



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Vol: 4 No: 1 February 2000

Raven's Bread is a quarterly newsletter for hermits and those interested in the eremitical life published Paul and Karen Fredette. This 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

P.O. Box 562

Hot Springs, NC 28743.

The annual subscription to the printed newsletter is \$8.00 in U.S. currency. (International money orders 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: [103517.210 @ compuserve.com](mailto:103517.210@compuserve.com)

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).

Thoughts in Solitude

By: Richard Simonelli, Boulder, CO

When all is said and done we don't know why a person has a hermit's calling. We might explain the call of the hermitage in a spiritual, or even in a psychological way, but finally we must trust the fundamental Mystery and just let the hermit be the hermit ò whether that person is someone else, or we ourselves.

This is a world of countless "things." It is a world of endless activities, relationships, involvement's and wonders ò both human-made and natural. In the spirit of a great renunciation, the hermit has chosen ò or perhaps "is called upon" is the better phrase ò to limit his or her involvement with the world. It is a *great* renunciation because it is made in order that the hermit may dwell in the silent Immensity in perhaps the only way available to him or her in this lifetime. We don't know precisely when the hermit has had to pass through such a narrow gate but he does. In walking through that gate she is responding to a sacred command issued by life itself.

On the other side of the hermetic gate is a narrow trail which eventually opens up to a space of such immensity that it connects to each and every one of those countless things that the hermit has left behind. This connection takes place in the unseen world of the spirit. These spiritual connective patterns are not the private property of the hermit alone. Through the hermit's sincere commitment, the spiritual connectedness that the hermit discovers touches all living beings. It is as though the gifts and strengths of the hermitage are written on the winds for all to see. They are available to all as a healing pattern that interconnects the whole world. This unseen pattern which emanates from every hermit is the hermit's ultimate expression of service to the world at large.

Does this unseen benevolent web really exist or is this just a romantic fantasy or a literary metaphor? Many of those who have learned to live in, and work with quality solitude, have intuited that the connective pattern is real. At some point a solitary contemplative may have the insight that even in solitude he or she touches others. For some of us only solitude hones and refines the gift of intuition to where things like this are suddenly *known* without a developmental process.

Hermits offer the 21st century a model of human decency, wholesomeness, and an interiority that we all so desperately need. Living in a low-key, low-tech way, the hermit's renunciation is good news for an over-stressed contemporary world. The first prerequisite for both individual spiritual healing and societal healing is an inwardly directed gaze. As a people, we have become outer-directed to an alarming degree. We have lost the ability to look inside for the spirituality and self-knowledge that can quench an awful thirst. But the interiority that is a gift of the hermitage is not self-centeredness.

For many of us the inwardness of the hermit's life will lead naturally to an engaged solitude that becomes an outlet for service. Engaged solitude nurtures and supports others through forms of service that are compatible with a solitary person's skills and abilities. Through engaged solitude the invisible connective tissue of a hermit's lifestyle reaches out in more ordinary ways as well. The practice of engaged solitude allows us to fulfill any obligations to family, friends or community that remain outstanding in our lives. But in engaged solitude an individual's great joy is still found through the connected aloneness in which he or she meets God.

The hermit offers the future both an example and an actual style of life that can have a calming and cooling-off effect on an emotionally overheated world. Who knows, maybe even the phenomenon of global warming will be lessened if there were a few more hermits out there.

This found expression not so much in poverty as in frugality. Possessions and concerns beyond one's present needs were seen as so much distracting baggage. Common was a disarming unconcern to provide for old age or sickness.

7. Stillness and Silence

This was the treasured bonus afforded by a simple, uncluttered life. Some spoke of a rich emptiness which sourced all creativity in their life, an emptiness filled by God alone.

8. Growth in Stewardship

Some found, after an initial radical withdrawal, a sense of service in the world by prayer or ministry without detriment to solitude, a sense of communion with others in loving concern and compassion. Following the daily News was a spur to prayer. I was reminded of flag-bearers accompanying an army into battle, unarmed, vulnerable, useless - except to show others direction and solidarity.

9. Detachment

A letting go of everything that has not to do with aloneness with God. There was a distinct wariness of being drawn into causes no matter how worthy or into activities (e.g. in the parish) which might develop into absorbing and distracting chores. For some, their way of life or location (like the Desert Fathers) might mean being deprived of the regular reception of the sacraments. In the spiritual life all such adjuncts are a means to an end and only God is the End, to whom some may be graced to attach themselves without intermediaries.

Topic for May 2000 Issue:

How have "disabilities" contributed positively to your life of prayer and solitude?

Deadline: April 4, 2000

"Silence is the winter name of God." anon.

Resources Available from Raven's Bread

Readings in Spirituality - Annotated Bibliography by Sharon Jeanne Smith **31pp. \$10.00**

Solitude & Union: A Select Bibliography on the Hermit Way of Life by Cecilia W. Wilms **26pp. \$8.00**

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. \$8.00**

Notes to Guide the Beginning Hermit by A Hermit of Mercy **15pp. \$5.00**

Statutes for Hermits by The Bishops of France (1989) **12 pp. \$4.00**

Discernment Survey 1996 **6pp. \$2.00**

Raven's Rest

Retreatants welcome to schedule time after April 1, 2000 at **Raven's Rest** (a fully furnished apartment with private entrance) here at **Still Wood**. Offers opportunity to experience solitude and silence on a forested mountainside in the Smokies. 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

The Ladder, Parable-Stories of Ascension & Descension by Edward Hays. *In crafting these parables in the ancient tradition of the Desert Mothers and Fathers, Hays calls the book a "handheld spiritual teacher for anyone eager to become a student of the mystical path."* Paper 207pp \$13.95 (Available through Forest of Peace Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 269, Leavenworth, KS 66048-0269. TEL:1-800-659-3227)

A Quarterly Magazine of interest to RB readers: **"Forefront: The Desert and the City"** *Invites one to share the wisdom of others who hear the call of contemplation and find creative ways to live mindfully in the world.* Published by The Spiritual Life Institute: One year - \$16.00, Outside the US - \$20.00 US Funds; Order from: Spiritual Life Institute, Box 219, Crestone, CO 81131

Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West by Raymond Gawronski, SJ. *Non-Christian traditions and the via negativa, and their relationship to christian mysticism based on the Word Revealed and the place of silence in the Christian spiritual life.* William B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI 1995, Hard Cover, 232 pp

The Angels of God: Understanding Scripture by Judith Lang. *Discusses the role of angels as Mediators, Messengers, Ministers and in Apocalyptic literature.* New City Press, Hyde Park, NY Paper 240 pp. \$11.01 (UK £9.95)

Peace is Every Step; The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life by Thick Nhat Hahn. *Shows how the deep meditative presence is available in everyday situations and pressures.* Bantam Books 1992, Paper 134pp. \$10.36



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