



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

August 2010

Thoughts In Solitude

As was mentioned in the May issue of *Raven's Bread*, our solitary environs is a cherished gift that opens our awareness to God's Presence in nature, out of whose womb we have emerged and toward which we are now merging again as one. How to count backwards? Only after two is there One but One is before two. And One is fun, fun, fun!

Who wouldn't want to be in this intimate love affair God is initiating with us from moment to moment? Is there some other reason to be in existence? I am always overjoyed to discover so many hermits reading *R.B.* whose primary "fun" is this treasured love relationship that will never cease to be. It is so pleasing to have the experiential contemplative dimension of humanity held up as the epitome of what not only hermit life is about but what every other calling from God is pointing to. No matter what vocation or religion we adhere to, we are all oriented to oneness in our intimate, experiential and unitive love relationship with God, ourselves, others and creation. Our Trinitarian God is a love relationship and so is life. God comes to us disguised as our life. Rahner was right: "The Christian of the future will be a contemplative (mystic) or s/he won't be a Christian at all."

Maybe Keating would say that God is constantly taking the initiative by kissing each of us moment by moment in our daily lives. By welcoming and being aware of his kiss, we automatically return his tender love to Him. In giving his love, God is also receiving it.

All major religions are about divine union (Love) and that is exactly what the contemplative experience is about. Unless the solitude/silence of the hermit is but a means to open awareness experientially to God's moment to moment communion and intimate love affair with us, these means are coming up short.

Everybody in our country needs to eat a few of Wood B.'s spiritual hermit cookies to "taste and see" the goodness of Being (aliveness-existence forever). To heal our environment (collective ego), we begin by healing our

(angry) selves, our individual egos. And we can't fix our ego with another ego (so says Einstein, the contemplative), but only by realizing that we are more than this counterfeit, illusory ego self. We don't have to waste time beating up on our ego but we have to see it for what it is and it is not who we really are. Merton says his ego is where he lived a lie. His remedy for this lie was the Truth experienced in contemplation where we light the candle of our True Self (God living in us as us) and shine brighter than the sun. Then there is no need to curse the shadows of sinful ego self because the darkness is automatically dispelled by the brilliance of this "lightsome divinization" that we truly are.

How sad that not only Christianity but other religions have lost or never even acknowledged the gift of our innate contemplative consciousness that is the experience of God as us. Panentheism is not pantheism. If everyone's primary work was Wood B.'s "spiritual stimulus package," there would be more inner peace and even more jobs! It seems to me that everyone is complicit in the "ego mess" we have created by not becoming who we really are. Institutionalized religions (including Christianity) are doing little to bring us beyond our ego. Still prevailing in religion is the dominant collective ego protecting itself and giving birth to the clinging, insincere children of power, prestige and possessions.

Merton's question is relevant. How do we light the candle in people (rather than curse the darkness) by telling them they are shining brighter than the sun? Answer: Shine!

*Anonymous R. B. Reader
God's Holy Ground*



A Word From Still Wood



One of our summer delights is watching the antics of the humming birds. In early May, we put out a feeder filled with bright red nectar and eagerly watch for the first “hummer” to buzz in. We often have an early group of migrating hummingbirds refreshing themselves for a push further north. Then the feeding station is quiet until our local birds show up from their southern home. This year we noticed that although we caught glimpses of them flitting around the honeysuckle, they were not frequenting the feeder.

Karen finally decided that something was not right and took it down. After washing it thoroughly, she enriched the nectar by boiling up water with a higher percentage of sugar. When she re-hung the feeder, she was astonished and delighted to see hummingbirds investigating this fine new “flower” within twenty minutes! How did they know? Obviously, the little creatures are equipped to detect sweetness wherever it can be found, and even more astonishing, to know if there are sufficient calories to sustain their rapid metabolism. Their wings whip through the air faster than the eye can see. When the alpha male dives at another hummer, we often hear a high pitched whistling caused by the speed of his descent.

By late summer, we may have as many as a dozen hummingbirds flitting, diving and ducking around the feeder. The smarter ones wait until the dominant male is occupied driving away some other bird and will flit onto the

other side of the feeder for a few anxious sips before he returns. We can't help wondering when Alpha gets to drink since he's so busy chasing everyone else away, he seldom has a moment to alight and sip. Even when he is still, his little head is constantly scanning the area for any unwanted table mates. The social life of humming birds not only circulates around food, it seems that table fellowship is a critical issue.

We hope our readers savor what **RB** serves up! Recently, the issues have been rich with your contributions and many new readers are joining our ranks. We are so grateful to have such an active readership for this is what creates the sense of community that we cherish. **RB** offers the option of connection without joining, companionship without intrusion and of guidance without judgment. In other words, we provide a place where lovers of solitude can share their thoughts and insights; pose questions which will receive serious responses; and learn from the experiences of others. Although **Raven's Bread** readers do not belong to a community in a technical sense, we form a great praying sphere that, unlike our little *hummers*, welcomes everyone to the table where we share one another's bread and our special “dolce vita”!

