



# Raven's Bread

*Food for Those in Solitude*

Online Edition

May 2022

## Thoughts on Solitude

All that is asked is that we shall look for a little time, in a special and undivided manner, at some simple, concrete, and external thing. This object of our contemplation may be almost anything we please: a picture, a statue, a tree, a distant hillside, a growing plant, running water, little living things. We need not, with Kant, go to the starry heavens. '*A little thing the quantity of an hazel nut*' will do for us, as it did for lady Julian (of Norwich) long ago. Remember, it is a practical experiment on which we are set; not an opportunity of pretty and pantheistic meditation.

Look, then, at this thing you have chosen. Willfully yet tranquilly refuse the messages which countless other aspects of the world are sending; and so concentrate your whole attention on this one act of loving sight so that all other objects are excluded from the conscious field. Do not think, but as it were, pour out your personality towards it; let your soul be in your eyes. Almost at once, this new method of perception will reveal unsuspected qualities in the

external world. First, you will perceive about you a strange and deepening quietness; a slowing down of your feverish mental time. Next you will become aware of a heightened significance, an intensified existence in the thing at which you look. As you, with all your consciousness, lean out towards it, an answering current will meet yours. It seems as though the barrier between its life and your own, between subject and object, had melted away.

You are merged with it, in an act of true communion; and you know the secret of its being deeply and unforgettably; yet in a way which you can never hope to express.

Seen thus, a thistle has celestial qualities; a speckled hen a touch of the sublime. Our greater comrades, the trees, the clouds, the rivers, initiate us into mighty secrets...a deep and peaceful love unites us with the substance of all things...

The price of this experience has been a stilling of that surface mind, a calling in of all our scattered interests... p. 289



Excerpted from

**Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness**

**By Evelyn Underhill**

(Contributed by Adele Chatelain, Philadelphia, PA)



Here at Still Wood, we've experienced spring several times this year—it seems to arrive (Oh, joy!) and then disappear in snow flurries (Oh, whatever!). The weather service keeps remarking on new high or new low temp records. In other words, for most of us, it has not been a “normal” spring.

Life all around the world has not been very “normal” for several years and in places like Ukraine, definitely abnormal. We consider “normal” as the usual, the comfortable and the expected. But if we are honest, are there actually any moments in time when everything is “normal”?

Folks have coined a phrase to express what we can reasonably expect from now on—the “new normal.” This idea gains traction in the everyday when we think of postponing something “until life gets back to normal” But upon serious reflection, we realize that by “normal” we usually mean “like it used to be.” Wisdom, however, tells us that there's no real hope of that now. There simply is no going back. Something new is on the horizon and we all have a part to play in it. Whether we are pondering the recent pandemic, or harsh geopolitical realities, or profound societal polarization, or increasingly rapid advances in technology, or the frightening effects of climate change, we must acknowledge that life has radically changed. Many have actually died, much has been destroyed, and ways of living and interacting that we were accustomed to are already gone or quickly slipping away.

The true “new normal”, the only one that offers genuine hope to our world today, is to embrace an inner change of heart, mind and spirit that can effectively meet the challenges posed by the irreversible changes we perceive around us everywhere. The times call out to us urgently to learn far more about saving and serving one another, giving all that we have and all that we are to seek out new ways, Holy Ways, that will stop the rape of this planet, the trivialization of truth and integrity, and the acceptance of senseless violence and suffering, to allow the mystery of mercy and compassion to take over our lives. We begin in small ways, with greater awareness, more mindfulness — dreamers you may call us — who offer our attention, our respect, our real presence. It is, in fact, the only “saving” way to fulfill the promise of a beautiful world, a world at peace, a world that serves life.

In her book, Judy Cannato writes: “On an unconscious yet collective level, we are connected to all that is happening on the planet. We are constantly influencing and being influenced...Although we may think that we function as separate persons, at every second we are caught in a web of interconnected and interdependent relationships that shape what we call reality.”

This is what we would call the core reality of solitary life, where we live attentive to all that is in a loving, healing way. Even, or should we say, especially in solitude, we are connected to all that happens on our planet, to all who are living, dying, and being born. May we become ever more immersed in our calling.

*With our grateful love, Paul & Karen*

**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](mailto: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).



## *A Word from Raven's Rest*

By Pete Reinl



What follows is an excerpt from the March edition of *A Raven's Offering* – I thought it appropriate to share this reflection with you as we journey through these incredible seasons of change (on so many different levels).

I held her close. I could almost feel her heart beating. She had one hand on my shoulder and the other, along with her blue eyes, went exploring. Her concentration, curiosity and focus were extraordinary. She seemed mesmerized. First a finger into my nostril and then a grab at my eyeglasses, followed by a thorough perusal of my facial hair. Her fingers followed her eyes and every so often she paused as her eyes caught mine. Eventually, those dainty little fingers and bright eyes locked onto my blue flannel shirt buttons and there her attention remained for nearly 20 minutes – sporadically looking up at me – so intent. She just kept looking and touching, pulling and playing with that one shirt button as though she found the meaning of life – as though she discovered the answer to why she'd been born – and she was seemingly in awe about it all.

