



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Vol: 3 No: 2 May 1999

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 \$7.50 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 on Solitude

By: A Canonical Hermit Missionary

To anyone who asks me about my Plan of Life, I reply, "You don't really want my Rule of Life. You want your *own* Rule of Life. May I offer a few ideas that might help you in this process?"

Before anything else, find a director. Be open to God's gentle guidance through the unfolding of events as you search. God's ideas may not be yours! Hermits are often called like Abraham to go out by faith to a far off land "not knowing where (they are) going."

Sketch out a simple schedule, the basics, no more. Include in this schedule a firm period for prayer. It is wisely said that where prayer is not scheduled eventually there will be no prayer at all. Think seriously of praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Its psalms and the lessons of the Fathers will nourish you throughout the day, and link you to the Mass you may not be able to attend daily. If you wish schedule some few - *very few* - devotions. In this and in everything else avoid multiplicity, clutter. Simplicity supports inner silence.

Make time for spiritual reading. Above all, immerse yourself in the Scriptures. Let them saturate you. Slowly, through the years, like good grass they will take over the lawn of your soul and you may well find that you have appetite for nothing else. Slowly, I said -

Allow the rest of your day to flow gently around this simple schedule. Your quiet times with God, your work, relaxation, study, exercise, extra reading. Seek balance.

Hermit life is a vocation, not a camping trip, an inner journey in search of God, with God, in God. One grows into the vocation slowly. Be patient - with yourself; with God. The hermitage can - and will - become empty, lonely. Try not to fill it. The emptiness and loneliness, you will one day discover, is God. In the beginning - but it will *always* haunt you - dread of this lonely emptiness will raise a defense against its bewildering pain, and we become Very

Busy. It will happen but at least be aware, that you may the sooner return to Silence. Cling to God and He will lead you. The Desert is pathless and only He Who calls you knows the Way. Listen to your bishop, to your director and to the Spirit speaking in your heart.

Be yourself. Find your own way. Don't try to be what others think you should be. Not even what *you* think you should be. Be docile, open to change, for it is in change and flowering that you will become what you really are in God's dream. And through the pain and joy of this transformation, you will be a blessing for your church and for the whole world.

A Word From Still Wood

The Carolina Silver Bell is blooming on the mountain here at Still Wood and so is *Raven's Bread* for many of the dreams we planted are coming true. And we have *you* to thank! Where shall we start?

First we must thank all of you who have shared about your Plan of Life and/or life story for the sake of encouraging brother or sister hermits on their solitary way. No one need feel quite so alone with such a helpful network available. Our hope of offering examples of Plans of Life meant your sharing what is quite personal. Even so many of you responded, as courageously and diversely as woodland wildflowers. So now, we can look forward to filling this and the *next* issue with rich material for thought and reflection!

RB finds itself facilitating a conversation that is proving to be wide-ranging, covering varieties of eremitical lifestyles suited to people in many differing circumstances. Not everyone can be (or wants to be) canonically recognized under Canon 603. Yet everyone can benefit by some defined expression of their intention to live a life oriented to prayer and solitude. This "definition" can be three succinct sentences or thirty pages replete with quotes from Scripture and holy men and women of past ages.

The volume of subscription renewals and new subscribers has been most heartening with many of you tucking in that little extra so we can send RB to any hermit who wishes to receive it, even if s/he cannot afford it. Additionally, some of you have been substantially underwriting RB's printing expenses. You know who you are and so does our ever-generous God who will find ways to reward you even beyond what Raven can dream! We are most grateful.

Something more for which we can all be grateful: Paul is "coming out of the shadows" in his heretofore unsung role as copy editor of Raven's Bread. From now on his name will be included as Co-editor so due recognition can be made for the hours of work and artistic labor he contributes to each issue. You DO know he is our illustrator and originator of our beloved Wood B. Hermit, don't you? Welcome into the sunshine, Paul!

Raven's Rest, our retreat haven, is available now to anyone who is in need of some time for solitude and prayer amid the beauties of these mountains. We have found God here - or rather, God has found a place for us here. In turn, we wish to share what has been lavished so generously on us. Bluebirds were investigating one of our nesting boxes a few weeks ago. We wonder who we may next welcome to the raven's place of rest?

With Grateful love,

Karen & Paul

~~~~~*Sounding Solitude*~~~~~

By: Celia M. Comby, London, UK

Four and a-half years ago I retired from teaching Art, having felt a kind of pull toward a more contemplative life. At that time I had a vague idea of dividing my time between prayer and painting but the urge to paint has fallen, more or less, by the wayside and the urge to pray has grown steadily stronger. At first I thought I was suffering from some sort of "creative block" but now I think that God has been leading me more deeply into a path of intensive prayer, silence, and solitude.

Since I have a pension and no longer need to earn my living, I knit and sew for Oxfam - blankets and clothes for refugees and victims of disaster in Third World countries. It seems quite a suitable alternative to weaving mats and baskets for which the market these days is somewhat restricted!

The hermit who gave me Raven's Bread tells me that one cannot be a "recognized" hermit unless one is actually consecrated. For me, recognition is not all that important. God loves me and recognizes me by my Baptismal

Through it the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

All that matters is to be created anew.

Peace and mercy on all who follow this rule of life.

(Gal 6.14-16)

Topic for "Hermits Ask and Respond" Forum in August 1999 Issue:

RB asks for further contributions to this conversation about Plans of Life. We hope to publish your reflections as time and space permit.

Deadline: July 1, 1999

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 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

Franciscan Solitude Edited by Andre Cirino, OFM & Josef Raischl. *A wide-ranging collection of studies on the Franciscan hermit tradition, past, present and future.* Franciscan Institute Publications. St. Bonaventure, NY, 1995 Paper, 370 pp. \$18.00

A Way of Desert Spirituality, The Plan of Life of the Hermits of Bethlehem by Eugene I. Romano, HBHJ. *The approved Plan of Life of a laura of American hermits.* Alba House, New York, 1995, Paper, 120 pp. \$8.95

The Solace of Fierce Landscapes, Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality by Belden Lane. *Speaks powerfully of physical settings of desert and mountain; the interaction between them and the person searching. Draws on traditional roles of prayer and discipline; voluminous footnotes; well researched; challenges present from the past. Physical landscapes continue to bring us into the presence of God when we are silent.* Oxford University Press, New York. 1998, Hard Cover, 282 pp. \$25.00

Meditations and Mandalas, Simple Songs for the Spiritual Life by Nan C. Merrill. Provides through writing and drawing momentary glimpses of the paradoxes of life. Whether prayed individually or communally, this book can

be like a window to the soul that awakens inner vistas. Continuum, NY, hbd. \$15.96

Psalms for Praying, An Invitation to Wholeness by Nan C. Merrill. A reworking of the Book of Psalms in a loving, contemplative manner, which betrays none of the book's original vigor or essence. Continuum, NY Paper, \$13.56



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