

My Journey

By Bob Sabath

Bob Sabath is Convener of the DC/VA/WV/MD Chapter of Illuman.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality?

As one of the founding members of Sojourners Community in Washington, DC, I have been involved with Richard Rohr's work since his early days in the 1980s through a network of communities experimenting with new forms of church. At age 59, I went on a Men's Rites of Passage in upstate New York in the fall of 2006.

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

Not so recent, but still living within me, is that MROP week in New York. I thought life had already initiated me, so I came to take notes and learn how to do similar events at a retreat center where I was living at the time.

But I quickly put away my notepad and jumped into this boiling, life-changing stew, where I simmered for five days in the transformational mix of silence, wilderness, and ritual. It broke open my heart and allowed me to see the next unwanted steps that I needed to take.

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

This work has helped me to develop a contemplative mind and the capacity to see my own inner contradictions and the failures and inherent betrayals within my own life and community. By taking this journey of descent into my own sacred wound, I better understand that what is flawed in me is somehow intimately connected to the unique gift that I have to offer to a broken world. Inner work—seeing in myself what I dislike in others and in my daily circumstances—has become a necessary spiritual discipline.

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

We were told, not one, but *three* things at the end of my MROP week:

- Don't talk about it too much—too much talk will freeze the experience and stop its growth within you.
- Create time each day for silence and each month for wilderness.

- Find a group of men that are hungry for the same thing and begin to work out your life with them.

What's the best thing about doing this work?

I did find a group of men. That same group of men is now getting ready to host our third Rites of Passage at Rolling Ridge in West Virginia. Gathering regularly with a group of brothers to bring this work to others is part of what keeps me alive on my own journey.

You can still sign up for the October 4–8 Rites of Passage in Harpers Ferry, WV, here: <http://www.illumandc.org/mrop-2017/>.

Registration deadline is September 24.

Concluding thoughts?

What is begun within the liminal space of a gathered wilderness community must be worked out in the small, slow steps of daily life. When I couldn't, or wouldn't, sit for 20 minutes without going crazy, I sat for 3, and then 7, and then 10.

I have spent my whole adult life within the "holy mess" of intentional community, and know first hand that "mess" is a necessary ingredient for the continuing process of transformation. Life together with brothers and sisters, lived in vulnerability and weakness, is teaching me how to turn the upsets and push-backs of relationship into teachers and opportunities for inner work.