



1993

Initiating Adolescent Males into Manhood: A Retreat Experience for Fathers and Sons

Michael P. Smith
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses



Part of the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, Michael P., "Initiating Adolescent Males into Manhood: A Retreat Experience for Fathers and Sons" (1993). *Master's Theses*. 4048.

https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/4048

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](#).
Copyright © 1993 Michael P. Smith

**Initiating Adolescent Males into Manhood:
*A Retreat Experience for Fathers and Sons***

By

Michael Smith, SJ

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
Loyola University of Chicago
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling
at the Institute of Pastoral Studies.

Chicago, Illinois

January, 1994

© 1993, Michael Peter Smith.

All rights reserved.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge the many people who have contributed in many different ways to the writing of this thesis.

I want to thank my father, Peter, for being the kind and generous man that he is, and for showing me that compassion, warmth, and unassuming service of others are manly qualities. I also want to thank him for instilling in me the virtue of perseverance, a virtue I needed to finish this thesis. I also want to thank my mother, Margaret, for her loving support and her belief in me, and for imbuing me with the value of doing things properly, a trait which enabled me to return to the rough draft of my thesis and re-write it.

I am indebted to Frs. Jim Colleran and Fred Brandstrader, and the people of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, for the warm welcome and hospitality they extended to me over the past two years. I will miss the Our Lady of Lourdes community very much.

I am deeply grateful to my readers Dr. Peter Gilmour and Dr. Tad Guzie for their support. I want to specially mention Peter Gilmour for the painstaking work he has done in correcting, critiquing, and editing my thesis. His enthusiasm and encouragement were both needed and appreciated.

Finally I wish to thank my classmates and my teachers in the Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling program for their support and encouragement during these two years of study.

To Have a Brilliant Son ¹

Yahweh, Master of the Universe, blest me with a brilliant son. And he cursed me with all the problems of raising him. Ah, what it is to have a brilliant son! Not a smart son, Yahweh, but a brilliant son! Joshua, a boy with a mind like a jewel. Ah, what a curse it is, what an anguish it is to have a son whose mind is like a pearl, like a sun.

Yahweh, when my Joshua was six years old, I saw him reading a story, he swallowed it as one swallows food or water. There was no heart in my Joshua, there was only his mind. He was a mind in a body without a heart. It was a story about a poor old man and his struggle to get to Jerusalem before he died. Ah, how that man suffered! And my Joshua enjoyed the story, he enjoyed the last terrible page because when he finished it he realized for the first time what a splendid memory he possessed. He looked at me proudly and re-told the story from memory, and I cried inside my heart.

I went outside and shouted to the Master of the Universe, "Why? What have you done to me? A mind like this I need for a son? A heart I need for my son. A soul I need for my son. Righteousness, mercy, strength to suffer and carry pain, that I want from my son, not a mind without a soul, without a heart."

Chaim Potok

1. This story is quoted by Brian Cavanaugh in *More Sower's Seeds: Second Planting* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 16.

Dedication

To my father and mother,

Peter and Margaret.

Thank you.

Table of Contents

Introduction		1
PART I		
The Theoretical Bases for the <i>Fathers and Sons Retreat</i>		
I	Two Issues Facing Adolescent Males in Industrialized Urban Societies	17
II	Initiation of Adolescent Males in Indigenous Cultures	31
III	Towards a Contemporary Rite of Passage for Adolescent Males	48
PART 2		
The Practice of the <i>Fathers and Sons Retreat</i>		
IV	Assessing the needs of Adolescent Males and their Fathers or Mentors	71
V	Preparing for the <i>Fathers and Sons Retreat</i>	82
VI	Facilitating the <i>Fathers and Sons Retreat</i>	102
VII	Evaluating the Initial Model of the <i>Fathers and Sons Retreat</i>	126
Appendices:		
A.	Retreat Timetable	149
B.	Blessing Ceremony	153
C.	Evaluation Questionnaire	157
Selected Bibliography		161

INTRODUCTION

My aim in preparing this thesis is to design and test a retreat for adolescent males and their fathers or mentors. The weekend retreat is called the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The main goal of the retreat is that it be an initiatory moment, or rite of passage, for the adolescent male participants in the ongoing process of their becoming men.

The term *rite of passage* was coined by the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep in describing the rituals performed by indigenous tribes to assist the transition of a person from one stage of life to the next. van Gennep, writing in 1908, noted:

The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Whenever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts, like those which make up apprenticeship in our trades. Among semicivilized peoples such acts are enveloped in ceremonies, since to the semicivilized mind no act is entirely free of the sacred. In such societies every change in a person's life involves actions and reactions between sacred and profane - actions to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury.¹

For van Gennep the series of transitions from one stage to the next include birth, puberty, marriage, parenthood, occupational specialization, death - all of which are marked, in indigenous cultures, by sacred ceremonies. The sacred ceremonies marking each passage are important not only because they facilitate the transition of the individual, but because they contribute to the continued flourishing of the tribal community.

In this thesis I am specifically concerned with the transition from boyhood to manhood in an industrialized urban society, and designing a rite of passage to mark that movement.

I use the terms rite of passage and initiation interchangeably in this thesis. The

1. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 2f.

word initiation [in·i'ti·a'tion *n.*] comes from the Latin *initialis*, meaning a beginning. As I use the word, initiation refers to pubescent males being formally introduced into manhood by older men by means of specific rituals which signify their continuing growth and development into manhood.

I have limited the focus of this thesis to a study of male rites of passage in indigenous cultures, and how tribal patterns of ritual initiation might inform our understanding of the process of transition into manhood in industrialized urban societies.² The patterns of feminine rites of passage in tribal societies and the study of initiation into womanhood in modern society are vitally important for contemporary adolescent females, but beyond the scope of this thesis.³

There are two major parts to this thesis. Part 1 discusses the theoretical bases for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. Part 2 describes in detail the practice of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. Part 1 explores three main areas:

- The lack of male formal initiation rituals in industrialized urban society, the psychic effects of the crisis in masculine ritual processes, and the father - son relationship in contemporary culture (Chapter One).
- Some of the socio-cultural, religious, and psychological interpretations of male initiation rites in indigenous cultures (Chapter Two).
- A suggestion about what male initiation in an industrialized urban culture might entail (Chapter Three).

2. I use the term "industrialized urban society" in this thesis to describe modern Western society. Clearly there are parts of most Western countries that are not urban or industrialized. For instance many rural communities are not industrialized. Also many factories have moved out of once industrialized inner-city areas. Some commentators describe modern Western society as post-industrial. Others, searching for a term to describe modern societal organization, have coined the phrase "the information society". However I think that the term "industrialized urban society" still the best describes the organization of most Western societies. What I say in this thesis about male initiation in industrialized urban societies also applies to adolescent males in parts of Western countries that are not urban or industrialized.

3. Bruce Lincoln's book, *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Rituals of Women's Initiation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), is an excellent study of women's rites of initiation.

In Part Two, contemporary theory about fathers and sons in present day culture, and patterns of indigenous initiation rituals outlined in Part One, form the bases of a retreat experience for fathers and sons. Part Two includes:

- An assessment of the needs of fathers/mentors and their adolescent sons/protégés (Chapter Four).
- Preparation for the retreat (Chapter Five).
- Facilitation of the retreat (Chapter Six).
- An evaluation of the initial retreat model (Chapter Seven).

Rites of Passage in Indigenous Cultures

The impetus to design a retreat for fathers, mentors and adolescent males⁴, which would have as its central theme the process of initiation into manhood, came from noticing two things. The first was the growing number of journal articles and books on the father-son relationship. The impression gleaned from the literature was that the father-son relationship is perhaps the most wounded in modern society. The second was that in almost all indigenous cultures fathers and older men initiate their pubescent sons and adolescent protégés into manhood. Recent literature on male psychology and spirituality hypothesizes that adolescent males in industrialized urban societies, like their counterparts in tribal cultures, still need some form of ritual initiation to mark the end of boyhood and the beginning of manhood. However, because masculine rites of passage in our culture are virtually non-existent, and because the bonds between adolescent males and their fathers or older men tend, in general, to be strained or absent, the task of addressing the adolescent

4. In this thesis I use the term "adolescent male" to refer to a male at a stage of psychosocial development between boyhood and manhood. In common parlance, adolescence would be regarded as occurring between the chronological ages of 13 and 19. However adolescence has become a somewhat ambiguous term in modern society; because of increasingly lengthy periods of education and professional training, adolescence may, for some men, effectively extend into their thirties. Some men in their thirties exhibit signs of the role confusion characteristic of an adolescent identity crisis.

need for initiation into manhood by older men is formidable.

Ritual initiation of adolescent males in indigenous cultures insures that their psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs are met as they begin to make the transition from boyhood into manhood. Unfortunately, in industrialized urban societies, initiation is usually left to chance, and in most cases adolescent males search for a way of initiating themselves and proving their manhood.

Tribal initiation rituals involve removing the pubescent youth from familiar surroundings, helping him to differentiate himself appropriately from the world of his mother, undergoing an ordeal by which he must prove himself worthy of manhood, experiencing the spirit world, gaining acceptance into the community of men, and returning to the tribe as a man. David D. Gilmore, Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York, notes that indigenous cultures are usually highly structured in the way they acknowledge manhood for adolescent males:

A number of primitive societies provide collective rites of passage that usher youths through sequential stages to an unequivocal manhood. Such rites dramatize the masculine transition through a clear-cut process of ritual investiture complete with emblems and culminate in the public conferral of an adult status that equals manhood.⁵

By undergoing rites of passage the adolescent male in an indigenous culture ideally experiences both a change in his social status and a change in his sense of identity. For the adolescent male, the rituals surrounding initiation signify death of boyhood and rebirth into manhood. By undergoing the process of ritual initiation the adolescent male in an indigenous culture is assisted by the older males of his group in the process of achieving a mature sense of his gender identity.

