



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Vol: 10 No: 2 May 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

By: Richard Simonelli
Nederland, CO

Thomas Merton was a contemplative, a writer, a peace activist and someone who connected Christianity to Eastern religions as they had never been connected before. He lived in what might be called "sacred contradictions," leaving the world a far better place for his presence. In 1953 he wrote,

"There is one thing I must do here at my woodshed hermitage, St. Anne's (and may I one day live here and do it all day long), and that is to prepare for my death. But that means a preparation in gentleness. A gentleness, a silence, a humility that I have never had before - which seems impossible in the community, where even my compassion is tinged with force and strain. But if I am called to solitude, it is, I think, to unlearn all tensions, and get rid of the strain that has always falsified me in the presence of others and put harshness into the words of my mind."

The notion of a hermit as entirely isolated and self-sufficient is a stereotype that doesn't really exist. It was never true and never will be. Thomas Merton bravely pioneered hermitage as cautious engagement with the community - engaged hermitage. His community varied in its makeup, starting from his entry into the Trappits Abbey of our Lady of Gethsemani in 1941, until his untimely death in 1968. At first he fulfilled many responsibilities within the monastic community, including instruction of the new monks. As his writing fame spread, his community began to include a voluminous correspondence as well as viits with editors and other people of the day. The societal explosions of the 1960s and the perennial injustices of the Vietnam War caused the mingling of hermitage and community tension and strain to become a way of life for

him. He accepted his conflict between the more conventional hermitage, and his interest in and compassion for the suffering world, right to the end.

In March of 1968, just six months before his death, with his worldly fame well established, he said, *"Almost every day I have to write a letter to someone refusing an invitation to attend a conference, or a workshop, or to give talks on the contemplative life, or poetry, etc. I can see more and more clearly how for me this would be a sheer waste, a Pascalian diversion, participation in the common delusion.... For me what matters is silence, meditation - and writing: but writing is secondary. To willingly and deliberately abandon this to go out and talk would be stupidity - for me. And for others, retirement into my kind of solitude would be equally stupid. They could not do it - and I could not do what they do."*

The individual and the community are in constant relationship. Energies flow back and forth between them in a way that is necessary and good. The laws of interplay between the individual and the community must be honored and obeyed so that both can live in harmony. To focus on the individual in isolation is to tell an untrue story. To think of the community as the highest good is also untrue. We must be individuals within the community as well as finding community within ourselves.

Thomas Merton sacrificed himself in the deepest sense of the word "sacrifice" - to make sacred. His own apparently contradictory drives - hermitage and the world - leave those of us with callings in both, an instruction manual for how to live, and perhaps how not to live, at this very turbulent and pivotal period on planet earth.

We live in a time of activity addiction. Ours is not only a non-contemplative time but an anti-contemplative time. As a people, we are drowning in material advancement brought on by science and technology as well as in a compulsive need for newness and progress. We lack the balance that contemplation could bring. We never ask the contemplative question, *"Who is progressing and who is becoming new?"* The very question is derided and ignored.

In reality, contemplation and activity are in constant relationship - they are not two separate drives or needs. To separate them in the life of an individual or in the life of the community is to poison the well. To utilize Western, materialistic, mechanistic science without the more holistic systems that include the contemplative heart of the scientist or technologist is to continue to poison the well.

The human community also includes the natural environment, which surrounds, nurtures, and loves us in its own way. The apparent polarities of *individual* and *community* are really more a triangle of *individual*, *community* and the *natural environment*. These three are in constant relationship, energy exchange and flow. They become unified and whole through contemplation. This is the unity that Thomas Merton knew and longed for as he lived in sacrifice so future generations might know a more peaceful life.

Merton's books and journals demonstrate a faith anchored in Christ. Christ was Merton's rudder, inspiration and savior. But his journals cry out with another love in his life - the land. So many of his journal entries invoke mother nature as an opening to other thoughts, reflections and devotions. That same entry written just six months before his passing opens with: *"Warmer. Rain in the night. Frogs again. At first the waterhole (four feet long at most) had one frog or two. Now they are a small nation, loud in the night. The innocent nation, chanting blissfully in praise of the spring rain. Last evening I pruned a few little trees, including the beeches I had planted."*

Merton's challenge to us all is to re-discover the contemplative life in ways and means that make unique sense to us as individuals and to our situations in life. The mindfulness, awareness and silence of contemplation unite the individual, the community and the land. From that union, the greatest sages speak. From that union, the progress ethic driven by our science and technology heals rather than harms. From our sacred intention to live a balanced life, Merton's sacrifice is consecrated again and again and again. Let us become wise through that which lies beyond our experiences, *chanting blissfully in praise of the spring rain.*

(Quotes taken from *A Year with Thomas Merton; Daily Meditations from his Journals*, Jonathan Montaldo, Editor)

A Word from Still Wood

Shy April green has been a shimmer with the colors of a near-perfect spring. Our forsythia maintained its golden arc around our "old rugged cross" for three weeks until the tulips and daffodils joined the show. Our Prairie Fire Crabapple glowed with a profusion of rosy blossoms for the first time amid the blue-green junipers at its feet.

This year's flowering was specially well-timed to adorn the Easter Triduum with fragrance, color and song. The finches had donned their brilliant yellow and black finery for nature's great parade while, the hummingbirds zoomed in on Easter Sunday, darting amid butterflies drifting lazily in the warm sun.

This year we celebrated the Triduum at home which allowed us to fashion each Service in ways that nourished our own deepest need. On Holy Thursday, before ending our Lenten abstinence with lamb and bitter herbs, we washed each other's feet, asking forgiveness for failures and promising once again to love, honor and cherish one another. On Good Friday, we labored hard on the land, clearing away the dross of winter and assessing which perennials showed signs of surviving the winter cold. As dusk shrouded the surrounding slopes, we sat before our barren altar, reading the Passion in turns and praying silently, with the mournful chants of Tenebrae in the background.