*With grateful love,
Karen & Paul*

Raven's Bread is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in eremitical life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. This newsletter seeks to affirm and support people living in solitude. **Raven's Bread** is a collaborative effort and thus depends on the shared reflections, stories, news, notices, letters and information from hermits themselves.

Please send your written contributions, address changes, and subscription donations to: **Raven's Bread Ministries**, 18065 NC 209 Hwy, Hot Springs, NC 28743 or via Paypal at our website.* Our phone number is: 828 622 3750, The annual donation is \$10.00 in the USA or \$12.00 US for readers outside the States. Please send payment in US funds (PayPal can convert foreign currency to US dollars.) Any extra donations will be used to subsidize subscriptions for hermits who cannot afford the full cost.

Raven's Bread derives it's name from the experience of the prophet Elijah in 1 Kings 17: 1-6. where a raven sent by God nourished him during his months of solitude at the Wadi Cherith (The Cutting Place).

*Our website is :[Http://www.ravensbreadministries.com](http://www.ravensbreadministries.com)



Raven's Forum



In our May issue, we started this new "page" in **RB** called **Raven's Forum** in which we will publish letters from readers expressing what they've been inspired to share as a result of something they've read in previous issues. We believe these exchanges can be helpful in continuing to build a sense of communal support and common purpose which has become one of the special fruits of **Raven's Bread**.

To be honest, when we took on **Raven's Bread** and the ministry to hermits which has grown from it, we did not realize, that you, the readership, would develop such a sense of community. Occasionally, we receive a letter or email from someone asking to "join" **Raven's Bread**. While we explain that we are not an entity that one can join, we do welcome them into the holy place which is every issue of **RB**. If people are drawn to become a part of what they find here, we realize it is because they have read and pondered on what YOU, the readers, have shared over the years.

Speaking of years, with this issue, **RB** is beginning its fourteenth year! We are still gaining new readers from around the world who often find us now on the wonderful

world of the internet. We are working to update the website and make it even more helpful to hermits and solitaries. Another "update" you may have already noticed, is some changes in our mailing procedures. We have had our printers take over the tasks of folding, addressing, stamping, and mailing the newsletter, which now goes out as Standard Pre-Sorted instead of First Class. Now serving a thousand subscribers, we realize these tasks are more efficiently handled by our friends at Print Haus. This will free us up to focus on other aspects of the ministry, especially upgrading the appearance and quality of the Resources we offer, and, yes, writing another book.

With regard to your address — please check your label and note your subscription date. By changing the format, we hope it is more clear when your subscription comes due. Some of you are a bit behind. If you don't indicate your wish to remain on the mailing list, we will delete those past-due. However, anyone can receive **Raven's Bread** even without a donation. Many of you send a little extra to help out our less endowed brothers and sisters. On their behalf, we thank you. Your gift is much appreciated!



A NEW APPROACH TO BOOK REVIEWS



Please check out David Tetrault's Blog: www.silentiumaltum.blogspot.com for some thought-and-prayer stirring reflections as well as some thoughtful book reviews. Also, here are few new blogs for/by RB readers: <http://thesolitudeblog.wordpress.com>, www.saintbruno.org & www.ahealingplace.blogspot.com

A few books by Raven's Bread readers !

In the Shade of the Sidra Tree by Diana Woodcock. "Trust Diana Woodcock's poetry to find water in the desert, to touch the deep underground springs of the spirit wherever she travels. An honest and faithful guide, she takes us on a journey of understanding toward a place and a people we urgently need to know more deeply." Dan Veach, *Atlanta Review*. Order online at www.finishinglinepress.com/NewReleasesandForthcomingTitles.htm Paper, \$14.00

The Isle of Monte Cristo, Finding the Inner Treasure by S. T. Georgiou. "In his third book, Georgiou takes us on an inner pilgrimage that ultimately leads to the treasure of Christ, hidden in our hearts. His interior trek began on Patmos where Georgiou serendipitously met Robert Lax, the much-beloved poet and hermit, who became his mentor. In this book a circle of love completes itself." Twenty-Third Publications; Paper with flaps; 320 pp. B/W photos \$19.95 CDN Order online at www.twentythirdpublications.com; 1-800-321-0411; Amazon.com; in Canada, Novalis Customer Service at 1-800-387-7164. (For review copies – Dayle Furlong, Publicist at 416-363-3303, Ext.252.)

The Good Retreat Guide, 6th Edition by Stafford Whiteaker. It lists and describes over 500 places to find peace and spiritual renewal in Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, other European countries, as well as sites in Asia, Australia and Africa. Choose from Anglican, Buddhist, Roman Catholic or non-denominational sites offering retreats in complete silence or interactive." Includes a glossary and Spiritual Notebook with contributions by Elizabeth West and Paul & Karen Fredette among others. Published by Hay House, paper, 560 pp. Order on line: www.thegoodretreatguide.com.