5. David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 124.

Contemporary Facsimiles of Initiation

In industrialized urban cultures various rituals mimic the initiation rituals of indigenous cultures. There are, for instance, hazing rituals performed in the military, college fraternities, and gangs. While these rituals might at one time have tapped into an archetypal need in the person for initiation, in general they do not deeply satisfy the initiate because they typically fail to address his spiritual needs. Most young men regard such hazing rituals with suspicion. Commenting on this, the Jungian analyst Joseph Henderson notes in his book, *Thresholds of Initiation*: "Actually it is a good instinctive reaction when a young person rejects initiation if it fails to provide him with a convincing socio-religious meaning."⁶ Hazing rituals are usually mindless, sometimes violent and occasionally physically dangerous. These modern facsimiles of initiation, that often involve unexplained physical ordeals, are unconvincing to the initiate. However, the need for initiation remains.

An Initiation Retreat

I have situated the initiatory moment for adolescent males in the context of a retreat. Why focus the rite of passage in a *retreat*? A retreat, in the classic sense, is a period of withdrawal from the world during which a person sets aside time for prayer and meditation. The reason for situating an initiatory moment for adolescent males in the context of a retreat is that spiritual transformation is at the heart of an adolescent male's transition into manhood. In indigenous cultures initiation into manhood is seen primarily as spiritual transformation. As the late Mircea Eliade, the world-renowned expert on myth and symbolism, remarked:

Initiation represents one of the most significant spiritual phenomena in the history of humanity. It is an act that involves not only the religious life of the individual, in the

⁶. Joseph L. Henderson, *Thresholds of Initiation* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 93.

modern meaning of the word "religion"; it involves his *entire* life. It is through initiation that, in primitive and archaic societies, man becomes what he is and what he should be - a being open to the life of the spirit, hence open to the culture into which he was born. For as we shall soon see, *the puberty initiation represents above all the revelation of the sacred - and, for the primitive world, the sacred means not only everything that we now understand by religion, but the whole body of the tribe's mythological and cultural traditions.*⁷

According to Eliade, indigenous cultures regard the deepest need of the adolescent male at the time of his transition into manhood as spiritual. In my view the deepest need of contemporary adolescent males as they make their passage into manhood in a modern industrial culture is likewise for a revelation of the sacred.

Since the key aspect of the process of initiation into manhood is spiritual, who then will reveal the sacred to adolescent males in contemporary culture? For thousands and thousands of years adolescent males in indigenous cultures have been initiated into the spirit world by their fathers and the older men of their group, and this has deeply affected the individuals involved in the ritual and indeed the life of the entire tribe. Anne Maguire, a British physician and Jungian analyst, explains the results of initiation rituals:

The initiand had been afforded a view, as through a window, of the vast and remote eternal world. However, more than that, he had been touched and made aware of his self before the objective numinous presence of the Other. This is the real meaning of initiation.⁸

Ideally, in my view, fathers and older men in industrialized urban societies who are committed to the emotional and spiritual development of adolescent males, ought to guide them to "a view of the eternal world" and an awareness of the Transcendent Other. Hence the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is a time during which fathers and older men will have the opportunity to share their experiences of the sacred and help the adolescent males to become more open to the movements of the Spirit.

7. Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: the Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth*, (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), 3.

8. Anne Maguire, "Jung's First Dream", eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Steven Foster and Meredith Little, *Between and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1987), 61.

The Societal and Cultural Need for Male Initiation

If initiation is as important as Eliade and Maguire suggest, and I believe it is, there are dangers for a modern society of not initiating young men into a spiritually mature and responsible manhood. Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos, in their book, *The Wild Man's Journey*, nominate various societal ills they consider are caused by the disappearance of male initiation rites at puberty, and the failure of older men to mentor younger men:

The pattern (of initiation) was so widely documented that one is amazed that we have let go of it so easily. The contemporary experience of gangs, gender identity confusion, romanticization of war, aimless violence and homophobia will all grow unchecked, I predict, until boys are again mentored and formally taught by wise elders. Historically, it was much of the meaning of the medicine man, the priest and the shaman. Now boys look to coaches, drill sergeants and fundamentalist preachers for what the Church no longer gives them.⁹

Much of the aimless violence Rohr and Martos mention is perpetrated by adolescent males, and the incidence of violence among adolescent males is increasing. Children in the United States represent the fastest growing segment of the criminal population.¹⁰ Arrest rates for males, who make up over 90% of felons in prison in the United States, peak at age 16 and tend to decline thereafter.¹¹ My assumption is that it is no coincidence arrest rates for males peak at age 16. Early adolescence is the stage at which males are attempting to prove themselves as men, and that some should of them strive to achieve a sense of manhood in antisocial and violent ways is not surprising. In my view one factor, among a constellation of social factors, contributing to this upsurge of violence, is that younger males are not being initiated by older males, nor taught by them how to deal with their aggression and curb their violent tendencies. Table 1 below illustrates a dramatic increase of more than 300% in arrest rates for juvenile violent crime in the United States over the last 25 years.

9. Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos, *The Wild Man's Journey: Reflections on Male Spirituality* (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1992), 50.

10. William J. Bennett, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators* (Washington: The Heritage Foundation and Free Congress Foundation, 1993), 4.

11. Patricia Sexton, "How the American Boy is Feminized," *Psychology Today* (January 1970): 24.

Table 1: Juvenile Violent Crimes Arrest Rate¹²

Year	Arrest Rates (per 100 000)
1965	137.0
1970	215.9
1975	272.4
1980	338.1
1985	308.6
1990	430.6

Likewise, the increase in abuse and exploitation of women by young males is, in my opinion, another indicator that there is a troubled group of younger men in society who have not been initiated into a sexually mature and responsible manhood by their fathers and older men.

The Jungian analyst, Marie-Louise von Franz¹³ warns of a dangerous increase in delinquency in our time because of the failure of modern religion to properly initiate young males into manhood. One effect of the failure to initiate adolescent males into manhood is, in her opinion, an increasing appearance in modern society of the *puer aeternus*, the eternal boy - the adult male who has not fully grasped his manhood but is trapped in boyhood.

Robert Moore, a Jungian psychoanalyst, and Douglas Gillette, a counselor and mythologist, use the term "Boy psychology" to describe the *puer aeternus* in the

12. William J. Bennett, Op. Cit.

13. Marie Louise von Franz, quoted by Joseph L. Henderson, *Thresholds of Initiation* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 86.

introduction to their book *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*:

What happens to a society if the ritual processes by which these (gender) identities are formed become discredited? In the case of men, there are many who have had no initiation into manhood or who had pseudo-initiations which failed to evoke the needed transition into adulthood. We get the dominance of Boy psychology. Boy psychology is everywhere around us, and its marks are easy to see. Among them are abusive and violent acting-out behaviors against others, both men and women; passivity and weakness, the inability to act effectively and creatively in one's own life and to engender life and creativity in others (both men and women); and, often, an oscillation between the two - abuse/weakness, abuse/weakness.¹⁴

The havoc wrought by immature men who, because they have not been appropriately initiated, are expressing Boy psychology rather than deeply mature manhood, may threaten the structures of a society.

A Psychological and Pastoral Response

Clearly, then, it is crucial for any group that its adolescent males are adequately initiated by older men. Unfortunately the need for a specific rite of passage into manhood is rarely met in an industrialized urban society, and I view this as a form of cultural deprivation. In light of this cultural deprivation, the question which has motivated this thesis is: What pastoral response can churches, schools and other groups make to help meet the need of adolescent males for initiation into a responsible and spiritually mature manhood? Marie-Louise von Franz¹⁵ suggests that psychology and religion could cross-fertilize each other in a particularly fruitful manner if, as she urges, modern religion employ the wisdom of depth psychology in addressing the problem of the disappearance of initiation rituals.

In my view pastoral counseling is ideally suited to the task of addressing the problem of the disappearance of male initiation rituals, because it utilizes insights and

14. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician and Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), xvi.

15. Marie Louise von Franz, Op.Cit.

principles derived from the disciplines of both theology and psychology. The process of 'cross-fertilization' between theology and psychology is at the heart of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*.

A Co-development Model

The design of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* utilizes a co-development model. That is, the retreat simultaneously addresses the different psychosocial and spiritual needs of both the fathers and mentors, and the adolescent male participants. The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is designed to serve (1) the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of adolescent males as they begin the transition from boyhood into manhood, and (2) the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of fathers and mentors as they assist their adolescent sons and protégés to negotiate the transition into manhood.

Psychosocial Development

In the thesis I use two of Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development to describe the psychological and developmental needs of adolescent males and their fathers or mentors. These are identity and generativity.

Identity. Erikson proposes that the psychosocial crisis of adolescence is the achievement of identity versus role confusion. Identity is: "... the immediate perception of one's selfsameness and continuity in time; and the simultaneous perception of the fact that others recognize one's sameness and continuity."¹⁶ For an adolescent male, identity achievement involves a coherent synthesis of his past self-definitions, his present experiences, and his future aspirations. The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is specifically designed to help each adolescent male reflect deeply on his life story and dare to say where

16. Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980), 22.

his life story might lead him.

Generativity. For a father or mentor the psychosocial task of middle adulthood is the achievement of generativity versus stagnation. Generativity is expressed in a commitment to care for the next generation. The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is specifically designed to help fathers and mentors care for the next generation by fostering the ongoing development of adolescent males into psychologically and spiritually mature manhood.

Religious Development

In the thesis I use Vicky Genia's five stages of religious development to describe the psychospiritual needs of adolescent males and their fathers or mentors.¹⁷

Genia notes that a shift in religious thinking usually occurs during adolescence, paralleling the identity crisis typical of this period. For adolescent males, this stage of religious development, which she terms *transitional faith*, is characterized by questioning, doubt, and religious searching. Uncertainty is the distinguishing characteristic of adolescent males in this stage of transitional faith. They need support as they critically examine the religious beliefs which sustained them through boyhood. The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is specifically designed to provide an occasion where each adolescent male might reflect on his previously-held religious beliefs and assist his transition from the egocentric and dogmatic religious thinking of boyhood towards the self-chosen faith of mature manhood.

