

# ***Raven's Bread***

## ***Food for Those in Solitude***

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### ***Vol: 9 No: 2 May 2005***

***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.

To E-mail ***Raven's Bread*** directly click on this link: [fredette@nclink.net](mailto: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 On Solitude** zzzzzz

**Excerpted from "Vita Consecrata"**  
**Apostolic constitution 1996**  
**by Pope John Paul II**

Together let us thank God...for all those individuals who, in their inmost hearts, dedicate themselves to God by a special consecration.

Its universal presence and the evangelical nature of its witness are clear evidence — if any were needed — that the consecrated life is not something isolated and marginal, but a reality which affects the whole Church...The consecrated life may experience further changes in its historical forms but there will be no change in the substance of a choice which finds expression in a radical gift of self for love of the Lord Jesus and, in him, of every member of the human family. This certainty, which has inspired countless individuals in the course of the centuries, continues to reassure the Christian people, for they know that they can draw from the contribution of these generous souls, powerful support on their journey towards the heavenly home...

From the first centuries of the Church, men and women have felt called to imitate the Incarnate Word who took on the condition of a servant. They have sought to follow him by living in a particularly radical way, through monastic profession, the demands flowing from baptismal participation in the Paschal Mystery of his Death and Resurrection. In this way, by becoming bearers of the Cross, they have striven to become bearers of the Spirit, authentically spiritual men and women, capable of endowing history with hidden fruitfulness by unceasing praise and intercession, by spiritual counsels and works of charity...the quest for hesychia or interior peace, ceaseless prayer, fasting and vigils, spiritual combat and silence, Paschal joy in the presence of the Lord and oblation of self

and personal possessions, lived in the holy communion of the monastery or in the solitude of the hermitage...

It is a source of joy and hope to witness in our time a new flowering of the ancient Order of Virgins, known in Christian communities ever since apostolic times. Consecrated by the diocesan Bishop, these women acquire a particular link with the Church, which they are committed to serve while remaining in the world...

Men and women hermits, belonging to ancient Orders or new Institutes, or being directly dependent on the Bishop, bear witness to the passing nature of the present age by their inward and outward separation from the world. By fasting and penance, they show that man does not live by bread alone but by the word of God (cf. Mt 4: 4). Such a life "in the desert" is an invitation to their contemporaries and to the ecclesial community itself never to lose sight of the supreme vocation, which is to be always with the Lord. Again being practised today is the consecration of widows, known since apostolic times, as well as the consecration of widowers. These women and men, through a vow of perpetual chastity as a sign of the Kingdom of God, consecrate their state of life in order to devote themselves to prayer and the service of the Church.

Institutes completely devoted to contemplation, composed of either women or men, are for the Church a reason for pride and a source of heavenly graces...In solitude and silence, by listening to the word of God, participating in divine worship, personal asceticism, prayer, mortification and the communion of fraternal love, they direct the whole of their lives and all their activities to the contemplation of God...Thus there is good reason to hope that the different forms of contemplative life will experience continued growth in the younger Churches as an evident sign that the Gospel has taken firm root especially in those areas of the world where other religions predominate. This will make it possible to bear witness to the vitality of the traditions of Christian asceticism and mysticism and will contribute to interreligious dialogue.

## **A Word from Still Wood**

Blessings for the Easter Season! The Paschal celebration was early this year and nature's resurrection is only now catching up on our mountainside. A golden arc of forsythia curves behind our old rugged cross atop our drive and sunset orange tulips wave gracefully at its foot. Our rock garden is decked out in daffodils, red and yellow primroses, pastel mountain bells, woods hyacinths and grecian windflowers. The Lenten Rose still blooms next to the deep purple hyacinth with its heady fragrance. The floral festival on the forest floor has begun with the shy spring beauties, shasta white bloodroot, wild larkspur, and of course, the queen of the woodlands, five varieties of trilliums. We do wish you'ns could share this wonder.