Treasured time spent with my eight-month year old granddaughter, Augie. Presence. True, authentic, genuine presence. A moment when you know you are fully seen and heard, recognized and felt. Gosh, you just want to bask in its goodness and sacredness and its giftedness, don't you? It's as though warm water washes over you and hugs you and loves you and releases all that ails you... It seems to me presence – to be present, to experience presence, to offer presence – is one of the most significant reasons for our spiritual practices and our vocation as contemporary solitaires, lovers of solitude, monks or hermits in the world. Perhaps to relearn and to reacquaint, and/or to deepen within ourselves this gift of presence. Not just any presence but a fully embodied presence – a reverent presence – a presence that's real and attentive, listens and sees, leans in to use the senses. This is a presence that's humble and caring, curious and silent, compassionate and holy (whole), loving and peaceful, generous and spacious. A unitive presence. A presence honoring boundaries. A sacred presence offered to others. A remote blessed presence offered to all peoples everywhere. A consecrated presence offered to ourselves (our bodies), creatures, nature, the cosmos – to life – to Presence itself. Such an inspiration and model – such an illustration of spontaneous, pure and organic total presence my granddaughter exhibited.

Admittedly, many things can get in the way of my being present and I'm guilty of being absent, partly because of the sometimes-lost childlike wonderment... But, and this is big for me, I trust that intention matters – that effort matters – aspiration matters – awareness matters – the energy I release matters. So, I continue the daily discipline of silence, contemplation, prayer, letting go, and service that I might offer as authentic and soulful of a presence as I can muster throughout the course of my many and varied engagements in the world. That I might recover my childlike wonder...

*Your brother, Peter*

Raven's Bread Ministries now offers by email (ONLY) a monthly reflection of support, encouragement, and inspiration for those embracing the life of a hermit / monk / solitary in the world entitled **A Raven's Offering**.

To receive this monthly reflection please send your name and email address to: [Peter.reinl59@gmail.com](mailto:Peter.reinl59@gmail.com)

**NOTE:** Your name and email address will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will not be shared.

**NOTE:** This monthly reflection will not be published during the months when RAVEN'S BREAD quarterly newsletter is published. You will not automatically become a subscriber to **A Raven's Offering** if you are a subscriber to **Raven's Bread Newsletter**.

## PRAYING

It doesn't have to be  
The blue iris, it could be  
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few  
Small stones; just  
pay attention, then patch  
a few words together and don't try  
to make them elaborate, this isn't  
a contest but the doorway  
into thanks, and a silence in which  
another voice may speak.

*Mary Oliver*

## A NEW PUBLICATION

We are pleased to announce that a  
Free Zen Devotional Chap Book: Daily Devotion  
was just posted to: [www.asinglethread.net](http://www.asinglethread.net)

AND

you can now subscribe to *A Single Thread*. To receive notification  
when new teachings are posted, go to *A Single Thread*, enter your  
email address and click on the SUBSCRIBE button.

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:

That even as we grieved, we grew.

That even as we hurt, we hoped..

That even as we tired, we tried.

Amanda Gorman from "The Hill We Climb"



## BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



### THE BOOK OF HERMITS, A HISTORY OF HERMITS FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE PRESENT

by Robert Rodriguez

*From an inkling about the universe to a desire for radical simplicity, historical hermits have reflected all of this and more. The persistence of hermits, even today, is universal.*

349 pp. \$14.99 pbk. Hermitary Press, 2021

ISBN-978-1-7368665-0-4

### RECLAIMING REST: THE PROMISE OF SABBATH, SOLITUDE, AND STILLNESS IN A RESTLESS WORLD

by Kate H. Rademacher

*Sabbath rest can pierce our illusions of self-reliance and control and that's good news. What if keeping the Sabbath is not only a commandment to obey but a freedom to reclaim?*

213 pp. \$13.49 pbk. Broadleaf Books, 2021

ISBN-10:1506465994 ISBN-13:978-1506465999

### THE RUTHLESS ELIMINATION OF HURRY: HOW TO STAY EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY AND SPIRITUALLY ALIVE IN THE CHAOS OF THE MODERN WORLD

by John Mark Comer

*Pastor Comer was not in a "pretty place" inwardly and turned to a trusted mentor who said: "Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life. Hurry is the great enemy of the spiritual life." It wasn't the response he expected but it was—and continues to be—the answer he needs.*

304 pp. \$16.48 hbk. WaterBrook, 2019

ISBN-10:0525653090 ISBN-13:978-0525653097