According to Genia's schema, one might expect a religiously committed father or mentor to have moved through his own stage of transitional faith, and to have made a commitment to "... a self-chosen faith that transcends egocentric and utilitarian concerns.

17. Vicky Genia, "Religious Development: A Synthesis and Reformulation," *Journal of Religion and Health* 29, No. 2 (Summer 1990): 85-99. Genia gives five stages of religious development: egocentric faith, dogmatic faith, transitional faith, reconstructed internalized faith, and transcendent faith. I have found her schema particularly useful in analyzing the spiritual needs of adolescent males.

At this stage, religious ideology provides the individual with a sense of purpose and meaning in life."¹⁸ She terms this stage of religious development *reconstructed internalized faith*. Religiously committed people who are at this stage of religious development, ideally show, "... a sincere desire to care for others by sharing the joys of their faith."¹⁹ The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is specifically designed to help religiously committed fathers and mentors foster the development of their sons and protégés into spiritually mature manhood. The retreat does so by providing the participants an opportunity to share their faith together.

The Team Facilitating the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

The retreat program outlined in this thesis is designed for use by: (i) a pastoral team at a high school; (ii) youth ministers or pastors in a parish setting; (iii) counselors in an outreach program for adolescent males; (iv) a group of fathers concerned to help their adolescent sons through the period of transition into manhood. The retreat is usually facilitated by two men who work as a team. The co-facilitators of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* need to have some background knowledge of developmental psychology, experience of working in small groups and an understanding of group processes, a sense of the importance of sacred ritual in helping people make life-transitions, and a sensitivity to the movements of the Spirit of God in their lives.

The initiation retreat program outlined in Part 2 of this paper is designed as a guide for the aforementioned groups.

A Framework for Thinking About Initiation

Initiation is a complex area of study in which not only psychology and theology intersect, but also sociology and anthropology. In preparing this thesis I found that I

18. *Ibid.*, 91.

19. *Ibid.*, 92.

needed a framework which would both assist me in structuring my thinking about initiation, and enable me to translate theory into practice. Gerard Egan, Professor of Psychology and Organizational Studies at Loyola University of Chicago, has developed a model of system design, functioning and assessment for use by helping and human service professionals.²⁰ I use Egan's model extensively in Part 2 of this thesis to develop the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. I found his model useful because it helped me:

(1) To situate the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* program in the broader social context, and to begin to determine how an initiation retreat would relate to the family of the adolescent male participants and their fathers or mentors, and connect with larger organizations such as a high school or a church community to which they were affiliated.

(2) To ascertain how various systems of society, including adolescent male's family, his school and his church, would impact upon the operation of the actual retreat program.

(3) To begin to address the complex question of what we are initiating adolescent males into in an industrialized urban society.

(4) To determine how to translate the idea of initiating adolescent males into manhood in an industrialized urban society into action. In other words, how the facilitators in a retreat team can get the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* to work in practice.

A specific difficulty - boys without fathers

There is a specific problem which facilitators of a *Fathers and Sons Retreat* must address. In modern society, many adolescent males are not living with their fathers.²¹

20. Gerard Egan, *Change Agent Skills in Helping and Human Services Settings* (Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1985), 22-55.

21. In 1960, 78% of children lived with both of their biological parents, while 8% lived with their mother only. By 1990, only 57% of children were living with both of their biological parents, while 22% were living with their mother only. Approximately 90% of single-parent homes are homes without a father. Source: William J. Bennett, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators*, Op. Cit., 15-16.

There are many factors, including the death of a father, the high rate of marital breakdown, and increasing numbers of single parent and blended families, which cause many adolescent males to have little or no relationship with their biological fathers. Some adolescent males do not even know their biological fathers.

Given the fact of absent fathers, how can the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* attempt to meet the psychological, spiritual and developmental needs of those adolescent males who do not have fathers or who are estranged from their fathers? Our experience in facilitating the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* has been that those adolescent males who are without fathers, but who wish to make the retreat with their peers, have two options. One is that they can seek out mentors whom they invite to go with them on the retreat. The other is that the fathers on the retreat can accompany those adolescents without fathers, and assume the father role for the weekend.

The Initial Fathers and Sons Retreat

The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* program that forms the basis of Part 2 of this thesis was initially used on the weekend of January 22 - 24, 1993 at a retreat center in Wisconsin. Fr. James Colleran, Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Parish in Chicago, Illinois, and I facilitated the initial retreat for ten adolescent males and their fathers or mentors. The participants in the first *Fathers and Sons Retreat* were drawn from a heavily Hispanic parish in Chicago.

Sons and protégés. The ten adolescent males on the retreat were drawn from an Eighth Grade class of the Catholic Elementary School attached to the parish. All were in the 13 - 15 year-old age bracket. Of the ten adolescent males, seven were Hispanic, two were Filipino and one was Caucasian. Seven of the 10 boys were living with their fathers. Three boys had no contact with their biological fathers in the past two years. Five boys came from single parent families, two of the boys from families headed by the father. The

three boys who did not have access to their fathers were encouraged to find mentors with whom they could make the retreat. However only one of the boys could find a man willing to go with him. The other two were "adopted" by the other fathers on the retreat. We found the fathers on the retreat very willing to assume the role of mentor for those adolescents without fathers. In fact it appeared that, in some cases, these fathers related better to their "adopted sons" than they did to their own sons.

Fathers and mentors. Seven fathers and mentors made the weekend retreat. Five of the fathers and mentors spoke Spanish as their first language; only one could speak no English. James Colleran speaks Spanish fluently, and when we separated the fathers and the sons for group work, he worked with the fathers while I worked with the sons, and he was able to translate for the non-English-speaking father.

Of the fathers and mentors, two were in recovery from alcoholism, one was unemployed. Of the fathers and mentors who were employed, most worked two jobs and most of them worked on weekends. So it was quite difficult for them to arrange to be absent from work for the weekend of the retreat. That all of these fathers managed to come to the retreat is, in my view, an indication of the importance they placed on the retreat.

The genuine concern of the older men for the adolescent males on the retreat was particularly encouraging. It has long been my belief that, generally speaking, if you provide males with enough time, a suitable space and a well-organized retreat program, they will respond generously and wholeheartedly. Such was my experience of the participants on the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. Their generosity is cause for hope.

PART I

The Theoretical Bases for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

CHAPTER 1

TWO ISSUES FACING ADOLESCENT MALES IN INDUSTRIALIZED URBAN SOCIETIES

In this chapter I examine two cultural issues and a psychological theory that have a major bearing on the design of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The two cultural issues are: (i) the lack of formal male initiation rituals in industrialized urban society, and (ii) the father - son relationship in Western culture. The psychological theory focuses on C.G. Jung's concept of archetypes.

The Lack of Formal Male Initiation Rituals in Industrialized Urban Society

It is interesting to compare the lack of male initiation rituals in industrialized urban societies with the great care taken to mark an adolescent male's transition into manhood in most tribal cultures. The transition from boyhood to manhood has long been recognized by the elders of most indigenous cultures as a crisis period adolescent males. Victor Turner, in his book, *The Forest of Symbols*, which is a study of the rituals of the Ndembu tribe of northwestern Zambia, calls the male initiation ceremony, which marks the important change in the physical and social development of an adolescent male at puberty, a life-crisis ritual. He notes:

These "crisis" ceremonies not only concern the individuals on whom they are centered, but also mark changes in the relationships of all the people connected with them by ties of blood, marriage, cash, political control, and in many other ways.¹

Physiological and psychological changes precipitate a life-crisis in a pubescent male and begin the process of his passage from boyhood to manhood. When this occurs, the people with whom he lives must change along with him. As he enters his period of transition, it also becomes period of transition for his father and mother, his siblings, his friends and all those with whom he relates in his community. Because he is changing they too must change their attitudes towards him and their ways of relating to him.

Acknowledging the difficulty of this transitional period for the adolescents involved, and recognizing that the socio-cultural survival of the tribe depends in large part upon the socialization of the males in the group, elders practice inherited sacred rituals that help change boys into men. Ray Raphael, in his book *The Men from the Boys: Rites of Passage in Male America*, comments:

Historically, a youth has rarely been left to his own devices during this difficult time of transition. Traditional cultures throughout the world have often devised ways of dramatizing and ritualizing the passage into manhood and of transforming that passage into a community event. Through the use of structured initiation rites, these societies have been able to help and guide the youths through their period of developmental crisis. By formalizing the transitional process, complex problems of identity formation are translated into concrete and straightforward tasks.²

The sacred rituals of tribal initiation involve an adolescent male relinquishing one identity, that of the boy, and taking on a new identity as a man. The adolescent male's transition into manhood is not a privatized event he undergoes alone; his passage into manhood is recognized, valued and celebrated by the whole community for whom it is a transition too. Rarely in modern secular society is the life-crisis of a contemporary adolescent's passage into manhood is recognized, valued and ritually celebrated in the community.

1. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), 7.

2. Ray Raphael, *The Men from the Boys: Rites of Passage in Male America* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1988), x.

Secularization of Industrialized Urban Societies

The growth of industrialized urban societies has caused a number of changes in the way people live their lives. One change is that society has become increasingly secularized, and a concomitant of secularization is a weakened sense of the significance of sacred ritual. But as Solon Kimbali points out in his introduction to Arnold van Gennep's book, *The Rites of Passage*, "There is no evidence that a secularized urban world has lessened the need for ritualized expression of an individual's transition from one status to another."³

One effect secularization has wrought on industrialized urban society is the disappearance of ritualistic initiation into manhood. This lack of ritualized initiation into manhood is a problem for males in today's society because they have no generally accepted way of achieving social validation as men, a crucial piece of traditional initiation rituals. Indigenous cultures ensure that this validation occurs. Yet, in many cases, adolescent males in modern industrial society search in vain for a way of being ritually accepted as mature men. David Gilmore contrasts indigenous cultures and their rituals of male initiation, with industrialized urban societies and their lack of initiation rituals:

Such prolonged and collective rites of passage are found mainly in primitive (or preliterate) societies. Peasants and urban peoples rarely celebrate adulthood for either sex through elaborate or sacred ritualization, usually opting for tacit recognitions of individual growth. As we have seen, the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern peoples, in particular, are generally left to their own devices, as are modern Americans and most other Westerners.⁴

Other contemporary authors write about the cultural deprivation caused by the lack of male initiation rituals in industrialized urban society. Edith Sullwood, a Jungian analyst, who works with children, makes the point that:

Adolescents of our time do not find such collective rituals offered by the elders to support and facilitate their transition. Our cultures have become much more complex and the teenager does not cross the threshold into a clearly defined form of

3. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), xvii.

