



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Vol: 5 No: 4 November 2001

Raven's Bread is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in the eremitical life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. The newsletter seeks to affirm and support this way of life. ***Raven's Bread*** is a collaborative effort and thus depends on the shared reflections, stories, news, notices, letters, and information from hermits themselves. The ***Raven's Bread*** Web page is an abbreviated version of our full newsletter, which also includes a **Bulletin Board** and **Reader Forum**.

Please send your written contributions, as well as address changes and subscriptions to:

Raven's Bread
18065 Hwy 209
Hot Springs, NC 28743

The annual subscription to the printed newsletter is \$8.00 in USA and \$10.00 US currency for foreign subscriptions. (Drafts drawn on US banks are the most convenient form of payment by foreign subscribers.) Any extra donations will be used to subsidize subscriptions for hermits who cannot afford the full cost.

To E-mail ***Raven's Bread*** directly click on this link: fredette@nclink.net

Raven's Bread (formerly ***Marabou***) derives its name from the experience of Elijah, the prophet, in 1 Kgs.17: 1-6. A raven, sent by God, nourished him during his months of solitude at the Wadi Cherith (the Cutting Place).

zzzzzz Thoughts in Solitude zzzzzz

By: Rev. Patrick W. Collins, Ph.D., Douglas, MI

"Unless we learn to listen in silence, we shall have nothing to say that is worth saying. Our lives are so cluttered with words that we no longer know how to handle silence. For our society, silence is simply a fruitless pause between words rather than a creative movement out of which deep and authentic words may emerge. If our life is poured out in useless words, we will never hear anything, will never become anything, and in the end, because we have said everything before we had anything to say, we shall be left speechless." (Thomas Merton)

Nothing is more counter cultural today than solitude and silence. We seem to fear being alone and quiet. Incessant noise, frenetic activities web our lives constantly. And yet the deepest need of the soul, the most profound requirement of the inner journey, is solitude and silence. Such an atmosphere is essential for us to experience true solidarity with others, all creation and the Creator God.

Many of Thomas Merton's writings speak of the deep human need to go to "the desert." This is not an escape from other human beings. It is rather a way of being united to others on an ever deeper level. "Do not flee to solitude from the community," he wrote. "Find God first in the community, then He will lead you to solitude."

Solitude is not for the sake of achieving something, even exalted spiritual experiences. It is an expression of one's total gift of self to the True Self within who is our God. Merton wrote from his hermitage, "There are few who are willing to belong completely to such silence, to let it soak into their bones, to breathe nothing but silence, and to turn the very substance of their life into a living and vigilant silence... The solitary is one who has made a decision strong enough to be proved by the wilderness."

Silence humanizes us, Merton believed, because it links us with all that is, in reverence

and respect. It allows us to realize our connection with, and need for, compassion. "As we grow to human maturity and care for the lives of others, we become creatively and beautifully silent. We evoke words from the other and generate life by our listening... The silent person is not the one who never speaks but the one who knows how to listen well."

From his hermitage the Trappist admitted, "I am only fully normal and human when I have plenty of solitude. Alone I live according to a different and more real tempo. I live with the tempo of the sun and of the day, in complete harmony with what is all around me. Solitude becomes for me less and less of a specialty, more and more just 'life' itself."

Over the years Merton realized that his initial desire to flee the world because of its evils and his own chaos was a lure to return to the world at a deeper level. "There is only one true flight from the world;" he wrote, "it is not an escape from conflict, anguish, and suffering, but the flight from disunity and separation, to unity and peace in the love of other (men)...But if you try to escape from this world merely by leaving the city and hiding yourself in solitude, you will only take the city with you into solitude; and yet you can be entirely out of the world while remaining in the midst of it, if you let God set you free from your own selfishness and if you live for love alone."

The spiritual seeker, who desires solitude and silence does so, then, for the sake of solidarity and unity with all.

A Word from Still Wood

The colorful fall days set against October blue skies failed to lift my heart this year. Since the chilling sights of September 11th, I have been changed. Everything I see and hear and read reminds me of those hours when our nation (and the world) watched helplessly as terrorists breached our national defenses and shattered our illusions - collapsing our naive belief that it can't happen to us. It can. It has. Where now is our security?

Spontaneously, Paul and I turned to a passage in Lamentations that used to be sung during the Holy Saturday Tenebrae Service. *"I will call this to mind, as my reason to have hope: the favors of the Lord are not exhausted, his mercies are not spent; they are renewed each morning, so great is his faithfulness. My portion is the Lord, says my soul; therefore will I hope in him"* (Lam 3,221-24).

