



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

November 2022

Thoughts on Solitude

We cannot escape the invitation to become a contemplative because all we have to do to receive it is to be born and I presume we have all experienced that. At the culmination of the Christmas season is the feast of the Epiphany. Epiphany means revelation. What revelation? Each of us is manifesting God, or at least we have the potential of doing so along with every other creature... but there is more. The feast of Epiphany reveals that God is inviting us to participate in the union of the Son of God with human nature. The Incarnation of the Word made flesh is the marriage between the divine and human nature. The Incarnation of the Word made flesh is the marriage between the divine and human nature in Jesus Christ. We share in the mystery of the Word made flesh in virtue of the oneness of the human species and become one body with Christ. This revelation is symbolized in the Gospel text by the water changed into wine. In this image we humans are the water and the Spirit is the wine.

Epiphany is the Christian celebration of what our brothers and sisters in other religions call enlightenment. Enlightenment is the inward realization and consciousness of being identified with who we really are. We are not our false selves or egos. Kiss them goodbye. They have no future. We have to have an ego in some degree to function in this life, but the most important aspect of our life is the epiphany or revelation of God that is going on all the time in the details of life. We know that a subatomic particle is in relation to the wave from which it comes, and that we are localized expressions or manifestations of the wave from which we come. We call our wave God, which is like a kind of nickname because there is no word for this

primordial wave. It just is, is, is —ISING without any limitation at all. If we have any existence at all, we must be present to and penetrated by this presence.

Why not cultivate it? That is the invitation of Epiphany. Why not become unified or identified with God so that you manifest God in every action, and in this way give God a chance to find out what it is like to be a human being. That seems to be the project. But it is only half the project. The bigger half is the effort God has been making since the beginning of time to convince us that he loves us. We are pretty shy about that; not too good candidates for divine love at that level, which is the meaning and source of every other love, physical, mental, and spiritual.

The Church has great courage, and perhaps even a little presumption in celebrating Epiphany the way she does, that is to say, the revelation of God on three distinct levels: the remote, the proximate, and the actual. In other words, there are levels of understanding, penetration, and realization in the feast and its significance that the liturgy is trying to communicate.

The coming of the Magi (first level) is the remote call of all humanity to union with God. Divine union is an invitation to everybody that ever existed or will exist. The baptism of Jesus (second level) is the proximate call of a certain group of religious people, the Jews, to a more intimate communion with the source of all that is.

The Marriage Feast of Cana, is the crown of the Christmas/Epiphany season (third level) which in this context is the

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“Each of us is manifesting God, or has the potential of doing so along with every other creature.”

Excerpts from *A Homily*
by Thomas Keating



Have you noticed how frequently the bright red cardinal bird shows up on Christmas cards? There may be more reason for this than its seasonal color. For you who take time to observe the activities of birds in your yards, you have seen how kind the male cardinal is to its mate. Not only does he assist in building a sturdy nest, he can be seen flying to his mate who is warming their eggs with bits of seeds and berries to nourish her.

After their eggs have hatched, usually two, he is equally busy as is his mate in feeding the fledglings. He also stands guard over the nest, ready to attack any encroaching predator

(even a nosy human with a camera!) Once the “kids” leave the nest, both parents keep an eye on them, helping them find food and safe haven for the night. And throughout this time, the male continues to be attentive to his dusky mate. Yes, most cardinal couples stay together for life!

Recently, we compared the habits of ravens and cardinals and were astonished to realize how similar ravens and cardinals are! Ravens mate for life and are considerate of their companions. If a foraging raven discovers a cache of food, it will call other ravens in the area to share it. In the Bible, consider how Elijah in Wadi Cherith was nourished by ravens who brought him “bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat at night.”

Raven parents have a much busier time than cardinals, however. With three to seven nestlings, they are kept busy feeding them during the six weeks the young stay in the nest and continue to feed and train them for six more months! Being a raven parent requires amazing devotion.

Although it is unlikely that we will see ravens replacing cardinals on Christmas cards, it is good to know what traits they share. And speaking of sharing, we have been overwhelmed with the generosity of all you dear “ravens”! Your bounteous response to our annual appeal will benefit readers of Raven’s Bread for months to come. Although the amount of your donations varied, we believe the large-heartedness of your gifts were equal. Now WE are challenged to offer you rich fare worthy of your generosity!

May you experience an abundance of love and joy throughout the Christmas season and in the year ahead. Let us continue to hold one another in caring prayer.

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 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).