4. David D. Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: cultural concepts of masculinity*, (London: Yale University Press, 1990), 125.

adulthood with its prescribed set of beliefs and skills. No cohesive forms of instruction or initiation into the adult world exist except certain academic expectations and the development of work skills.⁵

Robert Bly, the noted American poet and author of a number of works on men including *Iron John*, comments that older men in Western society are not doing their job of initiating adolescent males into manhood, and so continuity between generations is disrupted. He views male initiation as something which can only be performed by men. However, because many men are not accepting their responsibility for forming younger males, women, specifically mothers, are saddled with initiating adolescent males, a task that, in Bly's opinion, they are not equipped to perform.⁶

Those men who *are* willing to accept their responsibility for forming younger males, and who want to initiate adolescent males into manhood, face many difficulties, because there are no generally agreed upon structures in industrialized urban society for understanding and facilitating the transition from boyhood into manhood. Fathers, mentors, and adolescent males are at a loss because they have no clear-cut framework, or distinct social and cultural markers to help them negotiate that transition.

In the first world becoming a man is just expected to 'happen', somehow, as an adolescent male gets older. Except that being old has nothing to do with being a man. Many men are just grown up boys who haven't fully made the transition into manhood. This is why a number of psychologists and anthropologists in urban industrialized societies are examining tribal societies, and asking how indigenous peoples go about initiating adolescent males into manhood to determine what can be learned from them.

5. Edith Sullwood, "The Ritual-Maker Within at Adolescence," eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Stephen Foster, and Meredith Little, *Between and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987), 116.

6. Robert Bly, "The Need for Male Initiation", ed. Keith Thompson, *To be a Man: in search of the Deep Masculine* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1991), 42.

The Psychic Effects of the Crisis in Masculine Ritual Processes

Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette have worked together to analyze the crisis in masculine ritual process in modern culture. Noting that the process of ritual initiation into manhood has been all but abandoned in Western civilization, they propose the following historical reason for its disappearance in the introduction to their book *King, Warrior, Magician Lover*:

We can point to the historical background for the decline of ritual initiation. The Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment were strong movements that shared the theme of the discrediting of ritual process. And once ritual as a sacred and transforming process has been discredited, what we are left with is what Victor Turner has called "mere ceremonial", which does not have the power necessary to achieve genuine transformation of consciousness. By disconnecting from ritual we have done away with the processes by which men and women achieved their gender identity in a deep, mature, and life-enhancing way.⁷

Moore and Gillette use the Jungian concept of *archetypes* to analyze the effects of the crisis in masculine ritual process. In the Jungian schema, archetypes are primordial images and ideas, common to members of the human race, stored in the *collective unconscious* -- the deepest level of the human psyche. Archetypes are the possibilities, the potentialities and the predispositions of the person to act in certain ways in response to certain external stimuli. An archetype is an inherited readiness of the psyche to respond to particular situations or physical processes by producing the same, or similar, mythical or fantasy ideas.

The inherited readiness of the psyche to respond in certain determined ways seems to have been imprinted in the collective unconscious by repeated subjective emotional reactions over countless generations, and passed on to future generations as a residue of ancestral emotional life. Moore and Gillette describe archetypes, as the "hard wiring"⁸ of the collective unconscious which shapes and channels psychic energy. The archetypes

7. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician and Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), xvi.

8. *Ibid.*, 9.

cannot disappear, but they "power up" at various stages in life when the external situation calls for them.

Gillette and Moore name the four basic masculine archetypes - King, Warrior, Magician, and Lover.⁹ Their contention is that these four masculine archetypes constitute the deep structures of the mature male psyche, and provide an inner geography for understanding male psychology. They note that men who are fragmented are probably not experiencing their deep masculine archetypes:

A man who "cannot get it together" is a man who has probably not had the opportunity to undergo ritual initiation into the deep structures of manhood. He remains a boy - not because he wants to, but because no one has shown him the way to transform his boy energies into man energies. No one has led him into direct and healing experiences of the inner world of the masculine potentials.¹⁰

Initiation in indigenous cultures shows a boy the way to transform his boy energies into man energies, and leads him to a direct experience of his masculine archetypes.

Masculine rites of passage in premodern societies usually involve initiation into the Warrior archetype.¹¹ According to Moore and Gillette, in their book, *The Warrior Within*, the older men of indigenous tribes are particularly concerned with helping adolescents deal with the energy of the Warrior archetype; I will explore this aspect of indigenous initiation in more detail in the next chapter. They comment on the disastrous effects on the modern world of the lack of Warrior initiation for adolescent males:

Most of us refuse to see that the loss of an understanding of the necessity of Warrior initiation for young males has left us in a situation in which immature expression of male aggression terrorizes the global community, including the world of women and children.¹²

9. Ibid., xi.

10. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, "The Crisis in the Masculine Ritual Process" ed. Keith Thompson, *To be a Man: in search of the Deep Masculine*, Op. Cit., 43.

11. The Warrior archetype is described in detail by Tad Guzie and Noreen Monroe Guzie, in their book, *About Men and Women: How Your "Great Story" Shapes Your Destiny* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 38f.

12. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *The Warrior Within: Accessing the Knight in the Male Psyche* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1992), 203.

In contrast, indigenous initiation explicitly addresses the adolescent male's feelings of anger and his potential for violent acting-out in the hope that he might learn from older men how to channel his instinctual aggressive energy in constructive rather than destructive ways.

An Archetype of Initiation

A question that needs to be examined in conjunction with the problem of masculine aggression, is why adolescent males need put themselves physically at risk. For instance, in some of the housing projects in Chicago, a number of young adolescent males have taken to "surfing" on top of the elevators. They climb onto the roofs of the elevators and ride them up and down in the shafts. Recently one adolescent male was crushed to death when he failed to clamber off the top of the elevator in time.

Why do adolescent males risk their lives in such ways? There is something in the psyche of an adolescent male that draws him towards risking and testing himself in dangerous situations. Often he is dared into foolhardy escapades by his friends or his peer group; sometimes the need to test his courage comes from within. Patricia Sexton comments on the need males have to struggle for a sense of manhood: "It is difficult for societies to deal with the male's aggressive quest for manhood. Since males seem generally unwilling to settle for less without a struggle, they tend to become misfits much more than women do."¹³

The quest for manhood is innate in adolescent males, and a key part of their quest usually involves testing personal and societal limits. In an article entitled *Saint-Makers in the Desert*, Mary Elizabeth Podles, and her husband Leon J. Podles, suggest that

13. Patricia Sexton, "How the American Boy is feminized", *Psychology Today*, January 1970, 23.

adolescent males need some form of perilous physical and spiritual awakening which wounds them and shocks them out of boyhood into a higher consciousness:

There is something peculiar to the male psyche that attaches it deeply to personal, public and bloody sacrifice. Puberty rituals always involve the removal of the boy-child from the safe and normal world of the mother, the nurturing female, and the exodus into the hostile and dangerous. Whether this alien world is entered through drugs, or infliction of pain, or meeting with the spirits in mystic vision or combat with lions, the result is the same. The young man is wounded, scarred in body or in soul, and only by his wounding does he attain to a wisdom and compassion that permit him to transform his strength and aggressiveness into a self-sacrificial authority. In the mythic pattern, the hero can only become the king through the wounding of a close encounter with death. ¹⁴

I suspect that when adolescent males risk their lives by riding on the tops of trains, driving too fast, drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, fighting and so on, they are responding, usually unconsciously, to an archetypal need to be initiated into manhood. This archetypal desire to be initiated, which usually involves undergoing some kind of ordeal and withstanding the pain of that test, needs to be satisfied before adolescent males consider themselves worthy of manhood. For instance, adolescent males who want to become gang members may be burned with cigarettes, or beaten, or have to undergo other painful ordeals without flinching, in order to prove themselves worthy of acceptance into the gang. One 14 year-old gang member recently described his initiation ritual to me:

They asked me to go up against the wall, cross my arms across my chest, and for 45 seconds they beat me in the chest with their fists. Above my arms. As many times as they could in 45 seconds. If I fell they could hit me anywhere they wanted. They could kick me. Then, after the 45 seconds was over, they shook my hand, showed me their secret handshake. Then they burned me with a cigarette in-between my thumb and my index finger. It's a scar for life. It means that you are a part of their gang for life.

What would induce an adolescent male put himself through such a painful ordeal? Michael Meade, a storyteller who, with Robert Bly, has addressed many groups of men in the United States, comments on this phenomenon:

There's something in us that wants to get initiated; the initiatory desire in men is extremely strong. To complain that it's crazy for young men to drive around in cars

¹⁴. Mary Elizabeth Podles and Leon J. Podles, "Saint-Makers in the Desert", *America*, 167, No. 14, (1992), 348-361.

at ninety miles an hour is useless. We need to ask what the craziness is. To say that it is foolish for young men to want to hurl their bodies against each other in sports or to practice intricate physical routines is to say nothing. We need to ask why. What's pulling boys and men into that? ¹⁵

The Jungian analyst, Joseph L. Henderson, agrees with Meade's conjecture that adolescent males show a primal need for some type of initiatory process. In his book, *Thresholds of Initiation*, Henderson suggests that there is an archetype of initiation in the collective unconscious.¹⁶ In studying the dream material of his clients, Henderson has come to the conclusion that initiation is not just an outer ritual, but an inner reality embedded in the unconscious that will express itself in some way whether or not a particular culture makes provision for its formal ritual expression. Eliade, noting that initiatory themes remain alive in modern man's unconscious, states: "...in the depths of his being, modern man is still capable of being moved by initiatory scenarios or messages." ¹⁷

Henderson sifts through the dream material of his clients and points out how similar it is to the myths and ritual observances of ancient societies. He designates three thresholds through which a person must pass. These are the transitions, (i) from childhood to adolescence which, for boys, occurs at about the age of 13; (ii) from adolescence to early maturity, which occurs around the age of 18; and, (iii) from maturity to the experience of individuation, which occurs at mid-life.¹⁸ In terms of this *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, I am mainly concerned with (i) the transition from boyhood to adolescence which occurs at puberty.

