

My Journey

By Tom Newton

Tom Newton is a Ritual Elder with Illuman.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality?

Seventeen years ago, in my early forties and new to a program of recovery, I knew that, in order to survive, I needed to take the next step in my spiritual journey. I needed a different path, a new direction, to go to a deeper level. I began to read books and listen to recordings of wisdom teachers of many different traditions and spiritualities. I became intrigued by the notion of male initiation and knew that was where my journey was leading—and what a journey it has been! In May of 2001, I travelled with a friend from Philadelphia to Ghost Ranch in New Mexico for the MROP. My participation in these Rites was the most transformative event in my adult spiritual life.

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

Illuman has allowed me to move beyond my normal daily work and be part of a whole new experience. As a ritual elder in the rites of initiation sponsored by Illuman, I am able to pray, laugh, work, and grow with men on the Rites who hunger for a deeper spirituality. This is truly a gift to me.

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

At Soularize 2015 at Tamaya in New Mexico, I was introduced to the Way of Council. The Way of Council has become a part of so many aspects of my life. We conduct our parish staff meetings in the Council model. I lead a men's prayer group in our parish using the Way of Council and I introduced Council to a peer group I lead for newly ordained priests in our diocese. The dedication, singing bell, candle, and talking stick are great elements of ritual to use in Council. Encouraging all to speak from the heart, listen from the heart, be spontaneous, and be lean of expression have allowed these gatherings to be more prayerful, enlightening, participatory, and ultimately transformational for me and all involved.

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

I would recommend that a man not begin the journey alone. Find a good community, join a prayer group, go hiking with other men, invite another man into your world, and risk sharing parts of yourself that you've not been able to share before in a safe and affirming place.

What's the best thing about doing this work?

The best things about doing this work are the men that I have met, the connections that I have made, and the journeys that I have shared with other men. I am a better man, a better son and brother, a better friend, a better Christian, and a better priest because of this work. I hope that I have helped other men to come to believe that they are beloved sons of God.

Concluding thoughts?

Over the course of the last seventeen years, the direction of my life has been tremendously enhanced by my participation in Illuman. I am grateful for the lessons I've learned, the men I've met, the rites I've led, and the God I've encountered.