

My Journey

By Brad Pickel

Brad Pickel is the Administrator of Illuman and lives in Beaufort, South Carolina.

How and when were you introduced to male spirituality? In 2005, my wife and I attended a CAC-sponsored conference with Fr. Richard Rohr, titled *How Do We Breathe Underwater? The Gospel and Twelve Step Spirituality*. Being an adult child of an alcoholic, I wanted to better understand addiction while assuming there was little I would learn about “me.” It was life-changing when I realized that I was addicted to chasing success and the validation of others, which ultimately led to feelings of unworthiness.

Five years later, after facing a great personal failure, I finally hit rock bottom and realized there had to be a better way to live. Fortunately, I have an incredible role model for male spirituality in my father-in-law. He has been actively involved in M.A.L.Es since the 1990s and was a supportive presence as I became increasingly adrift in my life. He encouraged me to attend my first Men’s Retreat in Louisiana in April 2010, and the Men’s Rites of Passage (MROP) in West Virginia in October 2011.

How has participation in male spirituality impacted your life? My ongoing self-discovery has led me to seek further opportunities within male spirituality. I have learned the immeasurable value of being open and vulnerable to other men in the uncovering of wounds and unconscious fears that I had buried over the years. I began to see that I had lost access to many parts of my heart and deadened my emotions so that I could project a false image of what I thought others expected of me. Now, as I see more clearly, I know I am a Beloved Son and my value is inherent.

How would you describe the Illuman/M.A.L.Es community and your participation in it? I am privileged to be the Administrator for Illuman and am excited about the opportunity to grow in my participation with Illuman. I am focused on supporting our efforts to expand our reach across the U.S. and internationally.

How has your participation in Illuman/M.A.L.Es fostered the use and development of your gifts? In addition to working with Illuman, I am involved in male spirituality efforts in my community, and with a circle of initiated brothers (the Muckmeisters). The personal growth gained from

Illuman and M.A.L.Es has also led me to further explore the Enneagram as a tool for spiritual awareness. My goal is to use the tools I have cultivated and the gift of sacred awareness I have learned to be a better husband, friend, son, and human being.

What's one thing you'd recommend to a man starting on the spiritual journey? Have compassion and be gentle with yourself; we are all a mess at times. I believe that through ongoing commitment to loving ourselves and becoming true Elders, we can make the world a better place.