To sum up, even though there has been a decline in the ritual process of male initiation in industrialized urban societies, there is evidence that an archetypal need for some form of ritual initiation remains.

15. Michael Meade, "We must ask what the craziness is," ed. Keith Thompson, *To be a Man: in search of the Deep Masculine*, Op. Cit., 42.

16. Joseph L. Henderson, *Thresholds of Initiation* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1979), 3.

17. Mircea Eliade, "A conversation with Mircea Eliade", *Parabola*, 1,3, (Summer 1976), 76.

18. Joseph L. Henderson, Op. Cit., 19.

The Father - Son Relationship in Contemporary Culture

Given the evidence that, despite the decline in sacred ritual, an archetypal need for initiation remains, how can this need be appropriately met? Can older males initiate adolescent males into manhood? Can we look to fathers to perform the initiatory task for their sons?

Many authors, including Gustafson¹⁹, Merton²⁰, Bly²¹ and Mitscherlich²², describe the father-son bond as one of society's most wounded relationships. The Harvard psychologist Samuel Osherson, in the introduction to his book, *Finding our Fathers*, comments on the father-son relationship:

The interviews I have had with men in their thirties and forties convince me that the psychological or physical absence of fathers from their families is one of the great underestimated tragedies of our times. I believe that there is considerable sense of hidden loss within men, having to do with their fathers. ²³

Many fathers are not actively involved with their sons. Osherson cites Shere Hite's survey of 7, 239 men which reveals that "almost no men said that they had been or were close to their fathers."²⁴ Nash²⁵ claims that American men are, in general, so wrapped up in the pursuit of career success that they largely abdicate their role in their children's upbringing to their wives. They abdicate their role of assisting the developmental task of their adolescent sons, which is to become men. They fail to initiate him into manhood, and this

19. Fred Gustafson, "Fathers, Sons and Brotherhood", ed. Charles Scull, *Fathers, Sons and Daughters*, (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1992), 72.

20. Andrew Merton, "Father Hunger", ed. Charles Scull, *Fathers, Sons and Daughters*, (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1992), 18f.

21. Robert Bly, *Iron John*, (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1990), p. 21.

22. Alexander Mitscherlich, *Society without the Father: A Contribution to Social Psychology*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993).

23. Samuel Osherson, *Finding Our Fathers: How a Man's Life is Shaped by His Relationship With His Father* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1986), 6.

24. Shere Hite, *The Hite Report on Male Sexuality*, (New York: Knopf, 1981), 17, cited by Samuel Osherson, Op. Cit., 6f.

25. John Nash, "The Father in Contemporary Culture and Current Psychological Literature," *Child Development*, 1965, 28, No. 1, 261-297.

failure is a source of deep woundedness in the father -son relationship. Has it always been this way?

Historical Factors which influence the Father-Son Relationship

A number of authors including Nash,²⁶ Bly²⁷ and Mitscherlich²⁸ hypothesize that the Industrial Revolution wounded the father-son bond in Western society.

In his elegant comparison of indigenous and modern societies, Nash claims that, in both societies, the father-son relationship appears to be influenced by the economic system. Nash claims that the economic system of a typical indigenous society usually consists of family cooperatives in which the division of labor is by sex.²⁹ Such an economic arrangement customarily requires that fathers and sons work together. In such an indigenous culture, the boy is taught by his father, and, by means of this working relationship, the boy is socialized into his male role:

Such economic systems and their concomitant sex division of labor give rise to a whole system of values which emphasize social maleness and femaleness; the child-rearing practices of those primitive cultures where there is division of labor tend to emphasize the father-son and the mother-daughter relationships.³⁰

Nash postulates that this sort of family economy, in which labor was divided by sex, existed in rural Britain until the end of the eighteenth century.

However, the economic changes of the Industrial Revolution wrought huge changes in the family structure. Family cooperatives disappeared as men, women and children began working in factories and mines. The hours and the conditions under which they worked disrupted the then existing patterns of family life.

26. Ibid.

27. Robert Bly, *Iron John* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1990).

28. Alexander Mitscherlich, Op. Cit.

29. John Nash, Op. Cit., 265.

30. Ibid.

Gradually legislation was introduced to improve the working conditions of men, women and children in factories. Child labor laws, laws regulating working environments, and laws limiting the number of hours a person could work each week, lessened the likelihood that people who worked in factories would be exploited. Women and children worked less frequently in factories, and the family became increasingly dependent upon on the father for economic support . Even when both parents worked, however, it was rarely the structured along the lines of the family cooperative economy of pre-Industrial Revolution days.

Restrictions on the employment of children and compulsory education have disrupted the important father-son relationship which exists in many primitive cultures and once existed in our own. Instead, as a result of our economic system, it seems fair to say that we have a system of child-rearing in which the mother is considered mainly responsible for the upbringing of the children of both sexes. The father's economic activities, which have removed him from the home for much of the day, have precluded him from this responsibility.³¹

Bly concurs with Nash's hypothesis. Describing the impact of the disruption of the father-son relationship from the son's point of view, he argues that before the Industrial Revolution sons grew up with an immediate psychic relationship with their fathers. Bly contends that, socio-culturally, the son was a part of what his father was doing. The son was a part of his father's world. He knew what his father did and how he worked and spent his time. Bly contends that, because of their working relationship, the son felt validated by his father. A son didn't have to spend the rest of his life *earning* his father's respect, because he already had it. He already had a domain in which he had credibility, in which he was accepted, in which he knew he had gifts. He didn't have to prove himself.

At the time of the Industrial Revolution, when men began to work in factories, sons began to have less access to their fathers. Consequently the father-son bond was disrupted. This disruption continues in modern society as fathers work in offices.

31. Ibid., 266.

Because of changed work situations, a vacuum has developed in the hearts of young men because they don't see and they don't really know what their fathers do and who they are.

The German psychologist, Alexander Mitscherlich, compares the relationship of a son to his father in pre-Industrial Revolution days with the situation that prevails today:

Thus his contact with his father had marked the child in two ways. It had left him with the development plan for orderly behavior that we call the conscience (super-ego), and also the rudiments of practical life had been passed on to him. In social conditions characterized by regular, seasonal tasks handed on unchanged from generation to generation, this formative side of education hardly seems worthy of notice; it is a social phenomenon of a self-evident kind. No problem arises until this way of doing things become subject to a permanent revolution. If the revolutionary process takes the form of a fragmentation of labor and an increase of social activities with 'non-visible' results - such as all administrative and office work, for instance - the result for the young is a loss of direct contact, which means a deficiency in social education. The point that we are making is that this deficiency is not without a retroactive affect on the whole formation and imprinting of the present generation of sons by their fathers.³²

Society, by rending the father-son bond in this manner, has torn the soul of the male - and into this tear demons have fled - the demons of insecurity, selfishness and despair. Consequently, many men do not know who they are as men. Rather they define themselves by what they do, who they know, and what they own. The rending of the father-son bond has drastically affected a man's sense of gender identity. This in turn affects his relationship with his wife, with his daughters, with other men and, particularly, with his sons.

Much of the psychological literature on the father-son relationship is observational rather than experimental in nature because the bond is a difficult one on which to do empirical research. In addition, most of the studies have been done in the United States. However my assumption is that the generalizations made about the father - son bond in the American context to some extent approximate the father-son relationship throughout the industrialized urban societies of the Western world.

32. Alexander Mitscherlich, *Op. Cit.*, 143-144.

The Social Effects of the Relationship of a Father and his Son

The father - son relationship is vitally important for society. The relationship which the individual boy has with his father will affect his patterns of behavior as an adult. The degree of mature gender identity a boy's relationship with his father has enabled him to acquire will affect the web of relationships he forms in later life. Mitscherlich asks *what* it is that we learn from our fathers:

What does one really inherit from one's father, apart from his physique, perhaps, and what does one acquire from him? What happens in emotional communication with him, and what social task is associated with this relationship? One can admire one's father, one can feel sheltered and protected by him, or one can fear him; and finally one can despise him. At different times one can do all these things. Besides these so varying emotional attitudes, however, there is something else. One can learn from one's father, one can be initiated by him into ways of dealing with things, or one can do without him in the process.³³

The process of a son's being initiated by the father into ways of dealing with things - such as the pain encountered in living, anger and violence, relationships with women, sexuality, encountering God, and the service of others - that the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is designed to foster and complement.

33. Ibid., 139-140.

CHAPTER 2

INITIATION OF ADOLESCENT MALES IN INDIGENOUS CULTURES

In this Chapter I give a brief overview of some of the (i) socio-cultural, (ii) religious, and (iii) psychological interpretations of male initiation rites in indigenous cultures. I will not examine a male initiation ritual of any particular tribal group in detail, as the specifics of those rituals vary immensely from tribe to tribe. Rather, because my goal in preparing this thesis is to design and test a retreat for adolescent males and their fathers or mentors which would be an initiatory moment for the adolescent male participants, my aim, in this chapter, is to examine the underlying patterns of male initiation rituals in indigenous societies in order to determine what can be learned from them in terms of developing a contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males.

Tribal people were, and are, keen observers of human nature. They knew that some form of initiation ritual was needed for adolescent males at puberty to facilitate their passage from boyhood into manhood. The initiation ordeals they devised were responses to what they saw as the needs of the tribe, and the needs of the adolescent male at the time of his transition into manhood. Many psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists have attempted to decipher the meaning of these pubertal initiation rites. Given the amount written on this topic, this overview is far from exhaustive. I have restricted myself to those studies of initiation rituals of pre-modern societies which I believe could assist in the process designing a male initiation process for an industrialized urban society.

