



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

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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:

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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 In Solitude zzzzzz

Hermit Thoughts from Hermits of St. Bruno, 2005

To be called to life in the desert is a very generous calling...indeed, a certain revelation of just how much one is loved. How would it be possible to not be moved at the realization that God would want to draw us close to Himself? Such an expression of love and generosity on God's part requires an equally generous response on our part. (Yes, Lord, I will sit at your feet). The Hermitage Within, page 19.

Did Jesus not command His followers to love the Lord with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind (Mt 22: 37) and to love our neighbors as ourselves? The hermit, then, takes this command to heart and embracing it makes a "profession" out of learning to do so more consistently and deeply.

Called in love and for the purpose and sake of loving Him and others, how then would it be possible to not love Him who first loved us so generously? How not willingly learn to be molded bit by bit into a reflection of His Divine Son and into the fullness God desires of each of us?

Though we feel unworthy to be called to such an ancient and honorable spiritual tradition, living life as God's hermit is to live as continually and fully as possible in response to His free and unsolicited gift. Living without any personal and particular assurances, yet we trust; living with an awareness of our spiritual childhood, yet we learn to live humbly; living in the hope of attaining Perfection, yet we live in surrender to our Heavenly Father, letting Him draw us ever deeper to the level of intimacy with Him that He chooses for each of us.

Hermits pray because prayer is not only the mark of their vocation, it is their "lifeblood." Foremost, our prayer is one of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving as we spend our lives at God's feet, living as fully and continually as possible in His presence. And while we heed God's call into the desert so He can speak to our hearts, we also harbor a hope for perfection - union with Him - and our hope for attaining it sustains us in our ongoing efforts.

The hermit's journey is a journey into purity of heart for it is within the core of each of us, where the divine actions of the Holy Spirit take place - explaining in part, why a hermit's vocation is "hidden."

Apart from others, the hermit in solitude invites the Holy Spirit to continue to work within him/herself. And it is this transformation within the hermit which gives definition and purpose to his or her life. It is this inner activity which sustains his life and likewise draws him onward along the path of his spiritual journey. Entering more deeply into divine life through the grace of the Holy Spirit, we decrease (drawing less on our own human potential and inclinations), as He increases.

Love is, indeed, our starting point as we embark on the hermit's journey but it also is our ultimate objective - to be one with it. Though union with Him is ultimately God's gift, the hermit lives in a state of openness, readiness and expectation, being filled with God's graces and touches as He determines.

As we continue to pray, we are drawn ever onward and upward, scaling the mountain of the Lord step by step at whatever pace God has determined is best for us in serving Him and others.

By means of silence and solitude (vehicles for our journey), we move inexorably forward to a life of increasing simplicity, love and fulfillment. While we remain faithful to our desert vocation, we await our transformation — our Mount Tabor experience — wanting with a deepening devotion to become increasingly like our Master.

A Word from Still Wood

"Beside restful waters he leads me, he refreshes my soul." Ps 23,2)

Paradise is often imaged as a garden with restful waters, shady paths and lush growth wherein the fortunate saved meander. Here at Still Wood, the setting sometimes resembles this idyllic scene – at least during a few months of the year. One element of Eden which we missed were the restful waters. We decided to change that by creating a water garden.

This project has caused us to muse (more than once) about how the original Garden of Eden took shape. Was it first a divine dream that turned into a long, muddy, muscle-straining project? An idea that developed in complexity as God was inspired? The biblical description of the completed garden includes four rivers flowing in four directions, a variety of trees "delightful to look at and good for food, with the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." (Gn 2,9)

The so-called Second Story of Creation doesn't limit God's work time to six days but sounds more like an idea which grew and grew and grew...somewhat like our experience! The Scriptural account even includes mud and clay, all too familiar for us. As we slipped in the mud, dropped rocks on our shins, crushed precious ferns and struggled to lay stones exactly right, we wondered: "Why are we doing this? Isn't this mountainside lovely enough as it is? Do we *need* a waterfall beside our deck?" Well...no, we don't. But, like God, we had a dream...and with His help, it came into being.

Our project took over three years from conception to completion, including moments of serious discouragement, frustration, and impatience. What kept us going? The Dream! Such is the sequence of following any vocation but especially the hermit call. Those whom God "allures, leading into the desert and speaking to their hearts" (cf. Ho 2,16) are following a dream of beauty which only they can see. For many of us, eremitic life is lived in such profound hiddenness that even people with whom we must interact regularly do not know our true calling.

In a new book that has come our way, **The Eremitic Life, Encountering God in Silence and Solitude** (see Book Recommendations), we read: *"Initially, the desert was a place of refuge, a sanctuary that protected (hermits) from the corruption of the world...Today, the bare land of steppes and deserts has been conquered; the original place of solitude and silence is now covered with pipes, wires and roads. That is why the hermits of today are looking for an inner desert of their hearts more than for a concrete geographical location. What they are looking for is rather silence, prayer, and*

contemplation; the art of communion with the mystery shining in the soul of each person."

This is The Dream of every solitary - to find our own desert and turn it into a place of beauty by our love - for God and others (as our readers tell us in their Letters). However, it is sobering to remember these words of Thomas Merton. *"The solitary life is an arid, rugged purification of the heart. St. Jerome and St. Eucherius have written rhapsodies about the flowering desert but...the 'eremi cultores', the farmers of the desert sand, have had less to say about the experience. They have been washed out by dryness, and their burnt lips are weary of speech..."* **The Monastic Journey**.

We thank all of you who have chosen to break your silence and speak to other readers, sharing your own wisdom and experience. This is a rich issue in which the grace of hermit Dreams overflow to water other desert gardens. Let us continue to share what no one else can – the mystery of restful waters found in the desert.

