



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Vol: 10 No: 1 February 2006

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 Site offers an **ABBREVIATED** version of our full printed newsletter, which also includes a **Bulletin Board**, a **Reader Forum** featuring responses to a quarterly discussion topic, and a **Letters** section from the readership.

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. If you enjoy this free online service, we encourage you to make a donation to ***Raven's Bread Ministries***.

To E-mail ***Raven's Bread*** directly click on this link: pkfredette@earthlink.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 On Solitude zzzzzz

Carthusian Spirituality: A Summary Excerpted from "Halfway to Heaven" By Robin Bruce Lockhart

(Extracts from the Statutes of the Order of the Carthusians and from Guiges' *Consuetudines*, with which the Statutes are so much imbued.)

Solitude of some sort is essential to the seeker after God. There is no way that leads more surely to contemplation... As we contemplate all the benefits which God has prepared for those whom God has called into the desert, let us rejoice with Bruno, our blessed father that we have attained the peaceful lake whose waters well up with the purest sources of the spirit, untroubled by news coming from outside, and like a clear mirror reflect one image only, that of Christ... We know moreover that in our vocation of humility it does not become us to teach, but rather to be taught, and it is much better to celebrate the merits of our neighbors than our own...

The principal application of our vocation is to live in silence and solitude in ourselves as Jeremiah wrote: "A solitary will sit down and keep silence..."

Apart from all, to all we are united, so that in the name of all we stand before the haven of a hidden port, where we are invited to experience in some sort the incomparable beauty of the supreme good...

In solitude then let the hermit's soul be like a tranquil living god... Our life clearly shows that something of the joys of Heaven is present already here below... Wherefore in praise of God, for which the hermit Order of Carthusians was particularly founded, let us

dedicate ourselves to the peace and silence of our cells and strive to offer God unceasing worship so that sanctified in truth we may be those true worshippers which the Father seeks.

The final chapter of the *Consuetudines* is a eulogy of the solitary life, where Guiges cites many authorities to witness that this is the ideal state: *We know from the Old Testament and also from the New that nearly all the higher secrets and the deepest revelations come to people not in the tumult of crowds but when they have found themselves alone. The servants of God when they wished to meditate more deeply on some truth or to pray more truly, or to escape from the things of this world in order to be ravished in the spirit, always avoided multitudes and sought the advantages of solitude.*

Guiges refers to Isaac going alone to meditate in the fields; to Jacob, who in solitude 'met God face to face' and in that one moment gained a greater blessing from God than in the rest of his life which passed among men. References are also made to the love of solitude of Moses, Elijah and Elisha, and to the divine secrets revealed to them when they drew themselves apart from humanity. He quotes these glorious words of Jeremiah: 'It is good to wait in silence for the greeting of God... he who sits alone and keeps silence will rise above himself.'

Guiges reminds us of John the Baptist's life in the wilderness and, of course, of Christ himself going up into the mountain to pray alone, and of how at the hour of the Passion he again left the Apostles in order to pray in solitude. The joys of the solitary life of the Desert Fathers are much extolled.

Guiges ends this great eulogy in the following words: *There is nothing better one can choose in life than solitude with the soft sweetness of the Psalms, the application to reading, the fervor of prayer, the depth of meditation, the transport of contemplation, and the baptism of tears.* Here indeed is striking testimony to the primacy of contemplation and the riches of its spiritual wisdom.

The Carthusian, like his 'ancestor' the Desert Father, does not seek to be 'extraordinary' by retiring from the world, but rather to be his ordinary self, true to God. This contrasts strongly with many men and women today, who drift along with the current accepted values, however debased, acquiring a lemming-like herd mentality, floundering on the road to disaster.

In our present age there is an imperative need for people to recapture the experience of simplicity and absolute truth which the early Christians found in the desert, the living tradition of which the Carthusians are the incarnate heirs. Peace is born of silence, because silence is the threshold where the soul meets God.

A Word from Still Wood

Sorting through the material for this issue, we were very impressed that so many of you found time amid preparation for Christmas celebrations to contribute to the topic for this issue - **music**. As always, the most valuable aspect of your honest sharing is the diversity of views expressed. You recommended music you found most beneficial for your prayer; shared precious moments when music swept you into a deeper intimacy with God; or traced how your tastes have changed over your years in solitude.

Here at Still Wood, music often inspires and sustains us as we pray, creating an atmosphere of peace by calming our spirits and bringing us home to our own hearts. There are certain works which have accumulated a treasure trove of memories over years of listening; and new works that delight us with the artists' gifts. Different seasons call forth differing styles in hymns, chants and songs expressing our hearts' emotions.

However the **genuine** music of Still Wood is the stereo-symphony of the mountains surrounding us: the ever-changing melodies the wind plays among the leaves and branches of the trees; the sweet song of water in the runs and springs; the exquisite white noise of falling snow; and, of course, the varying chorus of birds as they change their repertoires throughout the year. This music is as vast as starshine; as stealthy as movements of shy creatures in the night; as intimate as the kiss of sunlight on stone; and as miraculous as the fragrances wafting up from crushed blossoms and cut grasses.

Once again, we recognize what gives **RB** its particular resonance among lovers of solitude: it is written almost entirely by you, our readers. The **Raven** brings you the reflections and experiences of those who are living the life they write about. These personal sharings bear the hallmark of truth. Over and over, new readers tell us they find echoes of their own heart in this newsletter which though small and simple in style, communicates an authenticity seldom found elsewhere. We trust you will find a special

delight in this issue, the first in our tenth year of publication.