Socio-cultural Interpretations of Male Initiation Rites

Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Masks of God*, suggests that three basic types of male initiation rituals in indigenous societies can be discerned, and each type reflects the organization of the society in which it was performed.¹ The three types of tribal organization he nominates show: (1) an essential equality between the sexes, (2) a pronounced patriarchal emphasis, or, (3) a pronounced matriarchal emphasis.

Essential Equality Between the Sexes

The first type of initiation was found in very small hunting, fishing and collecting groups of between twenty and forty parents and children, whose simple tribal structures did not have a pronounced patriarchal or matriarchal arrangement. In this type of society there was equality between the sexes, with neither sex appropriating the right to lead or have any special entitlement over the other. Pubertal initiation ceremonies in these tribes were not restricted to men and their pubescent sons. Rather the rites of initiation included both males and females and were nearly identical for boys and girls. The rites involved no painful physical mutilations or communication of mystical secrets, but were a means of educating the young men and women about how to become good mothers and fathers and how, as adults, they might live and work harmoniously together. The males in this first type of social grouping were hunters of larger animals, while the females were gatherers of smaller animals, edible insects, fruits, berries and other collectibles.

A Pronounced Patriarchal Emphasis

The second type of initiation was seen in numerically larger hunting tribes. In these hunting tribes, clans were carefully organized and society was purposefully stratified. This

¹. Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1959), 318 ff.

second sort of tribal society developed among indigenous peoples such as the Aboriginals, who dwelled in the central deserts of Australia and hunted kangaroo, and the Native Americans, who dwelled in the prairies of North America and hunted bison. The males of these tribes were highly skilled in the art of hunting wild animals for food. The hunt was extremely physically taxing and potentially dangerous, so men needed a great deal of physical strength and courage to hunt. Men also needed to be brave warriors to protect the tribe from other tribes. Men needed to be able to withstand pain both in battle and on the hunt.

Initiation rituals in this second sort of indigenous society were secret and rigidly segregated by gender. Typically initiation began when the adolescent male was taken away from his mother to a special place set aside only for men. Initiation rituals took place at this sacred place. Rituals were performed there which might include fasting, learning the skills of hunting, and training in the use of weapons. During the time of initiation, which could last anywhere from several days to some months, the adolescent male often had to endure physical pain. Frequently this involved the older men inflicting intense pain on, and sometimes mutilating, the male initiate. For instance, in one Aboriginal tribe an adolescent male would have a tooth knocked out during the time of his initiation. In other tribes adolescent males were cut with knives and ashes poured on the wounds causing the gashes to fester and leaving the initiate with permanent scars as reminders of their ordeal. The adolescent male also endured the psychological pain engendered by the frightening nature of the rites. The male initiation rituals frequently concluded with circumcision. The boy's ability to endure pain was regarded as a hallmark of his ability to enter the world of men.

The boy also learned the sacred myths of the tribe. He was initiated into the "men's mysteries", a body of myth and culture known only to the men, and this gave him a new spiritual orientation. In this way the myths of the tribe were passed on to the next generation.

In both political and spiritual matters men dominated these communities and women's authority was restricted to domestic matters. These were truly patriarchal societies.

A Pronounced Matriarchal Emphasis

A third type of initiation was found in tropical gardening cultures which had a very different social organization from that found in larger hunting groups. These tended to be matriarchal societies in which women dominated the spiritual and social life of the community. In this third sort of society plants were the chief form of food, and women, as the plant cultivators, were the main producers of food. That, coupled with being the bearers of the children, gave women greater economic power and social status than men. Men in these societies were almost inconsequential. According to Campbell, in reaction to their feelings of inferiority towards women, men "developed secret lodges and societies, the mysteries and terrors of which were primarily directed against women."² Initiation rituals in these societies was often a way of intimidating women and attempting to establish the dominance of men.

Women, and Male Initiation Rituals

In discussing the sociological meaning initiation rituals, it is important to note that there is no single understanding of initiation. The rituals varied from place to place, and the socio-economic and political arrangement of the tribal groupings had an impact on the structure of initiation rituals. It is clear, from Campbell's socio-cultural description of the three types of male initiation, that rites of passage in some indigenous cultures were expressions of the socio-economic power, or lack of power, of men vis-à-vis women. In some circumstances, male rites of passage were used as a means of continuing the

2. Ibid., 321.

subjugation of women in patriarchal societies, or attempting to assert male dominance in matriarchal societies.

There is a lesson, in Campbell's analysis, for older males concerned about initiation of adolescent males in modern societies. That is, male rituals of initiation are performed in a particular socio-cultural context, and reflect the gender roles and the position of women in that society. Gender roles in industrialized urban societies are in a great deal of flux in the present historical context. In designing a contemporary rite of passage with the purpose of helping adolescent males gain a healthy sense of masculine identity, the changing roles of women in society must be taken into account. Care must be taken that the ritual not be directed against women in any way, nor be used as a means of perpetuating the dominance of men over women. In that industrialized urban societies still tend, despite the efforts of the women's movement, to oppress women economically and socially, a contemporary rite of passage ought strive to be counter-cultural. A contemporary initiation ritual ought educate adolescent males about the essential equality of men and women, and inculcate in them a deep respect for women.

Given the potential of male initiation rites for contributing to oppression of women, shouldn't adolescent males and females be initiated together? A joint rite of passage could be a safeguard against promulgation of sexist rhetoric and patriarchal ideology. A contemporary rite of initiation could mimic the initiation rites found in the first type of tribal culture where there is equality between the sexes, and initiation rites include both boys and girls. In my view, joint rites of passage would not be particularly helpful for the adolescent males involved. It is my opinion that pubescent adolescent males in contemporary society need a special time in the company of their fathers and older males - a time away from females - during which they can be validated by older men and become more settled in their gender identity. In his book, *Fire in the Belly*, Sam Keen maintains indigenous peoples knew that both adolescent males and females needed time apart to explore their separate

truths as men and women:

Premodern societies knew the overwhelming power of woman and that boys could only emerge into manhood if they separated from her and entered for a time into an all-male world. Male rites of passage were designed to allow boys to escape from woman's world long enough to discover the shape of man's world. They knew that men must resist the danger of being defined by woman (and vice versa). The sexes were pried apart and isolated to explore their separate truths before they could come together.³

In my opinion, the same can be said of contemporary adolescent males and females. Both need time apart to explore their separate truths in order that, when they come together, their relationships will be enhanced because they are more certain of who they are as men and women. If an adolescent male has been given time to enter into a man's world and be accepted as a man, he will feel more secure in his gender identity. If an adolescent male feels more secure in his gender identity I believe that he will be less likely to act out aggressively, or in sexually inappropriate ways, towards females. In my opinion a female, in relationship with an adolescent male who has been initiated into the inner world of his masculine potentials by means of a culturally appropriate rite of passage, will be one of the beneficiaries of his mature masculinity.

A Generalized Pattern of Initiation

Victor Turner⁴, building on the work of Arnold van Gennep, affirms the idea that the rites of passage in indigenous cultures can be separated into three distinct phases. He posits the following generalized pattern of initiation rites in indigenous societies:

<i>Stage one:</i>	separation
<i>Stage two:</i>	transitional or liminal phase
<i>Stage three:</i>	reincorporation

3. Sam Keen, *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 28.

4. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 94-97.

Separation

The puberty initiation begins with an act of rupture by which the boy is separated from the rest of the tribe, and particularly his mother, in sometimes brutal ways. In the phase of separation the adolescent male is taken away by tribal elders men to a sacred place. In being physically separated from the tribe, he is stripped forever of his former role as a boy in the community. The boy becomes an initiand: one who is separated from the irresponsible world of boyhood, but who is not yet a man. Eliade comments on the separation phase of the initiation ritual of one Australian Aboriginal tribe:

The meaning of this first part of the ceremony, the separation of the neophytes from their mothers, seems quite clear. What we have is a break, sometimes quite a violent break, with the world of childhood - which is at once the maternal and female world and the child's state of irresponsibility and happiness, of ignorance and asexuality. The break is made in such a way as to produce a strong impression on the mothers and the novices.⁵

In nearly all Australian Aboriginal tribes the mothers are convinced that their sons are going to be killed and eaten by a hostile divinity. While they are assured that this divinity will bring their sons back to life in the form of grown men, the mothers know that their sons will never be what they were before the rite of passage: *their* sons. Among some tribes the adolescent initiands are mourned in much the same way as the dead.

The effect of this separation on the adolescent initiands is just as dramatic. They are "... torn from their blissful unconsciousness, and told that they are to die, that they will be killed by the divinity."⁶ The brutal separation from their mothers fills the initiands with forebodings of death. In the liminal phase they will ritually enact the psychic "death" of boyhood which has already begun with their separation from their mothers. The motif of death at the hands of Divine Beings occurs in a number of premodern initiation rituals.⁷

5. Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), 8.

6. *Ibid.*, 9.

7. *Ibid.*

Transitional or Liminal Phase

In the transitional or liminal stage, the boy finds himself in an undifferentiated phase. The boy is in a temporary period of transition from one state to another state. Having abandoned his former identity, boyhood, the adolescent male "passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or the coming state."⁸ The boy is betwixt and between, neither here nor there. He is neither boy nor man. Possessing nothing and having no status, his behavior is usually passive and humble.

During this liminal phase the initiands are usually taken to a sacred site known only to the men; great precautions are taken to prevent women from seeing this place. It is at this sacred site that he undergoes painful ordeals. His old self is relinquished and his consciousness is transformed by means of the rituals, the ordeals, and his introduction to the religious myths of his tribe. During this liminal phase an intense camaraderie tends to develop among the groups of adolescent males who are undergoing initiation together.

