



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Vol: 6 No: 4 November 2002

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 printed newsletter, which also includes a **Bulletin Board** and **Reader Forum** featuring responses to a quarterly discussion topic.

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: Judy Sigmund MD, Yellow Springs, OH

Several years ago, at a meeting of the Association of Contemplative Sisters, (ACS) I encountered my first hermit. She was tall, strong, confident, and interacted well with the rest of us, not a typical "recluse." As a future physician, being called to help people with mental illness through my relationships with them, I knew I could never be a hermit. But I experienced an on-going lure to the eremitic life. A member of ACS led me to ***Raven's Bread***. Other steps followed.

Such a life-journey is slow, for each moment of the process must be seen, reflected upon, then either acted upon or rejected. Oddly, this whole, enormous process of trekking toward God is contained in the present moment, if we will only see it for what it is. This is what I am learning about the life of the solitary. It is the moment to moment paring away of the extraneous, the unnecessary. It is the excruciating process of peeling off the layers of the world to find God like a precious gem at the core of every moment. No, I am still not ready for this. But, I thank ***Raven's Bread*** and Alice, Adele and Bette, three hermits who have reached out to me and have generously reflected upon and responded to my queries about their lives as solitaries.

As a psychiatrist and spiritual being, I have been frustrated regarding *spiritual direction*. As a therapist, I listen for spiritual themes, questions, and impasses in my patients' stories and I can often see how these mesh with the psychological and emotional problems they express. But on the two occasions that I have worked with spiritual directors, there has been an overt determination to keep psychotherapy issues separate and out of the discussions. Maybe readers can help me understand this. For me, all domains of my humanness are linked. I don't find it fruitful to put parts of me "on the shelf" while I talk to my spiritual director.

Although I have stated that I am not a hermit (I fall short too often and have also not yet discerned that I am genuinely called to this life), I reflect on my call to service and wonder if it means I cannot be a solitary. It is possible I could help people as a psychiatrist through my writing. I have recognized that my three decades of journal-keeping, letter-writing and even my professional writing are a form of liturgy for me. I began my life as a spiritual writer when I discovered the existence of God at age 17, when an existential curtain was parted and for a moment I saw eternity and knew that God was behind it all. To keep that moment alive (I thought God might leave me again, and I would go back to my previous spiritual blindness), I began writing about each God-given moment of my life as a way of showing reverence for it all. It's possible I could still serve the mentally ill through my writing, could stay connected to this needy population yet still limit distractions to my contemplative life.

At this point in time, it is my connection to institutions that most bind me to the world, such as the institution of medicine, and the institutional structure of the seminary where I am a student. As you can see, I am still at the periphery of the eremitic life, peering in, looking for the next step inward towards God.

A Word from Still Wood

Life happens! Even in such a tranquil, well-balanced place as Still Wood! Trees fall - on our gazebo/chapel; septic tanks back up; art exhibit deadlines arrive too soon; family appears en masse on our door step; a book publisher contacts us when least expected; and our beloved cat, Merton, develops bone cancer! And through it all, Grace beyond measure sustains our Raven's Bread ministry via email, regular correspondence and retreat work.

The above is our long-winded apology for the late arrival of this November issue. We know from past correspondence that you look forward to Raven winging in with its quarterly nourishment and we try to meet your expectations. This issue was particularly wonderful to assemble because so many of you responded to our "dilemma" in the August issue of too few reflections offered on the topic of spiritual direction. This time, we received such a windfall of wonderful responses on that topic AND the current discussion question re a hermit's service to the world that we had to edit your contributions a bit to get everything in. We hope you won't mind - the riches are distilled but are all there for you to digest.

Across the valley, the mountains are bejeweled with the richest fall colors we have seen since moving here. Those trees were "stressed" this past summer due to drought and apparently such stress creates the conditions for an exceptionally beautiful fall exhibition. It took a climatologist to teach me that stress can produce anything good! Hopefully, the Lord will use the stresses of our autumn to create a palette of rich colors in our lives also.

Thanksgiving is at hand and we wish to offer our heartfelt gratitude to our Dominican brothers who host the online version of Raven's Bread where so many of our new readers have discovered us. Their generosity these past six years is enormously appreciated.

Thanks also to the dozens of you who have renewed your subscription and even sent that little extra which allows us to send RB to those hermits who cannot afford it. (Please check your address label for your renewal date. Let us know if it's not correct.)

We appreciate your patience with us, your editors, and also with the bulk mail service which slows delivery so drastically. Please, if you have not received your copy of Raven's Bread by the last week of the expected month, let us know and we will gladly send you another copy. Perhaps postal delays can be a "stress" that produces a blaze of glowing patience!

