



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

February 2023

Thoughts on Solitude

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 Godself to us. Perhaps you noticed...the striking sentence from Isaiah that God delights in giving himself to us in the same way as a bridegroom marrying a virgin. In other words, his relationship to us is sexual as well as spiritual. Every divine reality that God can communicate to us is contained in the Eucharist. He is giving himself away totally and having a great time doing it.

If you've been a happy bridegroom at some point in your life, you can sympathize with this disposition. What joy God may have given you as you anticipated your wedding night is what he feels about each one of us right now, and God is encouraging us to celebrate that invitation and above all to receive it. The sacraments of the Church are about the transmission of divine life and love. They are about the interpenetration of spirits; they are about the symbols and beauty of sexual love raised to the level of the total gift of self.

To be a contemplative is to be willing to be loved concretely in every detail of life and on every level of human life, body, soul, and spirit. If you are merely thinking of receiving the Eucharist as a ritual, go home. That's not what it is. It may start with that, but the Eucharist is primarily about the interpenetration of spirits—all that you are into all that God is, and all that God is into all that you are including every detail of your life and every concern, joy, and suffering. In other words, you've got a

life companion of infinite capabilities all lined up in your favor and ready to go.

Why be afraid of anything? You've got the greatest gift of the cosmos, the friendship of God, and he wants to celebrate even if you may be a bit tired this morning.

How do we celebrate? Gratitude, self-surrender, enjoyment of the Divine presence—these are the dispositions that make you a contemplative. The experience of God's presence and action within you leads to a greater and greater capacity to see this action in everybody else and throughout the cosmos. It creates a marvelous open-mindedness toward all the truth. God then has the freedom to enrich you as he wills and as he has planned in incredible detail.

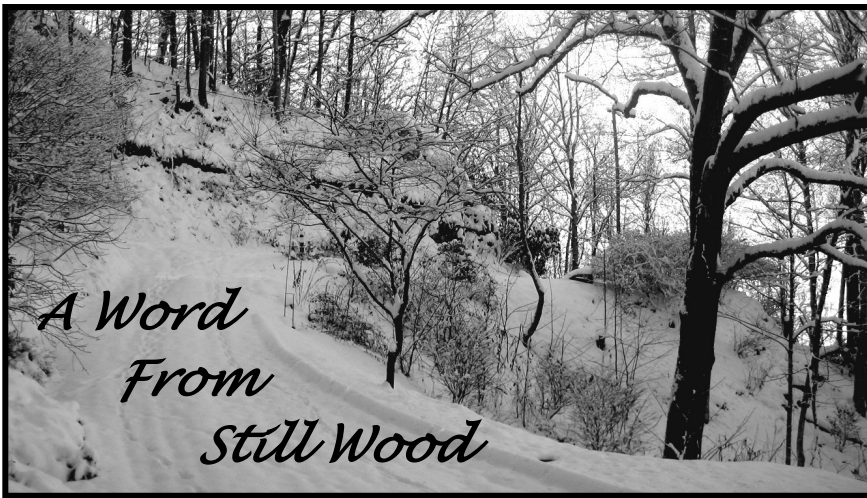
One last thought. The new wine provided by Jesus at the marriage feast was obviously to be consumed, so it was meant to be nourishment. It was meant to be digested. It was meant to affect the nervous system and the brain and to enliven the dispositions of all the guests.

Divine love has no conditions. We are invited into it not as an abstract idea or as a ritual only, but as an experience. Contemplation is the experience of God that is becoming continuous and permanent even in the details of everyday life and amid the distractions of computers and reports of the horrors of violence throughout the world. The divine goodness and the presence of divine love are always there. Your contemplative clarity deepens and you move from the occasional experience of the Presence to a permanent state of loving interaction on a moment by moment basis.

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The Second Half of: *A Homily*
by Thomas Keating



As we prepare this issue of Raven's Bread, nature is busy dressing up God's world in white. Still Wood lies at an elevation of 3,500 feet, a marker the weather service often cites as a dividing line between Winter Storm Advisories and Winter Storm Warnings. The Advisory (up to four inches of snow) includes all that we can see looking DOWN from the back deck to the highway; the Warning (up to twelve inches of snow) covers all that we can see looking UP the mountain from the front deck. For both areas, a wind chill warning of zero is

likely. We know parts of the country have already suffered far worse than this so we don't complain; instead we allow the silent snowfall deepen the quiet that surrounds us and wells up within us as we watch, and wait, and pray for all those for whom this mysterious play of nature spells catastrophe, or disaster or loss. The mix of swirling winds and steady snow makes it nearly impossible to see very far ahead...to know what lies in store for us at the end of the drive or across the valley.

In some ways it seems a microcosm of our planet under assault by winds of change and the steady drift of noise of every kind that distracts us from the work of caring tenderly for ourselves, our communities, and our world as a whole. The voices of Mother Earth, Brother Wind, Sister Air and Sister Water are being stifled by the din of smart phones and social media. Texting is not talking, and emailing is not embracing.

