



Raven's Bread

Food for Those in Solitude

Online Edition

November 2024

Thoughts In Solitude

Paddy grew the finest gooseberries, blackcurrants and redcurrants in the whole country. He had three fields of fruit bushes, and every day he walked round the bushes with a hoe, taking out any weeds which were growing, so the bushes had all the goodness of the soil to themselves. By the middle of each summer they were heavy with large juicy fruit.

But sadly, Paddy was not as good at raising children as he was at raising fruit. His two sons were known as the laziest young men in the country. They spent all day drinking, eating and chatting with friends; they never lifted a finger to help their father. As the years passed, Paddy became increasingly anxious about his sons' laziness.

'When I am dead and gone,' he would say to his neighbors, 'all my fruit bushes will become overgrown with weeds, and my sons will starve.'

Living a short distance from the village in a small cave was a hermit, renowned for his wily wisdom. Finally Paddy decided to visit this hermit, to ask advice. After he heard Paddy's story, the hermit sat for a few moments in silence, stroking his long, white beard. At last the hermit rose up, patted Paddy on the shoulder, and assured him that he would teach the two lazy sons to work. Then the hermit left his hut, and went to see the young men.

'I have something very important to tell you,' he said to them. 'I happen to know that in those fields of fruit bushes there is great treasure. It will be enough to feed and clothe you for the rest of your lives.'

It was now September. From then until Christmas, the two sons went out into the fields each day searching for treasure. They dug round every fruit bush, turning over the earth, in the hope of finding a casket full of gold. But by Christmas Eve they had found nothing. So they went to the hermit, and accused him of deceiving them.

'I haven't deceived you,' the hermit replied with a grin. 'You must keep searching. I promise that next September you will have found the treasure.'

The sons refused to believe him.

'Very well, then,' the hermit continued; 'I will make a bargain with you. If by September you have not found enough treasure to buy food and clothing for you for the rest of your lives, I will share whatever I receive with you. But if you do find treasure, you must share it with the poor in this village.'

The brothers agreed. So they continued to dig the fields, turning over the earth between the fruit bushes. Paddy watched with great satisfaction pleased that while his sons searched for treasure, no weeds would grow. Thus, by the middle of summer, the bushes were again heavy with large and juicy fruit. The hermit came to the fields to see the two sons.

'Ah,' he exclaimed, looking at the fruit bushes, 'I see you have found your treasure.'

At first, the two sons could not think what he meant. Then it dawned on them. Over the next few weeks, the hermit helped them to pick the treasure. Half they sold in the market, and the other half they gave to the poor.

And from then on, the two brothers continued to work hard in the fields. Each year, they again sold half the crop and gave away the rest. And as the hermit had prophesied, the money they got was quite sufficient to feed and clothe them for the rest of their lives.

Robert van de Weyer

From "One Hundred Wisdom Stories from
Around the World"
By Margaret Silf



Most of you know that Hurricane Helene slammed into the mountains of western North Carolina in late September. Now, in late October, we are still picking up the pieces. Washed out roads are being repaired; bridges are being replaced; many folks are still waiting for basic essentials such as water and power to be restored. A good friend is patiently digging four inches of mud from her home which is located by one of the many streams and rivers that flooded.

But one of the more beautiful things is how the mountain culture insures that neighbor will help neighbor in whatever way is needed. Our home was spared damage but we had watched fearfully as new streams cascaded down our slopes and a mudslide followed down the mountainside just fifty feet away. It missed our propane tank by ten feet, praise God, which meant that we had heat and could cook. So we prepared meals for the family of the young man who cut away the large hickory tree blocking our driveway. He had come to check on us even while the storm was still raging!

We live in an unincorporated area called Spring Creek so we have no “downtown” but we do have a volunteer fire department and a Community Center (a former elementary school) where people gathered to coordinate needed help for everyone in the area, including pets and farm animals! These gifted and caring folk organized to check on every home in the community; provided hot meals prepared at the fire department for those without power and water; retired RN’s found ways to insure no one went without needed medications, and other volunteers organized all the supplies that poured in.