Amid all the budding and leafing out, however, is a large brown scar where once glorious, twenty foot rhododendrons bloomed by our front door. They had come to the end of their life span and we sadly pulled them out last fall. In their place, we will plant the Georgette L. Fredette Memorial Garden which will eventually include azaleas, a parade of flowering perennials, a small pond with fountain, and windchimes. White rocks, collected from our woods, will accent the greenery. As we prepare the site, it is so easy to visualize Georgette herself supervising from the deck, her hazel eyes sparkling with delight and the quiet wisdom that knows there is a time for every (flower) under the sun.

As I write this, bells are ringing in Rome to announce the election of His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI. Let us pray that the Holy Spirit will flow abundantly through the man chosen to carry the huge burden that John Paul II recently laid down. As our tribute to our former Holy Father, we chose to reprint some words he addressed to hermits and lovers of solitude in 1996. Those who sit on the Chair of Peter must have a comprehensive view of the people of God. They see and direct not only those in high places, such as bishops and cardinals, but also the more lowly and seldom seen members of God's flock. Let us derive strength from John Paul's encouraging words and guidance in the high goals he set for us.

In keeping with the spirit of spring, we would like to further quote from the same text *Vita Consecrata*: "How can we not recall with gratitude to the Spirit the many different forms of consecrated life which he has raised up throughout history and which still exist in the Church today? They can be compared to a plant with many branches which sinks its roots into the Gospel and brings forth abundant fruit in every season of the Church's life."

We want to thank all of you who so kindly offered your sympathy at the death of our mother, Georgette. As the saying goes: Joy shared is doubled; grief shared is halved. In this issue we will print the first responses to our question of how you think we may

best celebrate RB's tenth anniversary in 2006. We invite further contributions to this discussion.

Let us continue to pray for one another that the New Spring we all await may begin in our lifetime through the silent love, unyielding hope and trustful faith that blossoms in hidden places around our global village. May the Raven continue to carry its message of courage from each to each!

**With Grateful love,  
Karen & Paul**

**You must give birth to your images.  
They are the future waiting to be born.  
Fear not the strangeness you feel.  
The future must enter into you long before it  
happens...  
Just wait for the birth...  
for the hour of new clarity.  
Rainer Maria Rilke**

**Discussion Topics for August 2005 Issue:**  
What place, if any, does art and/or craft have in the life of a solitary?  
**Deadline: July 1, 2005**

Silence is the folding of the wings of the intellect  
to open the door of the heart.  
*Catherine de Hueck Doherty*

### **zzzAn American Desert Motherzzz**

**Sister Joan Sutherland  
(1936-2005)**

*Raven's Bread* editors were saddened when Fr. Dick Hite emailed us in late February with the news that a longtime spiritual friend, Sister Joan Sutherland, had passed away unexpectedly February 23rd. Sister was one of the earliest women in this country to follow the hermit's call and did so with exemplary courage and determination. In the late 1960's, she realized that her attraction to contemplative prayer did not include a vocation to an existing religious congregation so she set out on a lonely search to realize her true call as a hermit. The eremitical life was almost unknown in the United States at that time, except for that most famous of hermits, Thomas Merton.

When I was discerning my own call to hermit life in the late 1980's, I wrote to Sr. Joan. She most generously shared her wisdom and experience with me, often by her favorite means of communication, taped letters. Although it has been over twenty-five years since she shared them with me, I vividly recall her stories of the search that eventually led her to West Virginia and the kind attention of Bishop Hodges, then Ordinary of Wheeling-Charleston. She arrived in WV with all her earthly possessions packed in her car (mostly dishes and cookware) and about \$100 in her pocket. She reached a small town where her car suffered a breakdown. Repairs wiped out her "nest egg" and determined where she was going to stay! Living there in a small rental, she earned her living by doing housework for people who were away during the day.

Bishop Hodges was so impressed with her sincerity and the genuineness of her call to eremitical life that in 1975 at St. Brendan Church in Elkins, WV, he received her vows as a Consecrated Virgin and a Hermit of the Diocese. He suggested that she search for suitable property which she found near Old Fields, WV, not far from Martinsburg. Bishop Hodges bought the property in the name of the diocese and provided the money for Joan to build a simple hermitage. One of Sister Joan's directees, Fr. Dick Hite, eventually received permission from his community to build another small hermitage on the property. Joan lived entirely on donations and from the fruits of the large vegetable garden she and Fr. Hite cultivated. I always enjoyed her accounts of how the garden was flourishing and how many jars of vegetables and fruits she put up each year.