Reincorporation

The third phase involves the adolescent male moving beyond the liminal phase and being reincorporated into the tribe. He is expected to take on the commitments, duties and responsibilities of a man in the tribe. In one Australian tribe reincorporation process involves the initiand in the following act of separation from his mother. After the initiation is completed the young man returns to his mother, holding a jar of water. As prescribed by the ritual, "... she asks her son for water to drink, but he splashes water over her."⁹ One commentator noted a mother crying for her son as if he were dead after this act. Similar ritual aggression towards mothers is demonstrated by initiates of other indigenous societies:

Among the Hottentots, for example, the initiate is allowed to insult and even manhandle his mother, in token of his emancipation from her tutelage. In some parts

8. Victor Turner, *Op. Cit.*, 94.

9. Mircea Eliade, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

of Papua the novice walks over his mother's body, deliberately stepping on her belly, and this gesture confirms his definitive separation from her.¹⁰

Such rituals, brutal though they may seem, help the adolescent male separate himself from his mother's feminine power and symbolize his new status as a man who is no longer under his mother's authority. It is difficult for a mother who has enjoyed the devotion of a son to give it up. She will be naturally inclined to want to hold on to her son. The purpose of such rituals is to assist both the son *and* his mother in this necessary transition. The rituals described above allows the mother to express her genuine pain and grief at loss the loss of her son, and to yield to and eventually accept her son's new role as a man in the tribe.

Initiation helps the adolescent male differentiate himself appropriately from his mother and his father. They help him to reframe his relationships to both parents. He is no longer dependent upon the care and protection of his mother and father, but is a man in his own right, able stand separate from them in a new and equal relationship with them.

Religious Interpretations of Male Initiation Rites

Because men in industrialized urban societies live in a basically desacralized world, it is hard for them to understand the centrality of the sacred for indigenous peoples. For the indigenous person every aspect of life, culture and the world is sacred and so related to the supernatural. For the indigenous person life, culture, and the world not only have supernatural origins, but their very substance is sacred and filled with the supernatural. Every indigenous society has myths to explain the beginnings of the relationship between the tribe and the supernatural beings. Eliade explains myth in the following way:

Any myth tells how something came into being - the world, man, animal species, social institutions, and so on. Myth, then, is always an account of a "creation"; it relates how something was produced or began to *be*. The actors in myths are Supernatural Beings. They are known primarily by what they did in the mythical times of the "beginnings". Hence myths disclose the creative activity of these beings

10. *Ibid.*, 30.

and reveal the sacredness or "supernaturalness" of their work. For this reason, myth becomes the exemplary model for all significant human activity. ¹¹

While initiatory rituals vary immensely from tribe to tribe, region to region, there are some similarities. One is the revelation of sacred myth. In all premodern societies the sacred myths of the tribe are gradually revealed to the adolescent male the time of his initiation into manhood. During his initiation the adolescent male learns the names of the Supernatural Beings, the story of their creative activity, and the mystical relationship they have with his tribe since the beginning of time. In this way he is introduced to the spiritual and cultural values of his tribe. He also learns the behavior patterns and skills appropriate for adults males within the social organization of the tribe.

Being introduced to the sacred myths or sacred history of his tribe does not merely tells the initiand how things came to be. Sacred history also models for the initiand what is appropriate personal and social behavior given that his actions, and the actions of the group, contribute to sacred history, through the mystical connection of his people to the Supernatural Beings. These sacred myths must be preserved and transmitted passed on intact to succeeding generations.

Eliade notes that in most indigenous cultures puberty initiations are performed medicine men or shamans:

Puberty initiations are performed under the sponsorship of specialists in the sacred - which comes down to saying that they are finally controlled by men with a certain religious vocation. The novices are taught not only by the old men but also, and increasingly, by priests and members of religious societies. The most important aspects of the tribes religion - e.g., techniques of ecstasy, the secrets and the miracles of medicine men, relations with the Ancestors - are revealed to the novices by men who themselves possess a deeper religious experience, obtained as a result of a special vocation or after a long apprenticeship. ¹²

Being introduced to the mythical traditions of the tribe is, as Eliade observes, an important sign of manhood for the adolescent male: "As long as they were considered to be

11. Mircea Eliade, "A Conversation With Mircea Eliade", *Parabola* 1, No. 3, (Summer 1976): 77.

12. Mircea Eliade, *Op. Cit.*, 39.

children, they took no part in the religious life of the tribe. If by chance they had heard references to mysterious Beings, and scraps of myths and legends, they did not realize what was in question."¹³ Formal introduction to the world of these sacred and transcendent realities means that the tribal elders judge the initiand capable of experiencing the sacred and understanding religious mysteries. Hence the time is ripe to leave childhood behind.

For indigenous people a man is *made* by means of his introduction to the sacred myths of the group by tribal elders. He does not make himself. The older men do. Through the process of initiation the boy dies. As Victor Turner notes:

In so far as the neophyte is structurally "dead", he or she may be treated, for a long or a short period, as a corpse is customarily treated in his or her society. The neophyte may be buried, forced to lie motionless in the posture and direction of customary burial, may be stained black, or be forced to live, for a while in the company of masked and monstrous mummers, representing, *inter alia*, the dead, or worse still, the un-dead. ¹⁴

After this "death", the adolescent male is spiritually reborn as a man by being taught the sacred history of the tribe. The learning of the sacred myths of the tribe is vitally important in the making of a man. This is the reason that older men in indigenous societies took the responsibility of receiving them and passing on them so seriously.

Initiation not only introduces the adolescent males to tribal culture and awakens them to spiritual values, it also has a beneficial effects on the rest of the community, as Eliade notes:

But the initiation is not the concern only of the young novices. The ceremony involves the tribe as a whole. A new generation is instructed, is made fit to be integrated into the community of adults. And on this occasion, through the repetition, the *reactualization*, of the traditional rites, the entire community is regenerated. This is why, in primitive societies, initiations are among the most important of religious festivals.¹⁵

To sum up, from a religious perspective male initiation involves the ritual death of

13. *Ibid.*, 9.

14. Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, Op. Cit., 96.

15. *Ibid.*, 4.

the adolescent initiands so that they might be introduced to the mythical history of the tribe by ritual elders, which causes their spiritual rebirth as men. Initiation rituals also proclaim to the whole community that the adolescent males are now men capable of being responsible adult members of the tribe and passing on the sacred myths to the next generation. In this way the sacred history of safeguarded and the tribe is regenerated.

Psychological Interpretations of Male Initiation Rites

Many researchers have attempted to decipher the psychological meaning of pubertal initiation rites. I want to briefly note four psychological interpretations of initiation rituals in indigenous cultures which could assist in the process of developing a contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males. I do not opt for one or other of these interpretations, but rather I consider that all four contribute to the psychological understanding of male initiation rites. The four are:

- (i) Masculinization.
- (ii) Resolution of the Oedipal Complex.
- (iii) Tempering Instinctual Aggressive Energy
- (iv) Sacrifice of Self.

Masculinization.

According to Lidz and Lidz¹⁶, and Munroe and Munroe¹⁷, male initiation is a ritualistic way of masculinizing a boy who has developed a primary feminine identification. Their idea is this: a male child will identify primarily with his mother if he does not have

16. Theodore Lidz and Ruth W. Lidz, "Turning Women Things into Men: Masculinization in Papua New Guinea," *Psychoanalytic Review* 73, No. 4, (1986): 117-136.

17. Robert L. Munroe and Ruth H. Munroe, "Psychological interpretation of Male Initiation Rites: the case of male pregnancy symptoms," *Ethos* 1 No. 4 (1973): 490-498.

sufficient exposure to males in infancy and childhood. The boy's primary identification with his mother may occur for a number of reasons: because of the absence of his father; because the boy sleeps exclusively with his mother, as is the case in many indigenous cultures; or because he spends a lot of time with his mother in the household. Not that he will behave totally like a female, but many aspects of his behavioral repertoire will be feminized. However, when, at a later stage of his development, the boy encounters strong male groups in his tribe, he will develop a secondary masculine identification which is at variance with his primary feminine identification with his mother. Indigenous peoples, whose tribal systems precipitate this sort of dissonance in sexual identity between a boy's primary feminine and secondary masculine identifications, often perform male initiation-circumcision rituals. These initiation-circumcision rituals "...hypothetically act as a dramatic learning experience that resolves the conflict and establishes masculine sex identity among young males. The genital operation is seen as a symbolically appropriate cultural device for achieving maximum sexual differentiation."¹⁸

The norm in most Papua New Guinean tribes, for instance, is that the men do not live in the same hut as their wives and have little to do with their children in infancy and childhood.¹⁹ Both girls *and* boys are called "people of the women's houses", and the mother-son bond can be extremely intense. In some tribes boys become panic-stricken when their mothers are not present.

There is little relationship between fathers and sons for the first 8 to 12 years of their lives until the time the men's group forcibly removes the boys from the women's houses and subjects them to harrowing initiations. A boy's long residence with his mother has created a feminine core identity so strong that men in many Papua New Guinean tribes deem it necessary to forcibly erase a boy's primary identification with his mother and

18. *Ibid.*, 491.

19. Theodor Lidz and Ruth W. Lidz, *Op. Cit.*, 118.

replace it with a firm masculine identification by means of initiation rituals. Male initiation rites in most tribal groups in Papua New Guinea have a two-fold purpose: one is to redress an imbalance in the boy's gender identification due to an asymmetrical family organization in which the mother is virtually the sole care-giver, and the other is to turn boys into fierce warriors capable of defending the tribe against warring neighboring tribes.²⁰

Resolution of the Oedipal Conflict

Ottenberg²¹ argues that one function male initiation rituals serve is to resolve the Oedipal conflict. According to Freud, the Oedipal conflict is a,

... triangular constellation involving a boy, his father, and his mother, in which the boy's sexual desire for the mother, whose love he wishes to monopolize, leads to hostility towards his father whom he views as a rival for the mother's love. As a result of his wish to possess the exclusive love of the mother, the boy moreover develops the wish to kill the father and replace him in his relationship with the mother.²²

Male initiation rites are seen as a way of containing the Oedipal wishes of boys. Initiation is viewed, by some psychoanalysts, as a tribal mechanism by which the psychological conflict between father and son is resolved. Initiation helps the son assimilate Oedipal lesson; namely, the son learns to repress his erotic desires for his mother and also repress his hostility towards his father, with whom he begins to identify instead.

