or meeting expectations of success and power. Each day affords an array of possibilities. Each possibility is interpreted not as potentially adverse but as part of a perfect spiritual process that we are invited to experience with God.

Most of humanity does not experience life; it judges it. Depending on our preferences, often veiled as values or disguised as morality, lives are interpreted according to pre-existing ends and expectations. As we go through our day, whatever does not meet the criteria (or fantasy) we entertain within our minds, is discarded. Therefore, options, opportunities, broader interpretations, and perspectives regarding life are ignored, limited, or unavailable.

The spiritual life is antithetical to this. I believe releasing oneself from expectations provides the conditions for enjoying life here and now—unfettered by the past or by the uncertainty of tomorrow. While hermits do not possess any monopoly on the spiritual life, most people do not explore the spiritually rich freedom eremitical life offers. Yet, regardless of their spiritual or religious affiliation, anyone can experience such a palpable difference in one's

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“The world is big and wide and wild and wonderful and wicked, and our lives are murky, magnificent, malleable, and full of meaning.”

Padraig O’Tuama

When we stumbled upon this portion of a prayer, we recognized not just how true this is...but how difficult it is to accept this truth. As a rule, we seldom like conflicting versions of a single fact. Our world is either wonderful or wicked. It can’t be both! Our lives are meaningful or murky, but not at the same time...or can they be? Many of us prefer to focus on one aspect of reality and, consequently, we unconsciously blot out other perspectives.

If we see the world around us today as wicked, we are deeply troubled and nothing is right or good. Our emotions plunge us into the depths. It’s hard to realize that the world is also wild and wonderful.

Likewise, if we perceive our lives as a murky mess, living is barely worth the trouble. We forget that our life, yes! our very life can also be magnificent and full of meaning. Suddenly sunshine breaks through from behind those dark clouds which have hidden great truths from us.

What we can and must do is embrace the truth that living a “both/and” way of perception is possible and actually vital, and toss out the “either/or” perspective that is so easy but so limiting. This allows the richness, complexity, and the subtle nuances of life to appear more clearly enabling us to change and grow.

This new year brings with it some important changes for everyone affiliated with Raven’s Bread Ministries. The first affects all of us. We have a new Email Address: (ravenbread97@gmail.com) which you will find in the masthead below. The second change focuses on financial support for the newsletter. You have all been so generous in the past twenty-five years that publishing *RB* has seldom been a financial burden for us. We don’t want it to be a burden for you either. Problems with using PayPal for digital transactions have bothered many of you. We are addressing those issues. *RB* newsletter is available to everyone who requests, whether or not one can make a financial contribution. Written contributions of one’s thoughts, opinions, concerns, and experiences are equally valuable and essential to the quality of the newsletter. We do, however, value and depend upon your financial donations to keep this ministry alive and responsive to your needs. So, once a year, in the August issue, we will place a “RENEWAL” notice in the newsletter encouraging your contributions. You can find all these changes detailed on page 3. Thank you all for your generous support!

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 donations to: ravenbread97@gmail.com or *Raven’s Bread Ministries*, 18065 NC 209 Hwy., Hot Springs, NC 28743 or via PayPal at our website. Our website is: <http://www.ravenbreadministries.com>. Our phone number is: 828 622 3750. Our videos are posted on YouTube. An annual donation is appreciated, each giving according to their means.

Please send payment in US dollars (PayPal converts foreign currency to US dollars). All donations go into a fund to insure that anyone who wants *Raven’s Bread Newsletter* 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).

CHANGES IN RAVEN'S BREAD CONTACT INFO.

We have adopted a new email address:

ravenbread97@gmail.com

Please use this email rather than our personal one for all matters relating to Raven's Bread Ministry: newsletter, books, resources, questions, personal guidance, etc.

CHANGES IN RAVEN'S BREAD CONTRIBUTIONS.

First of all, thanks to all of you who have been so generous over the past 25 years with annual subscription renewals to the newsletter and other donations of various kinds which have enabled Raven's Bread to offer a variety of services. Without you we could not have done this.

From the start our aim has been to make Raven's Bread as available as possible without regard for the ability to contribute financially. We also wanted to keep financial donations as simple as possible. In recent years this has grown more complex as we try to work effectively with **PayPal** for digital transactions. Many readers do not appreciate the annual auto-renewal component to these subscription payments.

Consequently, we have decided to **eliminate** the "**Subscribe**" button at the bottom of the website newsletter page and to **retain** the "**Donate**" button at the bottom of the newsletter page for all electronic transactions, newsletter subscriptions as well as any other financial contributions.

<http://ravenbreadministries.com>

For those who have enjoyed this auto-renewal feature in the past as well as the renewal date on the printed address labels, we will now offer a single donation reminder, once a year, in the **August Issue** of the newsletter together with an appreciation for the generosity of so many.