Homily by Thomas Keating

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celebration of the marriage between God and humanity. We need a little subtlety to penetrate its full significance. What is being revealed in this wedding Feast? What is being revealed is that the Divine Nature has united with our human nature and that this is being discovered and becoming conscious in the lives of ordinary folks like us.

Epiphany is also the celebration of God's nuptials with specific individuals, that is, in you and me. That is why I call it the feast of contemplatives. Contemplation is the process of human enlightenment that does on over the years. Old age is the time to do nothing in order to be more and more taken over in body, soul, and spirit, by this incredible love that is always with us, but has to be uncovered by a certain amount of discipline, by the trials of life, and by trust and self-surrender to the immediate presence of God. God is sheer compassion, forgiveness, tenderness and in certain situations, playfulness.

This is the love we are invited into on this feast day under the symbolism of a marriage feast. Please notice the circumstances. The wine has run out. In those days people celebrated marriages for three or four days. The mother of Jesus notices the problem but doesn't ask for anything. She has already got everything so she doesn't have to ask for anything. But at the same time she is concerned for everybody else's needs, especially this couple who will be embarrassed when the wine actually runs out. So she said to Jesus, "They don't have any wine." God is sensitive and eager to fulfill our every want and need, though sometimes withholding or delaying granting what we want in order to move us to a higher or deeper level of trust and intimacy.

Everything that God does is coming from love with an immense energy that science is just beginning to suspect. Invisible energies have to become felt or sensed for us to understand them. In this instance, Jesus uses the senses. He is reluctant to start his ministry ahead of schedule by what could be a miraculous event. Notice that Mary didn't ask him for a miracle. She just presented him with the problem, giving him credit that he might figure out what the best solution might be, something we don't always do.

There were six jugs holding 180 gallons of water sitting there. Water is the most pervasive element on this earth and there is plenty of it. Notice that in many miracles and in so much of the divine action, it is abundance and the incredible limitlessness of the gifts of God that are emphasized.

Here Jesus is changing six jugs of water not just into more water, but into something different, more exhilarating, healing, life giving, exciting, even intoxicating. An enormous amount of water is changed into wine, enough to serve a small army, or provide for about twenty or thirty other weddings. Nothing picaresque about God! What he gives is limitless. It is not wrong but sort of unenlightened to ask God for particular things, although that is sometimes part of the Spirit's inspiration. When you can have everything, ask for everything! Ask for everything because it is the totality of the divine life that is being offered.

As necessary as it is for life, water is not usually favored as the proper liquid for celebrations. People like something a little more delightful. Wine is the sign of God's delight in giving God-self to us. God is giving himself away totally and having a great time doing it.

A SINGLE THREAD ~ CONTEMPLATIVE ORDER OF HSU YUN

Liz Hulsizer aka Fashi Lao Yue, Old Moon, at asinglethread.net wonders if anyone engaged in the practice of Zen Meditation might be interested in a morning sitting at 6:30 AM CDT Monday through Friday. **ALL silent.** If so, contact Marilyn at marilyn.fischbach@gmail.com for a Zoom link. They are also offering a retreat during the Advent season titled **Pushing Upward**. It is 5 weeks beginning November 20th. Again, anyone interested can contact Marilyn at the same email address for details. They are now five ordained monks living a contemplative life in the middle of it all. 😊

Jesus in Ukraine

Wherever two or three

*One very young Russian soldier,
confused and exhausted and scared,
hungry and thirsting, and
two smiling young Ukrainian women
bearing in their hands bowls of soup
and golden rounds of bread
are gathered
around a cell phone carrying the voice
of his mother
heartcorded across the miles
as he gulps his gifted bread and tea,
as he drinks in the love of the one
who birthed him
into this aching yearning world
as he weeps silent weary tears,
as he listens and is comforted
as he eats this bread of life proffered by
those he has been told are his enemies
as one woman caresses his shoulder
as she consoles his now-present mother
as the second woman waits patiently*

*to give her precious offering tenderly to
another uniformed boy
as the soldiers behind them are drawn
into the radiant scene of Eucharist*

In my name

*as the teabag's tiny tag swings freely
in the wind
as faith and trust and hope blow freely
in the wind
and, greatest of these gifts,
love bleeds freely into the world
there I am in the midst of them.*

*I am the bread of life,
take this bread
let us become what we receive
let me rise in you*

He is risen

Alleluia

By

Virginia L. Collins-English

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.rein159@gmail.com
NOTE: This monthly reflection will not be published during the months when **RAVEN'S BREAD** quarterly newsletter is published. You will not automatically receive **A Raven's Offering** if you are a subscriber to **Raven's Bread Newsletter**.