



# Raven's Bread

*Food for Those in Solitude*

*Online Edition*

*February 2025*

## Thoughts In Solitude

Living my life with discipline has never been easy for me. Even though it has been painfully obvious for years that this is exactly what I need. Discipline had been almost impossible, I'm afraid, and so I found it extremely helpful to write down a detailed description of what each day of my spiritual life should look like.

But how does one begin? It came to me one day, during my usual early morning sloppy attempt to go through my spiritual routine. I watched a video on the early desert fathers, which as it turned out, was a very good place to start, and which I highly recommend. As I saw the utter devotion and love those early desert monastics had for God, I thought to myself, what would I not give to have a fraction of the relationship that they had with Jesus Christ. And so, as I moved into my morning rosary, I began to meditate on their stories and a picture emerged. Not of anything corporeal but a sort of outline of my entire spiritual journey, from the moment of spiritual re-birth, unto the present.

It became clear to me where I'd been, what had happened along the way, the causes and cures. I saw where I'd been and where I needed to go as clearly as if I had a detailed map. And so, I'd like to share it with you in the small chance you are reading this, my "pilgrim's progress", as it were.

I had been discerning for quite some time a vocation to which I felt called. Believe me, that is not an easy one-two-three process! I had finally determined that the best course for me would be to stay away from society, as I never felt like I quite fit in. To understand the call to eremitical life, you must first understand that it is a call to a stricter separation from society. It is not a selfish thing but is a calling for the benefit of the Church and society as a whole.

Christian hermits dedicate their lives first to the praise of God and then to the salvation of the world through stricter silence and separation from the world, coupled with assiduous

prayer and penance. Some take vows either privately or publicly, in the hands of a bishop. They submit to the spiritual direction of their bishop. Others do not. I feel that if you don't take vows, you should seek out a spiritual director.

Actually, I have found it almost impossible in this day and age to find someone qualified and willing to take on the task of being someone else's spiritual guide. But do not lose heart. One does not need to be a "canonical hermit" to live the ascetic life. A hermit with the right mindset (fixed on Christ) is quite content wherever he or she is. They live according to their own rule of life, carry out their service in silence and solitude, accompanied only by the Holy Spirit. Hermit life seems to be a very unique calling. It is simply the pursuit of Christ and Him Crucified. It is the pursuit of GOD.

Adopting the interior life is not for the faint of heart, however. It is but the beginning of an incredible journey. If one is fortunate enough to be guided by a spiritually mature brother or sister, the journey of the inner life is more easily defined. A cleansing of the soul takes place. Do not be afraid, my brothers and sisters in Christ, to allow the light of the Holy Spirit to shine His light into the darkest recesses of your soul, to root out all defects and attachments, to purge you of those imperfections that can hinder you from becoming one with God. You have begun an incredible life journey. That is, you are in pursuit of God....Who has been in pursuit of you from the beginning!



Contributed by  
"The Old Grey Hermit"  
C. L. Skaggs



As we pondered what to share in this quarterly “Word”, a fascinating email arrived. It was a reflection by writer David Benjamin Blower about researching a project for publication in **Passio**, a Passionist magazine in the UK. It caught our attention because the author discussed Paul, the First Hermit and Saint Anthony, known as the Father of Monks. Definitely our kind of people!

Blower related how Anthony decided to visit Paul, a contemporary desert dweller. However, Paul was not open to company and glimpsing Anthony approaching, swung the door of his cave shut to preserve his long-lived solitude. Undaunted, Anthony

persuaded him to open it by declaring that he’d lay down and die on the doorstep and then Paul would have the bother of burying him. It worked and Paul welcomed Anthony in, jesting about his morbid approach. They embraced, shared prayer, and took counsel together. They teased about Paul’s scraggly appearance and argued about who should break open the loaf of bread that a kindly crow (raven?) had dropped in. They spent the night in shared vigil.

These two Lovers of Solitude found something rare and wonderful in one another’s company—friendship. Clearly neither believed that their companionship infringed on their primary commitment as hermits.

We had planned to write about a current “hot topic”: loneliness—which we believe is being misunderstood in this age of endless social media posts. Online articles and discussions about loneliness often characterize “feeling lonely” as “unhealthy” and should be treated medically or therapeutically. For those of us who have embraced a life of solitude, loneliness is “part of the package” - a state of mind and heart that can open us to deeper awareness of the world, its troubles and its beauty, and which can contribute to both our emotional and spiritual maturity.

What we appreciate about the Paul/Anthony story is the inclusion of *friendship* in their mutual choice of solitude. Friendship involves natural affinity and mutual attraction, but also shared values as well as respect for differing points of view. Friendship is most often close up and personal but can also survive infrequent communication and often long-distance relationships.

