

# My Journey

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**By Matt Woollett**

Matt Woollett serves as Louisiana Convener.

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

My first foray into male spirituality occurred when I was invited to give a talk to the Kiwanis Club. The title of the talk was "Men in the Church," based in part on an article written by Karl Rahner, SJ. My presentation went into the differences between male spirituality and female spirituality. The response from the all-male crowd was overwhelmingly enthusiastic, informing me that I was on to something significant. The seed was definitely planted to the point where I attended a Men's Rite of Passage in 1997 at Ghost Ranch. Even though there were 150 men on the retreat, I literally was blown away by the depth of sharing coming from the men I encountered making the rites of passage. I knew then that I had arrived home, the place where true holiness resides. John Henry Newman's quote comes to mind: "So much holiness is lost to the church because men fail to share the secrets of their hearts, one to another." Since that moment, God has increasingly led me to encounters with holiness, and with men who are willing to be vulnerable, to share the secrets of their hearts and invite me to do the same. In a word, the journey inward to discover my true male identity as a beloved son of God has changed my life.

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

Participating in Illuman certainly challenges me to exercise my leadership skills. But above all, I participate in Illuman/M.A.L.Es, in my role as Convener and as a member of a local men's group, because of my love for the men (and women) God places in my life. This love compels me to want to give something back: I desire to share with other men something of God's unbounded love; I want to invite other men on this spiritual journey as a way of discovering their true self, their true identity; I need to be challenged by the men in my life to continue growing spiritually, to open my heart to the pain and suffering in the world and not be content with just going through the motions. Could it be that the passion I feel for this work is the greatest gift I bring to Illuman?

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

Last November I attended Soularize 2014 and the first-ever Illuman Conference in New Mexico. The experience of participating in the Way of Council was quite beautiful in that each of us in our small groups was invited to speak from the heart. The tenderness with which we were able to hold one another's pain and joy had a profound effect on me. In other words, the experience of being "excruciatingly vulnerable" (Brene Brown's words) with one another had the effect of cracking open my soul just a little bit more.

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

In talking to other men, I always insist that what really initiates us is life itself, and I encourage them not to be afraid to embrace the whole of life, to learn to love life in its failures as well as its successes. With that in mind, I recommend to men starting out on the spiritual journey that they find an essence friend, a man with whom they feel safe and who is infinitely interested in their spiritual growth and development. Then to begin a spiritual practice (for example, centering prayer) that they will actually do, actually practice. The practice, the Journey of Illumination as we say in Illuman, will then open us to the wonder of living life to the fullest.

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

That it's not work at all; it's a most amazing ministry. To have the privilege of walking the spiritual path with other men who value the most important thing in life—fostering our relationship with our Higher Power, the Ground of our Being, God "in whom we live and move and have our being"—what could be better than that?!

*Concluding thoughts?*

Don't settle for what the dominant culture tells you it means to be a man. Embrace your *warrior, king, lover, magician* archetype. Take that first step to discover your deep masculine self; your life will be so much richer.