Dear friends, if a financial gift is difficult for you, please remember that **RB** is sent **freely** to any one who wishes to receive it, via postal mail or email.

Thank you for your attention these changes and please remember that your written contributions are every bit as important. These are what leavens *Raven's Bread* into such a tasty, healthy loaf of shared insights, experiences and concerns.

Paul & Karen Fredette

Thoughts on Solitude...continued

inner life. In spiritual solitude, elevated and precise attention to the sacred exists. When these two aspects of the human condition become one—we experience the Sacred.. Everyone has this ability within reach. The invitation to transform the quotidian is genuinely available.

Hermits, witnessing God unfold one's day, choose to allow God to reveal—according to a different rhythm of time—sublime and salient opportunities for prayer, reflection, work, contemplation, service, and wonder on this side of the Earth's finite and terrestrial shores.



Rev. Dr. Daniel Medina

Miami, FL

(Miami Lakes Congregational Church)

A NEW PUBLICATION
FROM A LONG-TIME RAVEN'S BREAD READER.

The Music of the Spheres

Fr. Eugene Stockton

This project is a synopsis of my exploration of mysticism, incorporating key passages from previous publications and recent, ongoing reflections.

- Chapters: 1. The Earthly Sphere
2. The Mental Sphere
3. The Personal Sphere
4. The Heavenly Sphere

Appendix 1. The Problem of Evil

Can be ordered through "Blue Mountain Education and Research Trust; 254 Great Western Highway; Lawson, NSW, Australia 2783

PH: (02) 4758 7049; email: www.bmert.org or secretary@bmert.org

PRAYER THOUGHTS

Compiled by Bobbi Fisher 2022

This booklet of seven daily meditations offers scripture from the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible, and quotes by Christian writers through the ages. In reading and praying them over and over again, my prayer life has deepened, and my faith has strengthened. I pray that it will do the same for you. Order from Bobbi Fisher:

bobbifisher.mac@mac.com



A Word from Raven's Rest

By Pete Reinl



January has brought to the Smoky Mountains weather much like my home state of Wisconsin – cold and snow, and yet even more cold and more snow. Not necessarily what I expected when choosing to live in North Carolina (I even left my snow shovel back in WI). Ha! But isn't that like most expectations – whether it's expectations of people, situations, places, nature, etc. – it doesn't matter, typically the expectations we have fall short and we get disappointed. Expectations are a set-up for disappointment and they are our attempt to control people, situations, environments, etc. In other words, we become closed to receiving or seeing the gift(s) of the present moment – we become unable to be fully present.

Perhaps that's why over and over again as contemporary hermits, monks, solitaries in the world we are invited to live from a place of openness (emptiness) because if we don't it's quite possible (almost a certainty) we will miss seeing, noticing, hearing the spontaneous and ever presence of the sacred – the divine in the here and now.

Speaking of expectations, although I intuitively thought it might be helpful to offer monthly reflections to our readership, I had no idea just how many of you would subscribe to *A Raven's Offering*. Thank you ever so much for your interest, your kind responses, and your prayerful musings to the two editions that have been published thus far. Such a gift – both your engagement with the offerings (with me) and the humble opportunity to share some of my reflections with this contemplative community. If you haven't subscribed or you know someone who may find these monthly reflections of support, encouragement and inspiration helpful, please email me at peter.reinl59@gmail.com



BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



REMNANT CHRISTIANITY IN A POST-CHRISTIAN WORLD

by W. Paul Jones (A Raven's Bread Reader)

The inevitable decline of the contemporary church is integrally related to the consuming socio-economic-secular dynamic driving our society in a self-destructive course. At each crisis point in history, God has raised up a "faithful remnant" with sufficient hope to outlast the demise. I have sketched out the contours of a Remnant Church that needs to be set in place now.

368 pp. pbk.\$42.00 Wipf and Stock, 2021

ISBN-10:1725294842 ISBN-13:978-1725294844

BLOOM WHERE YOU ARE PLANTED: TRANSFORMATIONAL STRATEGIES EMPOWERING YOU TO GROW THROUGH WHAT YOU GO THROUGH

by Ronetta J. Francis

We may not be able to control experiences we face, so the basis of authentic transformational change is to change our perspective on those experiences, assess and take ownership of them and release negative influences.

176 pp. \$19.97 pbk. 633 LLC, 2019

ISBN-10:1733150714 ISBN-13:978-1733150712

SACRED EARTH, SACRED SOUL: CELTIC WISDOM FOR REAWAKENING TO WHAT OUR SOULS KNOW AND HEALING THE WORLD

by John Philip Newell

Newell reveals how Celtic spirituality—listening to the sacred around us and inside of us—can help us heal the earth, overcome our conflicts, and reconnect with ourselves.

288 pp. Hbk \$22.99 HarperOne 2021

ISBN-10:0063023490 ISBN-13:978-0063023499