

My Journey

By Bill Priesmeyer

Bill is the Missouri Convener.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality?

In 2008, after years of avoiding pain (in true Enneagram Seven fashion) by running from one numbing drug to another, "the party was over." In the wake of my narcissistic behavior, a path of destruction had wreaked havoc in my marriage and my family. Powerlessness over my addictive behavior led me to a 12-step recovery program. It was there that I began the descent.

While I had listened to cassette tapes of Fr. Richard Rohr in the early 1980s, I was not familiar with his work on male spirituality. This was about to change. My descent unleashed an appetite for spiritual reading which led me back to Fr. Richard. At a conference in Dallas, I learned about M.A.L.Es and the Men's Rites of Passage. I made my MROP in March of 2011 and connected with the men of Missouri shortly thereafter.

How has your participation in Illuman/M.A.L.Es fostered the use and development of your gifts?

For most of my life, I have been blind to my giftedness. I struggled with feelings of inadequacy and developed a myriad of defense mechanisms: workaholism, perfectionism, narcissism, and many other "isms" that disintegrated Sevens use to avoid pain.

On my MROP at Ebert Ranch in the West Texas Hill Country, a prickly little feller was born. Emerging from the arid, sun-drenched soils, Señor Cactus breathed his first breath and a previously unknown gift of creative expression through poetry and prose was birthed.

My continued participation in Illuman provides me opportunity to integrate my creativity in planning events, rituals, and gatherings.

Describe a recent Illuman/M.A.L.Es event you attended. What was the impact on you?

At a Leadership Retreat in Oracle, Arizona, I witnessed the pain of misunderstanding and divisiveness being transformed through the Way of Council into a positive energy that propelled the mission of the group forward.

What's one thing you'd recommend to a man starting on the spiritual journey?

Learn to walk in the dark.

"It takes more courage to examine the dark corners of your own soul than it does for a soldier to fight on a battlefield." —WB Yeats

Our journey to authenticity is often tenuous and vague at best. We must be *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, as Barbara Brown Taylor's book so aptly reveals. The fullness of the Mystery contains light, darkness, and every spectrum in between.

So, in our inner work, we must embrace the light and darkness within ourselves. When we live with a lust for certitude and answers, we will gravitate toward the light and the "perceived known." Encountering the darkness can be a daunting journey into unknown territory. Detaching from the false security of the known, the darkness will feel less like wandering aimlessly and more like the presence of God.

"The question facing us is which do we love better: the little island of our own certitude or the ocean of incomprehensible mystery?" —Karl Rahner

What's the best thing about doing this work?

Witnessing men:

- **becoming** liberated from their internal prisons
- **connecting** with intimacy in self and others
- **ripening** into generative men

Concluding thoughts?

As Fr. Greg Boyle proclaims, "Jesus was only about dismantling the barriers that exclude; Jesus was only about expanding the circle of compassion..." As generative men, inclusivity is the fruit of **becoming, connecting, and ripening.**