

My Journey

By Damien Faughnan

Damien Faughnan is the President of the Illuman Board of Directors.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality? I have been involved with formal religion for most of my life. For twelve years I enjoyed life in a religious community, close to seven years as a solemn-professed brother, with the De La Salle Brothers.

In the late 1980s, I grew increasingly disenchanted with formal religion and left the Brothers in 1989. I continued to seek spiritually, dabbling in Buddhism and lots of other spiritual traditions.

In 2001 (after 9/11 and the death of my mother), I had a crisis of purpose. At first, I was drawn back to the Catholic Church. I heard Fr. Richard Rohr speak and, after engaging with him, he suggested that I do a Men's Rites of Passage. I really had no idea what to expect, and I had a lot of reservations, but I went anyway and it changed my life.

Describe a recent Illuman/M.A.L.E.s event you attended. What was the impact on you? Last year I had the opportunity to experience the Way of Council—an incredible format for men's small groups. There is very little real listening or conversation in the world today. Most of us engage in conversations where our ego, self-centeredness, and stereotypical thoughts dominate. The Way of Council format allows us to have a listening silence and a space for speaking. It allows us to enter, individually and collectively, a different place of knowing. I'm excited that we can bring our particular version of Council to men's work.

What is different about men who participate in Illuman/M.A.L.E.s work? I think men who participate in our work, and who are doing their personal spiritual work, can see differently—and I might be projecting here! I can see both my small self and my God self. I can see my petty self and my generative self. Men who participate in this work are OK with uncertainty, understand suffering, and embrace mystery.

We also have a starting point of viewing other men as our brothers. We see each other as "beloved sons." The men who participate in our work have a lot of love for each other—it's a beautiful thing!

| *What part of the JOI are you focused on? Why?* I am very focused on Centering. I think this is a foundational spiritual practice. In our crazy world, it is too easy for me to become un-grounded. If I am not in a regular, daily practice of centering, I cannot bring a healthy self to the other elements of my Journey of Illumination. Part of this commitment means I'm keen to live a life of discipline (positive habits) and spiritual practice.