For over fifteen years, Joan struggled with many health problems including hypertension, hormonal imbalance and depression. She looked upon this as her particular "gift" and a means of being united with the Suffering Servant. Just before Christmas she was hospitalized for a week with pneumonia and a raging fever. Her recuperation was slow but by mid-February, according to Fr. Hite, she was regaining her strength and able to make her own meals. He had been away to attend a funeral but checked in on Sister Joan after he returned on the evening of February 23rd. She told him that it had not been a good day for her, but her symptoms did not seem alarming. A heavy snowfall the next morning delayed Dick and he only came down to her hermitage at about 1:00 P.M.. He was surprised to see her shades still drawn and the porch light burning. Going in, he found her on the floor of her bedroom. When emergency services arrived, they reported that she had evidently died the night before of a massive heart attack.

Fr. Hite emailed us with the sad news, adding that, according to her wishes, her body was given to the WV Medical School. A Memorial Mass was celebrated at Moorefield attended by many priests who admired and respected this pioneering Desert Mother. Dick concluded his note to us by saying that "it has been a great shock to all of us who loved her so much. Evidently her poor heart was worn out after the many years of suffering. A hermit lives alone and a hermit dies alone."

by Karen Karper Fredette

**Silence is one of the great and eloquent arts of conversation.**

**Thomas More  
(with thanks to *Friends of Silence*)**

**"A Suggestion"**

Trying to get in touch with another subscriber to Raven's Bread? Want contact from a subscriber or solitary in your area? Aware of opportunities that may be of interest to subscribers/solitaries? Have you a service to offer or product to sell? 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.

**Hermit Resources Available from *Raven's Bread*  
May 2005**

(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 inprint.com edition

To order online, click on this link: [www.book.orders@iuniverse.com](http://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 solitaries 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

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To email Fellowship of Solitaries directly click on this link: [solitarios@onetel.com](mailto:solitarios@onetel.com)

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

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

# Raven's Rest

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

Retreatants Welcome. Now scheduling for September and October 2005 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

**INTIMACY AND SOLITUDE** by Stephanie Dowrick.

*Psychotherapist Dowrick analyses intimacy and solitude which she sees not as opposites in conflict but rather as interdependent arts of a healthy whole.*

1996. Softcover, 230 pp. \$15.95. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY 10110.

**THE INTIMACY AND SOLITUDE WORKBOOK - SELF-THERAPY FOR LASTING CHANGE** by Stephanie Dowrick.

*Tailor-made for self starters who want to enrich and deepen their journey of self-discovery. In this warm, wise companion to her international bestseller, Intimacy and Solitude, psychotherapist and novelist Stephanie Dowrick draws readers into a particularly accessible and rich way of discovering how to enhance our self-knowledge and skillfully increase our appreciation of others.*

1998. Softcover 271 pp. \$12.50. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, NY, NY 10110.

**INVITATION TO SOLITUDE AND SILENCE; EXPERIENCING GOD'S TRANSFORMING PRESENCE** by Ruth Haley Barton. Forward by Dallas Willard.

*"Ruth Haley Barton has gifted us with a vital way to deeper intimacy with God...Alone with her own honest biographical witness, she offers us a variety of concrete practices that can help the reader enter solitude and silence with greater ease and understanding of the ways God is present for us in such times...What she has given us can contribute significantly to a more mature and fuller spiritual life," writes Tilden Edwards.*

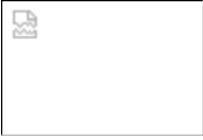
2004. Softcover, 144 pp., \$16.00. InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515.

Tel: 630-734-4000.

## WEBSITES OF POSSIBLE INTEREST:

**Hermits of St. Bruno.** A new site by an **RB** reader in Canada. [www.hermitsofstbruno.com](http://www.hermitsofstbruno.com)

**Skyfarm Hermitage** [www.skyfarm.org/home.htm](http://www.skyfarm.org/home.htm)



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