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Wisdom Elder

I began working on MROPs at the very beginning, struggling with the morning rituals for several months before the first rites of passage at Ghost Ranch in 1996 and arriving there terrified, with only scraps of ideas. Rituals materialized, day by day, by the grace of God and the skin of my teeth, as I worked with those first groups of volunteers.

Working rites of passage since then, and participating in MALEs and then Illuman, has been one of the deepest initiatory experiences of my life, forcing me to face layers of fear and doubt, leading me through my own father wound into trusting friendships and working relationships with other men. That work of trust, risk, and shoulder-to-shoulder labor is by no means completed, but it's helped me to build some beautiful relationships, and to discover and develop my gifts for ritual leadership.

When I was invited into this work, I was a fairly introverted artist, though I had a few close friends. I had a passion for experimental theater, but I generally worked in the solitude of my studio, and was fearful of working with or relating to other people, especially men. One thing I've been learning over the years in this work is that fear has such power when we give it power—but what God does when we face our fear is so different from what our fear imagines, and that fear is exposed as fraud. In fact, fear has become a gatepost for me, when it stands adjacent to the opposite gatepost—a deep stirring; it can show me the threshold I need to face and step through next, to keep actualizing my path.

It has been very moving to have been able, over the years, to witness men, and to hear personal stories of men, who have moved through their fears by giving themselves with such trust, courage, and sincerity to the process of the MROP, Firming and Soularize rituals. It teaches me something wonderful about the hearts of the men who are called into this band of brothers.

The heart of our work is transformation. In the continuing Journey of Illumination, I strongly feel my need for continuing inner work. With our reformation as Illuman, many of us have become more actively involved.

That's as important a part of our transformation as our prayer. In this work, we're called to become a new kind of creature, a divine human. Sounds impossible, but we know very well, deep down inside us, that it's not. All the teaching we've heard, all the ritual we've done, all the experiences we've had in this men's work, call us to it. And for that gradual transformation to take place, the contemplative dimension is crucial. The balance between our action and our contemplative experience is critical. Without it, we won't finally be able to realize the transformative depth to which Illuman is called.