In our grief and the irrevocable change to our personal psyches, we grope for Hope. Where was God in those tragic hours? Our God was *with* all the passengers on the four jets; *with* all the workers lost in a blaze of fire and smoke; *with* all those who escaped physically but who carry incurable psychic scars. God-with-them, and God-with-us.

Again the holiday season approaches, challenging us to discover where our enduring hope and our true joy is to be found. In a world of fear and war, can we welcome Love? Can we find peace within ourselves so that, in the words of St. Seraphim of Sarov, "thousands around us may find peace"?

This is the challenge of the solitary, the hermit, all of us who have no outward influence on world events. We can contribute to the final outcome of that fateful Tuesday. Will it be bombs or bread that conquer the hearts of those who hate us? Will it be revenge or compassion that motivates world leaders? Will it be hate or Love we welcome this holiday season?

In this issue of **RB**, we explore what respondents to the 2001 Survey have said is the essential grace of the solitary life. For all, it is a positive gift that opens them to God, themselves and others with focused intensity. Hermits are not folks who are against our modern world. On the contrary, they are emphatically for the immense possibilities for good that lie within it.

More than ever, we experience our planet as a global village where what affects one, affects all. A Child of Hope yearns to soothe our bruised and broken spirits. May our solitudes be the stable where God is born among us once again.

**With Grateful love,
Karen & Paul**

The 2001 Survey of Raven's Bread Readers

Of the approximately 590 copies of the Survey mailed this past May, we have now received over 150 responses. This has been a truly gratifying experience. The volume of returns is a fantastic 25%!!! This says something wonderful about you who are cooperating in this project and making it reflective of what is truly happening re solitary lifestyles.

The current issue of **RB** features the results to the first of Ten Reflection Questions: "*For me, the grace and essence of solitary living is ...*" We can still offer you the "big picture" from the eleven categories covered in the Survey's check-off section (Personal Information, Location, Religious Affiliation and Status, Lifestyle, Prayer Forms and Religious Practices, Financial Situation, Spiritual Direction, and Difficulties) which was published in the August 2001 Issue. In the months ahead, we will continue to review with our readers the material received in answer to the **10 Reflection Questions** and offer updates about any significant new data we receive. Eventually, a complete Report will be available from **RB RESOURCES**.

If you are interested in obtaining the **2001 Raven's Bread Survey Results**, these initial reports are available upon request to our online readers for \$5.00 each (U.S. currency):

By Mail:

Raven's Bread
18065 Hwy 209
Hot Springs, NC 28743

By Telephone: 1-828-622-3750

By E-Mail: fredette@nclink.net

**"Is there enough Silence
for the Word to be heard?"**

Autumn

The Leaves are falling as if from far up,
as if the orchards were dying high in space.
Each leaf falls as if it were motioning "no."

And tonight the heavy earth is falling
away from all the other stars in the loneliness.

We're all falling. This hand here is falling.
And look at the other one...it's in them all.

And yet there is Someone, whose hands
infinitely calm, hold up all this falling.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Topic for February 2002 Issue:

"How do you, as a hermit/solitary respond to world events and tragedies? Does your prayer life change? Intensify? What of penance or fasting?"

Deadline: January 7, 2002

In Light of September Eleventh, 2001

Summer's End

On Tuesday, September 11th, 2001,
The seasons changed.
America's blithe summer crashed to an end.
Towers and powers collapsed.

Shadowless blue skies, obscenely smeared
By billowing black clouds
allowed no illusion
to blur our vision as

Security fled. We await the next dread,
Afraid, bereft, we unbury our dead.
We fear the reprisals, the vengeful wars
that surge even now between our shores.

How shall we tell them, our children,
Of summer's demise, of what is no more.
Like Rachel weeping, unconsolated,
For a season lost.
Leaves fall now...and so do we.

Do we seed a new spring
or an endless snow?

Karen Karper Fredette

The Myhrr-Bearing Women

Inexorably they were drawn
back to the tomb;
at last the grey dawn
following night, day and night
of no rest, no calm;
calling of love, despite
falling despair, answered;
wordlessly they prepared the jars
with grief's aroma stored,
(will you not keep their tears?)
and took them, just as you desired
they should, to be the first to hear
and see your rising fire.

