

# My Journey

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By Mike Anderer

I am the Convener for the NorCal M.A.L.Es Chapter of Illuman.

## **How and when were you introduced to male spirituality?**

I have been aware and conscious of my life as a spiritual journey since I was a teenager. As a young man in the late 80s and early 90s, I was an avid reader of Sam Keen, Robert Bly, and others. In particular, I remember Henri Nouwen's *The Return of the Prodigal Son* having a significant impact at the time. I also remember confidently putting the following quote from Dag Hammarskjöld next to my picture in my college graduation yearbook: "God desires our independence so that, in failing to achieve it, we fall back into God." In the arrogance and pride of youth, I thought I was there already.

Fast-forward to 2009 and my early 40s. I was spent—10 years into marriage, two young children, a meaningful but demanding job.

Things appeared to stop going my way. ~~-, In fact,~~ things were beginning to come apart. In my exhaustion, I picked up the revised edition of *From Wild Man to Wise Man* by Richard Rohr. It spoke of the male spiritual journey in a way I hadn't *heard* before, even though I had probably *read* it several times before.

That book led me to register for the Men's Rites of Passage at Pilgrim Park, Illinois in 2010. I stayed connected to the community of men by becoming active in Illinois M.A.L.Es before I moved to California in 2012. I participated in the NorCal M.A.L.Es Firming in 2012 and have been active in the chapter ever since. I was the MROP Coordinator for the NorCal M.A.L.Es MROP at Camp Tamarack in 2015.

For the record, my life did fall apart in the years after my MROP, but my participation in the community of men is what gave me the strength, courage, and humility to accept what came and use it for the good of others.

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

The quiet accompaniment and faithful presence and love of the community of men created the container I needed to heal myself and to listen to my own inner wisdom- the divine that lives in me, in each one of us. Sitting in circle or council together, with open hearts, not judging or fixing the men next to me, allowed my truest

self to begin to speak for the first time. And that self was welcomed, accepted, and mirrored in the men around me.

**Describe a recent Illuman/M.A.L.Es event you attended.**

**What was the impact on you?**

A recent Illuman event I attended was Soularize and the Illuman Men's Retreat in New Mexico. I had the privilege of being a council carrier, sitting with a half-dozen other men from around the world. I was blessed and honored by their stories and self-observations, their vulnerability, their compassion, their understanding. It reminds me of the privilege and responsibility to be of service to other men, regardless of my particular role.

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

The one thing I recommend to a man starting on the spiritual journey is simple: Show Up! You can't get the gold if you don't present yourself to receive it. Show up!

**What's the best thing about doing this work?**

The best thing about doing this work for me is the amazement and joy that comes with being aware of God's presence in the unfolding of my life and the life of everyone around me; with helping to braid the events and people in my life and the world into something more beautiful; and with witnessing the daily birth of the divine in the world.

**Concluding thoughts?**

I will borrow a saying from Philo of Alexandria for my final words: "Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a great battle."