

Conveners Corner

By Al Selder, Illuman of Arizona Chapter Convener

Our chapter's roots came from a desire to host MROPs in Arizona. We hosted our first MROP in 2005 in Oracle, Arizona, which is a small town about 35 miles northeast of Tucson. I was initiated there in 2005.

During my initiation, it became clear in my heart that I needed to continue working to bring men back to God. I have been involved in Men's Spirituality work since 1998 and my initiation reinforced my calling to continue this work.



During my time in the desert, I had a vision of a place of many trees along a softly flowing river, with leaves shimmering in the sun from a gentle breeze blowing through. Several months later, when I shared this story with Brad Kuluris, he looked at me with a smile and said this was Aravaipa Canyon. He had a similar story, from his MROP in 2003, of seeing a place with golden vistas. When he shared this with Fr. Richard Rohr, he said, "Oh, I know that place. It's Aravaipa Canyon."

In 2008, Brad, my son Chris, and I went to Aravaipa. When I saw the creek and the cottonwood trees, I knew this was the place I saw in my vision. We said, "This is where we need to host M.A.L.Es [now Illuman] events." At this point, we met David, who has a ranch in Aravaipa Canyon. Richard knows David and when David dedicated the ranch as a place for spiritual renewal, Richard was there. We then began planning to have events at Aravaipa and, in 2009, hosted our first event with a FIRMe. Since then, we have hosted another FIRMe, five MROPs, and several other retreats. We had to postpone our April 2020 MROP, but look forward to April 2022 for our next one. Aravaipa Canyon is a great place for transformative experiences. If you have not been, I hope to see you there in the near future.

As mentioned, I feel called to continue in men's spirituality work in ways I am led and with the gifts I have been given. It has been an interesting journey. My spiritual growth has slowly increased as I am more connected with God and the people around me. Through this process, I have met many great men. Many of them have become brothers, such as the men in my faith-sharing groups, Arizona Chapter, Illuman, and my faith community.

In this work, I am connected with men who are outside of my wheelhouse, so to speak. This has been a great gift. I have often said that if I were not on this journey and was only connected in "my world," I would never have met such great men. It is our common desire to continue this work and to use our collective gifts that make this possible.

At times, I feel frustrated and wonder if I am making a difference. It is at these times I reflect on a quote from Mother Teresa, who said, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." If we all had a mission to touch one person and bring them closer to God, then we would all be touched. These thoughts help motivate me to keep going.

To conclude, I want to share the story of the starfish, which many of you probably have heard, but is very appropriate for what we do.

Save the Starfish

A young girl was walking along a beach upon which thousands of starfish had been washed up during a terrible storm. When she came to each starfish, she would pick it up and throw it back into the ocean. People watched her with amusement.

She had been doing this for some time when a man approached her and said, "Little girl, why are you doing this? Look at this beach! You can't save all these starfish. You can't begin to make a difference!"

The girl seemed crushed, suddenly deflated. But, after a few moments, she bent down, picked up another starfish, and hurled it as far as she could into the ocean. Then she looked up at the man and replied, "Well, I made a difference to that one!"

The old man looked inquisitively at the girl and thought about what she had done and said. Inspired, he joined the little girl in throwing starfish back into the sea. Soon others joined, and all the starfish were saved.