Judith Lang

Raven Fights the Wind

Pitched against its strength, my strength

gets me nowhere.
I could give up of course.
Turn back from this standstill moment. But
then
what of the giddy glide
sideways,
arriving
where I'm meant to be?
Elizabeth Ayers

The Blind Man at Siloam

"Go," he said to me,
"And wash
in the pool of Siloam."
And I began to panic.
Two milligrams of mud
Dolloped upon my eyes?
How would that
assuage my blindness?
And would I not simply
Sink into that despair
That had formerly plagued my days
And go back to begging coins
To help my family?
How could I trust
That this blind measure
Of pure faith, in yet another
Might save, and salve, and heal?
I pick up my staff, and trembling,
Obey Physician's orders
And wash
To find my life transformed.
Elizabeth Kearns

Raven Gazes into the Fire

You think I can't count the cost? Me?
With these soot-black wings,
this singed song lodged
in a burnt out throat?
Elizabeth Ayers

"A Suggestion"

Trying to get in touch with someone? Want someone to get in touch with you? Aware of opportunities of interest to solitaires? Have you a service to offer? Are you looking to locate or re-locate a hermitage? Why not place your message on the **Bulletin Board** of *Raven's Bread* (printed version). Requests are posted **free of charge** for our regular subscribers.

Resources Available from *Raven's Bread*

(all prices include postage)

Readings in Spirituality - Annotated Bibliography by Sharon Jeanne Smith **31pp. \$15.00**

Solitude & Union: A Select Bibliography on the Hermit Way of Life by Cecilia W. Wilms **26pp. \$13.00**

Commentary on Canon 603 from "The Law of Consecrated Life" by Jean Beyer SJ, 1988 Translated from the French by W. Becker, 1992 **10pp. \$3.00**

Hermits: The Juridical Implications of Canon 603 by Helen L. Macdonald, Researcher Novalis: St. Paul University, Ottawa, ONT **24pp. \$12.00**

Notes to Guide the Beginning Hermit by A Hermit of Mercy **15pp. \$7.50**

Statutes for Hermits by The Bishops of France (1989)
12 pp. \$6.00

Fellowship of Solitaries

Comprised of and open to religious solitaires of all stripes. The Fellowship is ecumenical and has no official connections with any church. People may join the Fellowship either as Members or as Associates. All receive a regular Newsletter and a List of Members, so that they may be prayerfully aware of each other in their different paths and to make contact with each other if they so wish.

Correspondent: Eve Baker, Coed Glas, Talgarth Road, Bronllys, Brecon, Powys, LD3 0HN

To email Fellowship of Solitaires directly click on this link:fos@btinternet.com

To access the website of Fellowship of Solitaires click on this link:<http://www.btinternet.com/~benedict.baker>

Inner Light Productions, Michael McClellan, Editor

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2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from 11 categories (personal information, location, religious affiliation and status, lifestyle, prayer forms and religious practices, financial situation, spiritual direction, difficulties).

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.5 No.3. **2 pp. \$5.00**

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from First Reflection Question: "For me the grace and essence of solitary living is..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.5 No.4. **2 pp. \$5.00**

Raven's Rest

The Silence...The Solitude...The Solace of God...

Retreatants welcome to schedule time from March 25 through November 1, 2002

at **Raven's Rest** Hermitage (a fully furnished apartment with kitchenette & private entrance) here at **Still Wood**. Offers opportunity to experience solitude and silence on a forested mountainside of the Newfound Range in the rural Smokies, approximately 35 miles N.E. of the Great Smokies National Park and 35 miles N.W. of Asheville. Spiritual Direction available upon request. Suggested offering \$20.00 per day includes meals. For further information, contact:

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BOOK NOTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Leather Tramp Journal, A 12-Mile Mountain Retreat by Richard Broderick. *During a 12-day, 12-mile retreat through the Adirondack Mountains, Father Rich addresses questions evoked by mountain views and thereby invites readers to explore their own "terrain" where vision, meaning, and perspective reside. We explore the topography of our soul with poet Mary Oliver's question: "What am I going to do with the rest of my wild and precious life?"* 2001. Paper, 144 pp. Forest of Peace Publishing, 251 Muncie Rd., Leavneworth, KS 66048-4946. Tel: 800-659-3227. \$11.95

The Art of Spiritual Rock Gradenig by Donna E. Schaper, illustrated by Simon Dorrell. *Building a quiet corner of stones and plants slowly and meditatively is an art appealing to both garden lovers and spiritual seekers. This book shows how to start or maintain a rock garden, whether one has acres of land or a window shelf.* 2001. Paper, 160 pp. Paulist Press, 997 Macarthur Blvd, Mahwah, NJ 07430. Tel: 800-218-1903. \$17.00.



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