

that a man simply does not know about mystery, miracle, darkness and waiting. Ideally, the woman understands transformation and therefore has a basic head start in understanding spirituality. She “knows” (if she is listening, that is), whereas he “has to be taught, he has to be carefully taught.”

I have been giving male initiation rites for six years at Ghost Ranch here in New Mexico and in Europe, but as the men keep telling me, I am “blowing into the wind.” About 1,100 English-speaking men have gone through these rites of passage, and about 400 German-speaking men. So this year I am starting to train these eligible initiated men to offer “rites of passage” for others. I think we have the essential message down, but we also know that the rituals themselves (and that is the key) will need to be different for different groups. Also we are no longer initiating boys for the most part, but adult men because we never had it as boys ourselves. The church’s sacraments of initiation, as I said in earlier articles, have been largely “protested and prettified” out of the male psychic space. It is only churchy kinds of men who relate to them, which is a rather small percentage of males.

We will be working this year with seven distinct group rituals: parish- or church-based groups of men (the hardest!), the incarcerated (the easiest!), men and boys at risk, gay men (although I am not yet sure they should be a separate group), black men, Hispanic men, and family-based initiation rites for sons, godsons, grandsons and nephews. (This is where men have done the most creative work so far. They want the next generation in their family to know what they now know.) So, pray for us. This is big stuff. This is the “anti-structure” called liminal space, which makes a lot of church “structure” actually make sense. It also shows a lot of it for the relative importance that it has, and it also reveals our amazing capacity for missing the central point.

Like all liminal and sacred space, male initiation restores an absolute center, called “God,” and that, of course, relativizes everything else. No wonder perhaps that the church itself is eager to forget it.

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