Living where we do on this mountain, we cannot see even one other house. Yet we, and a handful of neighbors, cannot help being connected by the constant background burble of Spring Creek that runs through and along side all our properties. The steady sound of this rushing water heightens our awareness of one another and reminds us to be attentive to each other: the young couple living on a farm across the road preparing for the birth of their first child, the Christmas Eve "due date" anxiously came and went and on a frigid New Year's Eve, the nearly ten lb. baby girl arrived to the joyful cheers of everyone along the Creek. Or the stressed elderly couple just down the road facing one setback after another as they tried to move into their nearly completed home by year's end. They found help and accommodations from nearby friends and neighbors. The house is quite small so our house-warming gift will be a loaf of fresh baked bread. Whether across the road, or across the ocean, each person is brother or sister to us. Every time and every place can be a time and place of Grace because of the one God in whom each and every one of us live and move and have our very being.

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: ravensbread97@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.ravensbreadministries.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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This season, let us put aside all fear and surrender to the Eucharist presence in which Christ, that is God, gobbles you up. If you are a passionate lover, you know that sometimes your love for the other is so great it wants to eat the beloved up. You want to consume the beloved, to be so united you can't ever be separated. This is how God feels towards us. The Eucharist is changing us. This is what transformation or enlightenment really means. Our human personality, capabilities, faults, even our sins are being consumed and transformed into divine life by this extraordinary transformative process. This is what we call in the Christian tradition, the process of contemplation.

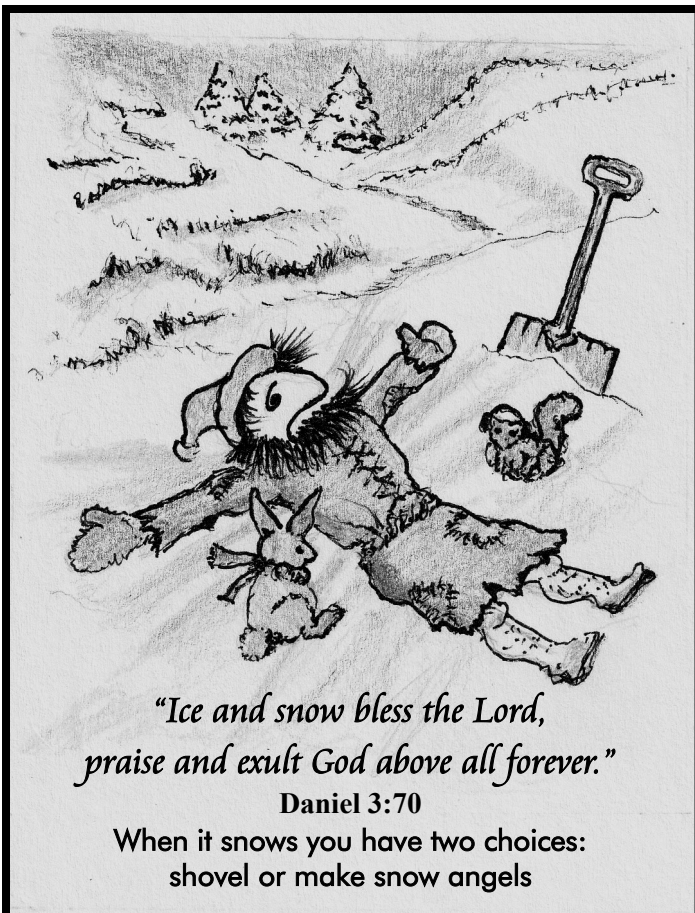
SO BE YUMMY! That is to say, really surrender to God! Turn your life over completely to love and see what remains — hopefully nothing but God. So let God be all in all in you. Let

him be the bridegroom whose desire for communion with us gives him such delight. This is the revelation that confirmed the faith of the apostles. The marriage feast of Cana is God's symbol of the transforming intention of the Divine will in our lives. This feast of divine light is not the end of the journey, but the beginning, in which we begin to see and live with the enlightened eye of faith. We live then not just with the other, but as the other and gradually become the other. Eventually *there is no other* because you have become the other too.

Contemplation (in my understanding and intent) is the process of Christian transformation (enlightenment in the Eastern religions). The Marriage Feast of Cana symbolizes the process: water transformed into wine; the human into the divine; flesh into spirit.



Wood B. Hermit



**To live a contemplative life
is to be open enough to see,
free enough to hear,
real enough to respond.**

**It is a life, and so has its own rhythms of darkness,
dying-rising.**

**Simply enough, it is a life of grateful receptivity,
or wordless awe, of silent simplicity.**

S. Marie Baha
Meditations on Nature, Meditations on Silence

*In Memory of Father Denis Walsh
Friend and Mentor*

*“Our HOMECOMING to the conception
God has of us eternally is an arrival at the place
from which we originated, at the place
in which we have been eternally
in our own most intimate truth and reality.”*

Hans Urs von Balthasar