**With Grateful love,
Karen & Paul**

**There is no need to *create* silence
for it is already there.
It is simply a matter of letting it rise up
from within us.
Once we have heard this silence
we thirst to find it again.
A Carthusian *The Wound of Love***

Into Great Silence

a film
a slow movement - touches faces
flowers-the sky-monastic walls
a candle lit in the darkness
sounds of chant in the somber chapel-
a slow movement touches everything-
a head bowed in prayer.
The slowness evokes a silence-
a deep silence penetrating all the
faces-figures-walls-halls-mountains
there is no noise heard-perhaps
a few footsteps walking.
But the silence is voice!
The silence touches-brushes against the face-
it covers the whole body.
The silence is an embrace - the Beloved
knocking at the door.
The hermits' faces-eyes recognize the knock-
they are waiting.
No words need to be said-
deep and true love needs only presence-
each one looking at the other.
God is in the silence - the divine speaks in silence.
It brushes the lover's face-tears are forming-
each is present to the other-wooing each other.
The delight of the divine presence
fills the whole room with an invisible perfume.

**Robert Trabold
Jamaica, NY**

Hermit Resources Available from *Raven's Bread* August 2007

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

Annotated Readings in Spirituality - by Sharon Jeanne Smith **21pp. \$5.50**

Solitude & Union: A Select Bibliography on the Hermit Way of Life by Cecilia W. Wilms **26pp. \$5.50**

Annotated Books on Solitude - **4pp. \$2.50**

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. \$3.00**

Hermits: The Juridical Implications of Canon 603 by Helen L. Macdonald, Researcher Novalis: St. Paul University, Ottawa, ONT **24pp. \$5.50**

Statutes for Hermits by The Bishops of France (1989)
12 pp. \$3.00

HERMIT RULES

Rules for Hermits (Spanish & English) by Padre Justo, O.P. **9pp. \$3.00**

Eremitic Rule of Life **30pp. \$5.50**

Franciscan Plan of Life in Hermitage **4pp. \$2.50**

Topical Outline for Plan of Eremitical Life **3pp. \$2.50**

HERMIT SURVEYS

Raven's Bread Survey 2001 - Compiled Responses **23pp. \$5.50**

Marabou Questionnaire 1996 - **9pp. \$3.00**

ARTICLES & COMMENTARIES

Notes to Guide the Beginning Hermit by A Hermit of Mercy **15pp. \$3.50**

Lay Hermits by Rev. Eugene Stockton **8pp. \$3.00**

Eremitism: Call to the Chronically Ill and Disabled (1989) by Laurel M. O'Neal **5pp. \$2.50**

NCR 2004 "Sacristans of Emptiness" by Rich Heffern **6pp. \$3.00**

Discernment Criteria - "Marabou" 1996 - **6pp. \$2.50**

Four Articles by Kenneth C. Russell. Reprinted by permission from "*Review for Religious*" (excellent footnotes & references)

Being a Hermit: Where and How 12 pp, \$6.50

Acedia - The Dark Side of Commitment 4 pp. \$2.50

The Dangers of Solitude 5 pp. \$3.00

Must Hermits Work? 10 pp. \$5.50

**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 \$3.00 postage & handling) are available from:

Raven's Bread

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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.

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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/>

BOOK NOTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Eremitic Life, Encountering God in Silence and Solitude

by Fr. Cornelius Wencle, er. cam.

This volume is a general introduction for the modern reader, to the hermit way of life. It presents immersion in solitude both as the special vocation of some and a spiritual dimension beckoning all.

2007. Softcover. 225 pp.

ISBN 978-0-9728132-3-5

Ercam Editions, Holy Family Hermitage, 1501 Fairplay Rd, Bloomindale, OH 43910

Tel: 740-765-4511 www.camaldolese.org

In Praise of Hiddenness, The Sprituality of the Camaldolese Hermits of Monte Corona

by A Camaldolese Hermit. edited by Fr. Louis Albert Lassus, OP

The author here sings the praises of the silent life in the desert. These few and very simple conferences were given to some brother hermits. They endeavor to express the meaning of their "disappearance."

2007. Softcover. 108 pp.

ISBN 978-0-9728132-4-2

Ercam Editions, Holy Family Hermitage, 1501 Fairplay Rd, Bloomindale, OH 43910

Tel: 740-765-4511 www.camaldolese.org

Camaldolese Spirituality, Essential Sources.

Translations, Notes and Introduction by Peter-Damian Belisle

After a thousand years and in a new world, this volume assembles, for the first time in any language, all the key foundational writings of the oldest eremitic order of the Western Church.

2007 Softcover. 267 pp.

ISBN 978-0-9728132-5-9

Ercam Editions, Holy Family Hermitage, 1501 Fairplay Rd, Bloomindale, OH 43910

Tel: 740-765-4511 www.camaldolese.org

Religious Vows, the Sermon on the Mount, and Christian Living

by Bonnie Thurston, Ph.D.

The author lives in solitude in West Virginia. She reflects on the Beaitutdes and shows how the Sermon on the Mount deepens understanding of the spiritual virtues that religous vows intend to nurture. 2006 Softcover. 104 pp.

ISBN 978-0-8146-2929-1

Liturgical press, Colledgeville, MN www.litpress.org

A Monastic Vision for the 21st Century. Where Do We Go From Here?

edited by Patrick Hart, ocso.

Twelve men and women offer their personal visions of what the church and the world can expect from monasticism as the 21st century unfolds; how they see it ideally

incarnated for the future.

2006 Softcover. 236 pp.

ISBN 978-0-87907-057-1

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