Along with your gifts of shared reflections, many of you have been remarkably generous with extra funds so impoverished readers can receive **RB** gratis. Your gifts also help us to cover the increased postal rates which affect not only first class mail in the States but all our foreign mail as well. We want you to receive **Raven's Bread** in as secure and timely a manner as possible so we plan to continue sending it First Class within the US and by Air Mail abroad. Thanks to **YOU**, (you know who you are) we will **not** have to increase our subscription rates this year!

**With Grateful love,
Karen & Paul**

**I weave a silence onto my lips
I weave a silence into my mind
I weave a silence into my heart
I close my ears to distractions
I close my eyes to attractions
I close my heart to temptations.
Calm me O Lord as you stilled the storm
Still me O lord, keep me from harm
Let all tumult within me cease
Enfold me Lord in your peace.
(Celtic Verse)**

Discussion Topic for May 2006 Issue:
Do you have a daily rhythm of work and prayer?
Would you share how you developed it?
(Please limit responses to 300 words or less)
Deadline: April 1, 2006

**Anyone who thinks that his time is too valuable
to spend keeping quiet
will eventually have no time for God and his brother
but only for himself and his own follies.
*Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)***

Hermit Resources Available from *Raven's Bread* February 2006

(all prices include postage)

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Annotated Readings in Spirituality - by Sharon Jeanne Smith **21pp. \$5.00**

Solitude & Union: A Select Bibliography on the Hermit Way of Life by Cecilia W. Wilms **26pp. \$5.00**

Annotated Books on Solitude - **4pp. \$2.00**

JURIDICAL COMMENTARIES

Commentary on Canon 603 from "The Law of Consecrated Life" by Jean Beyer SJ, 1988 Translated from the French by W. Becker, 1992 **10pp. \$2.50**

Hermits: The Juridical Implications of Canon 603 by Helen L. Macdonald, Researcher Novalis: St. Paul University, Ottawa, ONT **24pp. \$5.00**

Statutes for Hermits by The Bishops of France (1989)
12 pp. \$2.50

HERMIT RULES

Rules for Hermits (Spanish & English) by Padre Justo, O.P. **9pp. \$2.50**

Eremitic Rule of Life **30pp. \$5.00**

Franciscan Plan of Life in Hermitage **4pp. \$2.00**

Topical Outline for Plan of Eremitical Life **3pp. \$2.00**

HERMIT SURVEYS

Raven's Bread Survey 2001 - Compiled Responses **23pp. \$5.00**

Marabou Questionnaire 1996 - **9pp. \$2.50**

ARTICLES & COMMENTARIES

Notes to Guide the Beginning Hermit by A Hermit of Mercy **15pp. \$3.00**

Lay Hermits by Rev. Eugene Stockton **8pp. \$2.50**

NCR 2004 "Sacristans of Emptiness" by Rich Heffern **6pp. \$2.50**

Discernment Criteria - "Marabou" 1996 - **6pp. \$2.00**

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

Where God Begins To Be A Woman's Journey into Solitude by Karen Karper

An Authors Guild Back imprint.com edition

To order online, click on this link: www.book.orders@iuniverse.com

Autographed copies (\$12.95 plus \$2.50 postage & handling) are available from:

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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 Solitaries directly click on this link: solitaries@onetel.com

To access the website of Fellowship of Solitaries click on this link:

<http://www.solitaries.org.uk/>

Raven's Rest

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

Retreatants Welcome. Now scheduling for April thru October 2006 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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BOOK NOTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MUSIC PHYSICIAN FOR TIMES TO COME

Compiled by Don Campbell.

Ancient peoples knew that music and sound deeply affect body, mind and spirit. These essays by noted musicians, scientists, music therapists, and spiritual leaders explore new paradigms intergrating music's age-old healing role with modern techniques.

2000. 365 pp. Softcover. \$15.95. Quest Books, Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, IL

web: www.questbooks.net ISBN 0-8356-0788-7

UNENCUMBERED BY BAGGAGE, OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY OF ANTHONY DeMELLO

by Carlos G. Valles.

The official biography of one of the most beloved and prolific spiritual guides and writers of our times.

1988. 184 pp. Softcover. \$14.95 Published by Gujarat Sahitya Prakash.

Available through Merging Currents. web: www.help@mergingcurrents.com.

AWAKENING THE CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRIT, WRITING, GARDENING AND THE INNER LIFE by

Arthur Versluis.

A beautifully composed study of contemplation by one of America's wisest and most knowledgeable commentators on spiritual and religious matters.

2004. Softcover. \$15.95. New Grail Publishing, P.O. 14285, St. Paul, MN

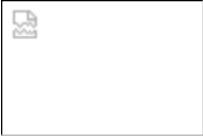
ISBN: 0-9650488-1-0

SONG FROM SOLITUDE (1999), ON THE NIGHT TIDE (2001), DELAYED BY ROUGH SEAS

(2003) by David Hodges, a monk living on an island off the coast of Wales, UK who is an accomplished poet, able to describe how we can experience the transcendent and ineffable God, in the apophatic tradition of John of the Cross.

Available in the US through Liturgical Press.

E-mail: sales@litpress.org Tel: 1-800-858-5450



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