We were without power for four days (which meant no water from our well) and no means to communicate with worried family and friends. Paul made trips down the mountain to dip buckets of water from Spring Creek so we could wash and flush toilets. When the general store got internet service, we were invited to take our tablets and laptops there so we could reassure loved ones including many of you, that we were safe and well. Until then, we had no idea that western North Carolina was in the national, and even international news!

During this same time, Karen was scheduled for a second round of chemotherapy and lo, the Infusion Center in nearby Waynesville re-opened just in time. She has just now received a third Infusion, which will be followed by a Pet Scan on November 7th to determine if the treatments have been effective. God willing, she will only need one more Infusion after that. Your prayers and concern have been deeply appreciated!

So, as we approach yet another holiday season, our hearts are VERY grateful for God’s sustaining love throughout a difficult year and we renew determination to respond as generously as we can, so that all our brothers and sisters on this weary and battered but beautiful earth may enjoy a richer and fuller life as promised in the story of the Child born in poverty who became the Savior of our small but dear blue-green planet earth.

With Grateful Love, Paul & Karen

Raven’s Bread is a quarterly newsletter (FEB-MAY-AUG-NOV) for hermits and those interested in solitary life published by Paul and Karen Fredette. It affirms and encourages people living in solitude. As a collaborative effort, it is written for and by hermits themselves, delivered by postal mail or email. Please send your written contributions, address changes, and donations to: ravensbread97@gmail.com or *Raven’s Bread Ministries*, 18065 NC 209 Hwy., Hot Springs, NC 28743 or via PayPal at our website. Our website is: <http://www.ravensbreadministries.com>. Our phone number is: 828 622 3750. Our videos are posted on YouTube. An annual donation is appreciated, each giving according to their means.

Please send payment in US dollars (PayPal converts foreign currency to US dollars). All donations go into a fund to insure that anyone who wants to receive *Raven’s Bread Newsletter*, or *Resources*, or *Library books* or an individual retreat space when available, can receive these services.

Raven’s Bread derives its 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).

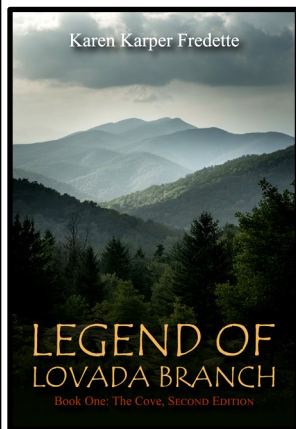
Our Sincere Gratitude!

Our thanks to all of you who responded generously to our annual August appeal and included notes reassuring us that our ministry to lovers of solitude is needed and valued. Then, on top of that response, so many of you also sent donations via PayPal once the news that Hurricane Helene had hit western North Carolina, causing such widespread serious damage throughout this region. Although we personally were spared the worst of the devastation, your concern touches us deeply. We have no words to adequately express our gratitude except to say thank you and God Bless Your Generosity!

Paul & Karen

"Just letting you'uns know."

A long-held dream is coming true at a most synchronistic time. Just when our mostly unknown part of the US has become national news, (thanks to Hurricane Helene), we are announcing the publication of a fiction/fantasy trilogy set in these awesome southern Appalachian mountains! Legend of Lovada Branch subtly presents what one Australian "raven" calls her vision of "one big global community."



Artfully illustrated with ink sketches by Paul Fredette, **The Cove**, **Panther Gap**, and **Woolyshot Ridge** depict in absorbing fiction, realities we have experienced for nearly 30 years here in these ancient mountains.

The books can be purchased on Amazon.com. **The Cove** is available from November 1st, **Panther Gap** due on November 12th and **Woolyshot Ridge** will be available by Thanksgiving.

Each will be published in "E-Book" format for \$9.99, and in Paperback print for \$19.99. Sorry, but we don't yet know what the full trilogy will sell for.

Offered with Love,

Karen Karper Fredette

Wintering

When the garden
Is picked clean of its last
Ripened tomato &
Gleaming green pepper
And basil is turned into
Fresh pesto & frozen for a
Future meal
The tomato sauce is
Stirred with fragrant herbs
And it is jarred for
Dinners with family.

