

A Window into the Weaver Role

By Fr. James Clarke, Illuman Weaver

I have had the distinct privilege of serving in the capacity of Weaver since 2005. I first became involved in men's work in 1992, in New York, where I was attending Fordham University. This experience led me to Richard Rohr's work with men. In 1995, I made my Men's Rites of Passage at Ghost Ranch. In 1996, I was asked to assist Richard with the first MROP in California as a logistics team member, and then to participate as a teacher in subsequent California MROPs. These experiences deepened my commitment to men's work and my desire to be a part of this great vision.

Acting as a Weaver is a humbling, challenging, and exciting experience. I feel a great sense of responsibility to not only facilitate the flow of the MROP and the different weekend gatherings, but to assist in facilitating and fostering the deepening of men's Journey of Illumination. What has touched me the most is the way men are so open to growing and seeking God in their lives. There is a deep yearning to connect at the level of the soul, but so often we don't know how. I have been privileged to receive training in this sphere and it is an honor to share this wisdom with others.

I think the word "Weaver" is a good descriptor for my/our role during the MROP as well as in the other weekend experiences. Asking God for wisdom and guidance, I weave together a team and community of like-souled men with a common vision and purpose, using words, rituals, prayer, and silence. It is always magical and grace-filled to witness the results. It's like an ever-changing kaleidoscope, offering beauty at every turn, every event.

From the time the team arrives to prepare for the Rites, until they conclude, I experience a real sense of camaraderie and mutual support, grounded in authentic humility. Everyone is focused on serving the initiates and facilitating the process. We all have our roles and responsibilities. It is a profound privilege to work with the team. No one stands out; all have their place. There is a palpable sense of God's presence working through us, supported by lots of prayer. We recognize that we are the embodiment of God's welcoming hospitality for these men. I see and experience authentic male power and authority in operation through the team. Our egos have been checked at the door.

We each are reminded that we do this work for the good of others. For this reason, we pray over each man before he is invited to lead the group in a particular activity. At the conclusion of the Rites, there is a simple ceremony whereby the community of men relieves the Weaver and Ritual Elder of their authority in that particular Sacred Space. It feels so right to do this—to remind us all that a man takes up a particular role or service for the good of all. When it is time, he lays it down again until he is needed by the brothers.