Holy Saturday afternoon, Paul split fire wood and prepared a Paschal Candle while Karen baked for the coming feast. When the first star appeared in the evening sky, we lit our New Fire and around it, we shared with one another the stories of our faith, both the Greater Tales that undergird our beliefs and the more personal ones relating our own journeys towards the promised land. We danced a bit, sang, and wiped away some tears as we felt the nearness of dear ones who have already Passed Over.

When the fire had died to embers, we carried the Paschal Candle up to our waiting altar, now adorned with lilies, and lit all the candelabras until our living room literally shone in golden light. With Handel's Halleluia Chorus flooding over us, we once again tasted the joy that death is conquered, our Redeemer lives, and so shall we!

On Easter Morning, we broke our fast with Challah, the traditional braided bread that our Jewish brothers and sisters have perfected. Later that day, we planted a redbud tree in memory of a dear friend who passed away this year, as well as a pink dogwood and a purple lilac, fulfilling long-cherished dreams of Paul and Karen respectively. Will they survive at this elevation? Since we have, perhaps they will too? Time will tell.

This ***Raven's Bread*** comes to you bonny and blooming with many, many gifts offered to us, your grateful "gatherers" (editors). The notes that accompany your generous renewals assure us that the nourishment ***Raven's Bread*** supplies is meeting many of your needs as hermits and solitaires. We especially commend your generosity in responding to needs and questions posed in the last issue. (See Letters.) So many responses to this issue's **Topic** came in that we will continue the discussion in the August issue.

Our numbers continue to grow and expand around the world. We welcome our first readers from China and Peru who join those from Iceland, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, the Czech Republic and the Philippines, Ireland and New Zealand, and a dozen other countries in between! ***Raven*** literally encircles the globe in its flight from this mountainside in the Smokies. Perhaps it is all your praying hands, joined in spirit, that are holding our war-wracked and storm-ravaged world together! May each of you nurture New Life in your hidden hermitages. Courage friends, brothers and sisters of silence and solitude. The great Pass-Over awaits us and the peace of the New Creation will come to fruition because it already seeded and growing in your hearts!

**With Grateful love,
Karen & Paul**

**Make your heart empty waiting in stillness.
Banish your busy thoughts out from your mind;
Return to quiet.
Take into your calmness the presence of God,
Overflowing with Love, stilling all fear,
Safeguard from all danger;
Rest in God's Peacefulness.**

Lao Tzu (570-490 BCE)

Discussion Topic for August 2006 Issue:

What advice would you give to a beginning hermit?
Or what would you ask if you preparing to enter solitude?
(Please limit responses to 300 words or less)

Deadline: July 1, 2006

**If we had a keen vision of all that is ordinary in human life
it would be like hearing the grass grow or the squirrel's
heartbeat,
and we should die of that roar which is the other side of
silence.**

*George Elliot from Middlemarch
courtesy of Heron Dance*

**Hermit Resources Available from *Raven's Bread*
May 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 inprint.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:

Raven's Bread

18065 Hwy. 209

Hot Springs, NC 28743

Tel: 828-622-3750

email: fredette@nclink.net

Fellowship of Solitairies

Comprised of and open to religious solitairies 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 Solitairies directly click on this link: solitaries@onetel.com

To access the website of Fellowship of Solitairies 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 July 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:

Paul and Karen Fredette

18065 Hwy. 209

Hot Springs, NC 28743

Tel: 828-622-3750

email: pkfredette@earthlink.net

BOOKS BY R.B READERS!

THE PSALMS (KJV)

Compiled by Craig David Larson.

This edition of the Psalms is for people who regularly read the Psalms outdoors. By "outdoors" we mean in places where it snows, rains, and suns...all of which take their toll on commonly produced manuscripts...sometimes astonishingly quickly. Seeking a solution, this shirt-pocket-size edition is made with paper that is both tear and weather-resistant. For those of us who seek God in the cathedral of Creation - the location that inspired many of these Psalms - this psalter can be a lasting resource for prayer. It is ring-bound to open easily and fits pleasantly in the palm of one's hand. Paragraph and verse indications have been omitted. A new structure for familiar words can evoke new interpretations.

2006. 150 Psalms printed on 3 1/2" x 4 1/2" pages. Softcover. \$25.00 (US). Thunderhill Publishing Order from: Craig Larson, Wind & Water Retreat, R.R. 1; Comp. 60; Swan River Manitoba R0L 1Z0, Canada

CARMEL, LAND OF THE SOUL

by Carolyn Humphreys, OCDS, OTR

The Carmelite approach to God through self-knowledge and contemplative prayer has typified the Order throughout the centuries. It has gathered momentum with the passing of years, until contemplative prayer is almost synonymous with the Carmelite charism. This work, manifestly the fruit of deep personal experience in prayer, is full of wise observations and counsels and will surely be of signal help to all those who have set their feet resolutely on the way to God.

2004. 208 pp. Softcover. \$14.95 Published by Alba House, 2187 Victory Blvd. Staten Island, NY 10314;

PH 800-343-2522; online: www.albahouse.com

CELL PHONE SPIRITUALITY: What your Cell Phone can teach you about life and God

by Fr. Kevin Goodrich, OP.

Fr. Richard Rohr writes: Some books just analyze and separate. This one synthesizes and puts back together things that never should have been separated - while fully recognizing the busyness and endless options of our lives. Trust Kevin Goodrich to be a solid and very creative spiritual guide!"

Can be ordered through: amazon.com



Raven's Bread
18065 Hwy. 209
Hot Springs, NC
28743