**With Grateful love,
Karen & Paul**

The 2001 Survey of Raven's Bread Readers

Since last year more than 620 copies of "The Survey" have been mailed to our readership, and we received over 175 responses. It continues to be a truly gratifying experience. The volume of returns stays at a fantastic 25%!!! It says something wonderful about everyone who cooperates in this project, making it truly reflective of what is happening in our own time re solitary lifestyles. We continue to receive requests for **Survey Results** and back issues containing the summaries we have printed thus far.

The current print issue of **RB** (November 2002) features the results of the Fifth of Ten Reflection Questions: *"Were you a member of a religious congregation in the past? What prompted you to leave? Was your departure related to your attraction to solitude?"*

...Sixty-one of the 158 respondents to our survey are former religious; 45 women, 16 men. It should not be surprising that for many, preparation for a life of solitude and prayer has included a period of time in formal religious life. In some cases, persons entered a religious community seeking to satisfy their attraction to deep prayer only to discover that (ironically) their attraction to solitude turned out to be the very thing that "unfit" them for religious life, even in a cloistered, contemplative group.

(from editor's introduction, pg. 4 of November 2002 Print Issue)

We are still offering 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

**Without solitude there can be no real people...
The measure of your solitude is the measure of
your capacity for communion.**

Topic for February 2003 Issue:

"In terms of simplicity, what has been the most challenging area of your life to discipline?"

Deadline: December 31, 2002

In solitude, I find myself undoing,

loosening my fingers and letting slip through
those terribly important things we all do;
becoming empty ...becoming still.
When I become empty,
when I am undone,
God pours his love through me
like water through a sieve.
Judith Rucker, Port Neches, TX

"A Suggestion"

Trying to get in touch with another hermit? Want contact from a hermit or solitary? Aware of opportunities that may be 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 Solitaires

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
Thoughts-of-the-Week from the Desert Fathers
To subscribe:

Send a blank e-mail to: thoughts-of-the-week-request@innerlightproductions.com

with this text in the body: subscribe thoughts-of-the-week

Four Articles by Kenneth C. Russell. Reprinted by permission from "*Review for Religious*" (excellent footnotes & references)

Being a Hermit: Where and How 12 pp, \$6.00
Acedia - The Dark Side of Commitment 4 pp. \$2.00
The dangers of Solitude 5 pp. \$2.50
Must hermits Work? 10 pp. \$5.00

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

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Second Reflection Question: "How did you come to recognize your call to religious / solitary / hermit life?"

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.1. 2 pp. \$5.00

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Third Reflection Question: "Reactions of others to my choice of eremitic life..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.2. 2 pp. \$5.00

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Fourth Reflection Question: "For members of religious congregations: Reactions of the community to my choice of hermit life..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.3. 2 pp. \$5.00

2001 Reader Survey: Initial Findings

Compilation of data from Fifth Reflection Question: "For former members of religious congregations: What prompted you to leave? Was your departure related to your attraction to solitude..."

Reprinted from *Raven's Bread* Vol.6 No.4. 2 pp. \$5.00

Raven's Rest

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

Retreatants welcome to schedule time from April 6 through November 1, 2003 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 \$25.00 per day

includes meals. For further information, contact:

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Tel: 828-622-3750
[email: fredette@nclink.net](mailto:fredette@nclink.net)

BOOK NOTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Awakening in God by Janet Knori. *Written by one of our own Raven's Bread subscribers, this book speaks of the spiritual life in the voices of contemporary women who are living a full spiritual life in our every day world. Six Christian women relate their spiritual histories. This is **not** a beginner's guide! It contains the wisdom of lived experience and encouragement for all who have chosen a more spiritual path.* 2002. Paperback, 114 pp. It can be ordered directly from Janet for \$11.00 (which includes shipping) at Janet Knori, 2454 Donegal Street, Eugene, OR 97404 Or on-line through www.1stBooks.com.

Celtic Daily Prayer *Contains rituals for Morning, Noon, and Evening Prayer, plus seven different days of Compline; readings for each day of the month, a lectionary, and two years of daily readings plus rituals for particular situations; sabbath observance and various saints' lives.* 2002. Hardback, 827 pp. \$20.95. Available through Amazon.com.

New additions to Raven's Bread Resources:

"A Rule for Hermits" by Padre Fray Alberto E. Justo, OP in English and Spanish. 9pp. \$4.00

Note: "Marabou" founder, Fr. Bede Jagoe OP, brought this to our attention and asked us to credit Fr. Tom Johnston OP who offered it to him.

"A Briefly Annotated Bibliography of Books on Solitude" prepared by an RB reader. 4pp. \$2.00

Websites of Interest:

www.heandi.qc.ca; www.mediaspaul.qc.ca;
www.umilta.net/eremit.html; www.chrmysticaloutreach.com;
www.commstanth.org

Books for the Soul Catalogue: Mediaspaul, 250 rue Saint-Francois Nord, Sherbrooke, QC J1E2B9 Canada



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