Harvest time is ending.
The fruit of summer
Is put to bed in autumn
As soil is turned over
And emptied from
Ceramic pots.
Garden tools
Stored away
For another spring.

Ahhhh wintering
A time of solitude
Of reading books
While snuggled up
Under a patchwork quilt
Mint tea in hand
Reflecting on summer days
As sleep comes
On a snowy afternoon.

Isn't this all prayer?

By
Suzanne Dowd



BOOK NOTES AND REVIEWS



THE ART OF SOLITUDE

by Steven Batchelor

World renowned Buddhist writer, Stephen took a sabbatical to venture more deeply into solitude, discovering its extent and depth. This beautiful collage documents his explorations that contributed to his ability to be simultaneously alone and at ease. It shows us how to enjoy the inescapable solitude that is at the heart of human life.

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Online Edition

On The Fullness of Time

With this reflection, my mother, Marian Collins, sends her wishes to you for a joy-filled Christmas and a peaceful New Year. At eighty-nine, she is anticipating her ninetieth Christmas!

In a world dark with fear and despair, my mother radiates quiet courage and unselfish love. She is a delight to be with: reflective, funny, and overflowing with generous spirit. Living with this dear, gentle woman fills me with gratitude that she is my mother.

Rich language rises from an interior well. Poetic, evocative, precise phrases trip readily from her lips. I ask if someone was polite to her, and she replies, "I suppose you could say she was, in a zipped-lip, velvet-glove, false-friendly kind of way." Her wit is sometimes sardonic, and always quick!

In fragile health and in a wheelchair, my mother is untouchable and invisible to almost everyone: the world has abandoned her, depriving itself of her gifts and wisdom. I am inspired by her resilience as her losses mount: she is bereft of her beloved husband, almost all family and friends, and the small daily social interactions that many take for granted. Gone is the chickadee she taught to eat from her hand. Gone also are her freedom of movement and her privacy. Insistently she maintains her dignity, or it would be gone too. She continues to extend human touch and voice to those who are suffering. She prays for "the forgotten people."

My mother is sustained by the steady beauty she finds in nature. Fragrant narcissus flowers emerging from bulbs, autumn colors foresting the hills "like pincushions," baby goats leapfrogging over one another: these gifts call forth her delight and wonder. Most of all, my mother is enchanted by the sky. The sight of a copper spiral of vapor trail in the western sunset sky caused her to exclaim, "A nonconformist aviator has been swirling through the sky."

Today we celebrated the winter solstice by flying through the sky in a single-engine plane. Looking down on familiar mountains and villages, we saw centuries-old New England stone walls through the tracery of bare trees, patchwork fields blanketed by snow, and ice-layered ponds. As our plane taxied down the runway, a flock of birds flew up in front of us, their wings silvered by the sun. Our woman pilot said, with a touch of envy, "Ah, that's the way to fly." But as I looked at my mother, her face glowing from sun and enjoyment, her eyes radiating a holy love, I thought, "How wonderful it is that she carries her own freedom and joy and peace within her."

Accompanying my mother as she faces serious challenges, I am enchanted by her continuing transformation. I note her undaunted serenity living with cancer and other personal obstacles, and her eloquent expressions of compassion and justice for others.

Time has become fluid for my mother. She moves through the decades of her life with ease. Her talk of "home" includes both her childhood home and mine. Softly she holds all that is dear to her, and releases all that is not. I am held in her expansive embrace of life. All time is now. All places are here. *Chronos* and *kairos* are one. Surely this is what is meant by "the fullness of time."

In this time of war, my mother is reading *Silent Night*, an account of the Christmas Eve during The Great War, when foot soldiers from both sides put down their weapons, left their trenches, and joined with people they had been taught were their enemies to celebrate together the birth of the Prince of Peace, the coming of light in a world grown dark. Deeply moved by this account of hope conquering fear, my mother prays that this grace of enlightenment will be felt anew. May her prayer be answered. May we all be a part of the answer.

And may you and your loved ones enjoy a peaceful New Year. *Virginia L. Collins-English, M. Ed*

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