

Ghost Ranch comes to Ireland

(A Personal Testimony)

A special call to men: take the risk: develop your manhood

Ghost Ranch is deep in the New Mexico desert. I live in suburban Dublin. There's a connection: In 2002 I and 120 other men from around the world had a very special life event there. It was something deep, something unforgettable and transformative.

That year, Ghost Ranch was the place where the Men's Rites of Passage (MROP), first devised by Fr. Richard Rohr OFM in the early 90's, was performed. Now, it happens all over the world. My dream, and that of the other men who have accompanied me on this journey, was to bring it to Ireland. This coming June this dream will be realised. The MROP is coming to Ireland for the very first time.

At a men's retreat around 1995, Fr Richard Rohr OFM referred to these 'Rites of Passage' as having a very profound effect on men. The idea seemed strange, unfamiliar, but what he said touched a chord: I was so curious that eventually in 2002 I applied to go. I remember feeling both excited and anxious when I received my notice of acceptance. I knew deep down that this was not just another retreat. It was going to be challenging and difficult. I swallowed my fear and set off on my quest to Albuquerque New Mexico.

Three bus loads brought 120 men from Albuquerque to Ghost Ranch. We ranged in age from 19 years to over 80 and came from all walks of life: people of firm faith, and people with none, travelling together on a common journey. Everyone came simply as a man without persona or status: as I came to learn, a group of simply wonderful men with hurts and weaknesses. We travelled through magnificent cowboy country, the land of the Pueblo and Navaho Indians until we finally arrived at Ghost Ranch deep in the heart of the desert. The accommodation was basic, bunk beds and a wash hand basin. The view was awesome. You could see for miles: you felt small in the vastness of the landscape. The first session made it crystal clear that this was serious, there was no turning back. It was both scary and exciting at the same time.

As the days went by in talking and listening, participating and reflecting, gradually various insights began to click into place. I discovered that at my deepest level I was good. That it was a great privilege to be a man, to be part of this wonderful gender. I was content to be me, no wish list. I got a really deep appreciation of my wife and how privileged I was to be her husband. I felt a great sorrow at how men in general haven't lived up to the grandeur of themselves as men, and at the disgrace of not treating others, particularly women, as they should be treated: with great respect, love and equality. Somehow, I noticed that along the way I felt my heart develop a deeper compassion. Other men reported a similar, substantial growth in their awareness and sensitivity towards others.

I found in the silence of the desert the God of creation, the God who loves me as the man that I am, not perfect by any means, but loved none the less. I found that even though I am well into the second part of life, I still have the capacity to produce fruits, fruits in abundance. All the men in my group had similar experiences. Strong bonds were forged between us.

I will be forever grateful for those five very special days at Ghost Ranch. Sometime after I had returned home I told my wife something about the experience and what it was like. She was uncharacteristically silent and allowed me to talk. Then she told me that she had waited 40 years to hear what I said: and that it was well worth the wait.

The MROP was indeed the most profound thing I have ever experienced. It left me with a stronger, healthier experience of my masculinity and manhood. This programme, first devised by Fr. Richard Rohr OFM in the early 90's, is of immense value to men today. It can offer you a clearer understanding of the wonder of your own masculine identity, of your mission in life to unify, nurture, affirm, and set boundaries; somehow, it makes courage, energy, focus, wisdom, passion and compassion all more possible.

Now this is your chance to experience the MROP for yourself. Fellow men: don't miss it this chance... you won't regret it: I promise that it's worth the risk! Women: please encourage your men folk to attend, to take the risk in going. You will be doing them, and yourselves, a great favour.

Gerard Moore (MALEs Ireland)

Details

Place : St Patrick's Missionary College, Kiltegan, Co Wicklow.

Dates: Wed 17th to Sunday 21st of June 2009

Times: Registration Wednesday 14.00 pm to 15.30 pm.

Finish Sunday 16.00 pm

Contact: MALE's Ireland, C/O 31 Pinewood Park, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14

Phone: 087 261 4248

Web site: www.malesireland.net

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Application Form: can be downloaded from Web site or obtained at the above address.