We hope that **Raven’s Bread** can serve as a genuine experience of friendship as our readers share ideals, questions, struggles and goals. We believe, as Blower writes, that even the best of lives can feel dry and void at times, and that those dedicated to solitude can and need to enjoy friendship, - “that secret fire that glows between persons and provides reconciling joy.” Over these many years, **YOU** all have provided us with rich enduring friendships that we treasure. Bless you!

*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: [ravenbread97@gmail.com](mailto:ravenbread97@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.ravenbreadministries.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).

Your "Sharings" are Wonderful!

"*Raven's Bread*" has always meant to be a sharing of thoughts, prayers, and experiences by you, the readers. This issue is a wonderful example of this! Among your many contributions, we are most grateful for your prayers for Karen's health. Her cancer (lymphoma) is once again in remission! We have few words to adequately express our gratitude except to say:

*God Bless Your Loving Care and Generosity!*

**Paul & Karen**

## JUST A REMINDER

Raven's Bread Ministries continues to offer by email (only) a brief monthly reflection of support, encouragement, and inspiration for those embracing the life of a hermit/monk/solitary in the world entitled A Raven's Offering. This reflection is mailed on the 15th of those months in which the Raven's Bread Newsletter is NOT published.

You do not automatically receive this email reflection by being a subscriber to this newsletter. To receive A Raven's Offering by email, please send your name and your email address to:

ravensbread 97@gmail.com

*There is something deeper than hope.  
Between the hours of darkness and dawn,  
the voices of our ancestors are amplified  
in the dreamtime—warning us  
of our awakening wisdom—  
a blessing to behold and a burden to enact.*

Terry Tempest Williams in "Unraveling"  
EMERGENT MAGAZINE  
via *Friends of Silence*—January 2025

## Thoughts On Silence

Offered by Bobbi Fisher

*"At this moment I am finding that the world is not silent; it is hard for me to embrace the silence I love. Perhaps it is the same for you. And so, I offer these thoughts as a gift to help you embrace "a time to keep silent and a time to speak."*

Drawing on my fine command of the language, I said nothing.

(Robert Benchley)

Listen to the wind, it talks, listen to the silence, it speaks, listen to your heart, it knows.

(Native American Proverb)

To listen to the silence, wherever you are, it is an easy and direct way of becoming present.

(Eckert Tolle)

The quieter you become, the more you can hear.

(Ram Dass)

I long to slip into cracks of silence  
Where breath is connected to spirit  
And spirit to wind

And a sense of oneness resonates in my core.

(Karyn Dedar)

Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us.

(Rachel Naomi Remen)

May you grow still enough to hear the stir of a single snowflake in the air, so that your inner silence may turn into hushed expectation.

(Brother David Steindl-Rast)

I need to be silent for while Worlds are forming in my heart.

(Meister Eckhart)

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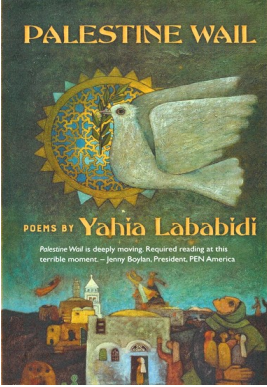
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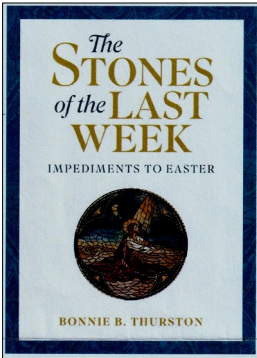
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**PALESTINE WAIL**  
POEMS BY  
**Yahia Lababidi**

Lababidi gently reminds us that we are partners in humanity and members of one human family. Drawing inspiration from the rich literary tradition of Palestinian resistance literature, he addresses us in a variety of voices: outrage, lament and longing. Ultimately, Lababidi's *WAIL* is a prayerful work seeking peace, healing and reconciliation—a testament to the transformative power of literature to keep hope alive in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

*"This book, like a lantern in darkness, brings to light the truth of lives we must learn to honor and remember."* - James Crews, author of *Unlocking the Heart: Writing for Mindfulness, Creativity, and Self-Compassion*



**The Stones of The Last Week**  
Impediments to Easter  
**Bonnie B. Thurston**

When Jesus descends the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem to the acclamation of the crowd, he announces "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out." In *The Stones of the Last Week*, Bonnie B. Thurston reflects on the Passion narratives in Like 19-24, and explores the many references to stones, both literal and spiritual, that impeded Jesus's last week with a view to their significance for our own journey to the fullness of life that resurrection offers.

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