L.L. Langness,²³ in a study of the Bena Bena tribe in Papua New Guinea highlands, argues against the resolution of the Oedipal complex as an explanation of male initiation rituals. He points out that for the Oedipal complex to develop there needs to be father-son rivalry, and the living arrangements mentioned above, where men live separately from their wives and have little or nothing to do with their sons during childhood, precludes the relationship necessary for the father-son rivalry to exist.

20. Ibid., 118.

21. Simon Ottenberg, "Oedipus, Gender and Social Solidarity: A Case Study of male Childhood and initiation", *Ethos* 16, No. 3, (1988): 326-352.

22. L.L. Langness, "Oedipus in the New Guinea Highlands?" *Ethos* 18, No. 4, (1990): 388.

23. Ibid., 404.

Tempering Instinctual Aggressive Energy

In their book, *The Warrior Within*, Moore and Gillette maintain that premodern peoples viewed the uninitiated, immature male as potentially destructive. Male puberty rituals in indigenous cultures were, in their view, the tribe's way of restraining and tempering instinctual aggressive energy of adolescent males in their group:

We are convinced that the preoccupation of most tribal cultures with the task of initiating young men was grounded in their understanding of the crucial task of channeling male aggression in constructive ways lest it destroy the world the tribe was attempting to build. In other words, we are certain that, in general, tribal cultures engaged in less denial about masculine aggression than is common today and that consequently they did a much more adequate job of confronting the problem of limiting its destructiveness for the intratribal human community as they knew it.²⁴

The Sacrifice of Self

Frequently an integral part of the ordeal of tribal initiation rituals is to deliberately inflict pain upon the young men in some way. While not all initiation rituals include inflicting pain on young men by their elders, there are recurrent accounts, from many tribal cultures world-wide, of adolescent males being bled from the nose, slapped, beaten, tattooed, gashed, circumcised, having teeth knocked out, joints of fingers severed, having the septum of the nose perforated, having an ear lobe removed and so on. Adolescent males are humiliated, made to fast, left in the wilderness, terrified by the stories told or the dramas acted out by their elders, have to complete physically exhausting trials, or are deprived of sleep. The experience of pain is regarded in many indigenous cultures as a part of the process of entering manhood.

Why are the initiands ready to be mutilated in such ways? Bruno Bettelheim comments on this in his book, *Symbolic Wounds*:

Such apparent readiness to submit to mutilation suggests the relative unimportance of pain as compared with the overwhelming importance of (1) the ritual's sacred meaning, (2) the degree to which they originate in and (3) satisfy conscious and

²⁴. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *The Warrior Within: Accessing the Knight in the Male Psyche*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc, 1992), 203.

unconscious desires.²⁵

Bettelheim points out that if these painful initiation rites are regarded as learning experiences, there is a presupposition of cooperation of the part of the adolescent participant. He notes that learning is only lasting and effective if the learner cooperates on the basis of his own motives. He must have a positive motivation. If he is forced, against his will, to participate in an initiation ordeal, the results may be diametrically opposed to those the tribal elders are wanting to facilitate. However if the painful ordeal satisfies important instinctual strivings of the adolescent, his willingness to submit to mutilation can be understood.

What is the psychological significance of the infliction of pain on initiands? What conscious and unconscious desires does it satisfy? Turner holds that the shared experience of a painful ordeal bonded the adolescent males together.²⁶ van Gennep maintains that mutilating the body of the initiate served the social function of marking him out from the rest of the tribe. Because scarring left permanent marks on the body of the young man, it defined him. He was now one of the initiated ones.

The mutilated individual is removed from the common mass of humanity by a rite of separation (this is the idea behind cutting, piercing etc.) which automatically incorporates him into a defined group; since the operation leaves ineradicable traces, the incorporation is permanent.²⁷

Morinis²⁸ disagrees with van Gennep. He notes that van Gennep's explanation does not account for those many instances during initiation rituals when inflicting pain on young men which does not leave lasting scars. He claims initiations in which inflicting pain does not mark the initiate are more common than initiations which leave lasting marks.

25. Bruno Bettelheim, *Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male*, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1954), 93.

26. Victor Tuner, *Op. Cit.*, 95.

27. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 72.

28. Alan Morinis, "The Ritual Experience: Pain and the Transformation of Consciousness in Ordeals of Initiation," *Ethos* 13, No. 2, (1985): 150-174.

He suggests that it is the pain, rather than scaring, which plays the central role in the initiation process.

Morinis notes that the two key elements of initiation ordeals are (1) the infliction of pain, and (2) its occurrence in a social context. The boy submits to pain and this symbolizes his willingness to sacrifice himself for the good of the tribal group. In submitting the adolescent male is giving up the unlimited freedom of boyhood, and taking on the social responsibility which manhood in his tribal society requires of him. A boy who refuses to voluntarily submit and bend to some degree towards the collective will would not be welcome in the society.

Sacrifice of autonomy makes possible and is a step towards the emergence of the moral individual, and observance of morality and convention is a precondition for the existence of social life. Life in society, in turn, is the only route by which an individual can fully realize the aspects of human nature that are above the animal. And hence the support for and general compliance with the injunction that one willingly undergo the sacrificial ordeal.²⁹

Morinis views the wounds and non-scarifying tortures inflicted on the body of the initiand as appropriate symbols of the state of mutilated autonomy which the adolescent male must enter if he is to become a member of society. They help him to resolve the contradiction between self and society through the necessary submission of self to sacrifice.³⁰ He experiences the pain of sacrificing his independent self that is the necessary cost of membership of the group.

He discovers for himself the resolution of the apparently irresolvable contradiction: self and society ("Society and I") can co-exist so long as self ("I") accepts a form that is socially molded.³¹

Through the intense experience of pain the initiands learn the lesson of sacrificing themselves for the good of the tribal group, and so are moved towards the development of the adult consciousness necessary for the survival of the group.

29. Ibid., 163.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY RITE OF INITIATION FOR ADOLESCENT MALES

In this chapter I explore the components necessary to fashion a contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males, and suggest some of the critical issues that must be addressed by a male initiation ritual in an industrialized urban culture. In my view a contemporary male initiation ritual must:

- involve the community;
- be a religious experience;
- articulate contemporary issues faced by adolescent males;
- address the developmental tasks faced by adolescent males, fathers and mentors.

Community Involvement

The rationale for developing a contemporary rite of passage suitable for adolescent males in industrialized urban society is this: if a community is to flourish, it has to have some way of initiating its adolescent males into mature membership of the community. For a community to initiate its adolescent males, there needs to be consensus, on the part of its older members, particularly the men, about what mature masculinity means for the community. Mature masculinity must be modeled by the older males of the group, and the adolescent males shown how they can attain it.

Critical to the development of mature masculinity is a sense of empathy for others. In order for an adolescent male to acquire a sense of empathy for others, he needs to learn that he is not the center of the universe. He needs to learn that others in the community have rights and feelings, and that he has responsibilities to them. In their book, *The Warrior Within*, Douglas Gillette and Robert Moore point out that this learning is at the heart of masculine initiation rituals. In their view male initiatory rituals have two important functions: (i) to provide a social forum for deciding what it means to be a mature man in the group, and (ii) to help the individual adolescent male die to the egocentricity of boyhood and rise to masculine maturity:

Essentially, the process of initiation removes our Ego from the center of the universe. When a society abandons initiation rituals, individual Egos lose an appropriate means of learning this valuable lesson. Life circumstances will urge the same lesson upon the Ego eventually, but perhaps in a very painful, inopportune manner. But by far the most serious consequence of ceasing initiatory practices is the loss of a periodic social forum for considering the nature of maturity. A society has to know what maturity is before it can pass the knowledge on. It's as if we no longer have a map to get us to maturity. If you don't know what something is, and you don't have a map, how do you get there? A few will stumble across the destination. But most of us end up getting hopelessly lost. When people bemoan our culture's loss of values, in part they are missing the transformative rituals - for rituals provide a structure within which social values can be recalled and reconsidered.¹

Initiation in indigenous societies is intimately connected with the community. For tribal people, initiation is not just another program, but a sign of the community's responsibility for forming its adolescent males. A contemporary rite of passage needs to be similarly anchored in a community. If it is not, it runs the risk of being merely a one-off program rather than a sign of the community's responsibility for its adolescent males. To put an adolescent male through an initiation program and then return him to a community that does not particularly care about him, and which does not acknowledge the significance of the transition that he is undergoing, would be to render a contemporary initiation process an ineffectual exercise. However, if the community cares about its adolescent males, and

1. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *The Warrior Within: Accessing the Knight in the Male Psyche* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 10f.

acknowledges the importance of the transition they are undergoing, it is more likely that there will be a demonstrable change in their masculine self-images as a result of their participation in the initiation ritual.

In most indigenous cultures the communal preparation for male initiation begins long before the actual ritual itself. As Bruno Bettelheim observes in his book, *Symbolic Wounds*:

Initiation does not suddenly and unexpectedly descend on the adolescent. He has been acquainted with the custom from infancy. He has hopes, fears and expectations in regard to it. He has developed a personality, and initiation must meet a felt need or he would not take part actively.²

The performance of the actual ritual is a symbolic culmination of the preparation that has gone before. The ritual is very important, because it symbolizes and concretizes the various aspects of mature manhood that the adolescent males have been prepared for by the community since they were young boys.

Is such long-term preparation possible in an urban industrialized society? I think so, if fathers and mentors are committed to the ongoing formation of their sons and protégés, and are involved in preparation process for the retreat itself.

Ideally, if a contemporary rite of passage for modern adolescent males is going to be more than a one-off program, the family, the school and the church communities ought to be engaged in the process. The bare minimum of communal involvement would be a number of meetings (i) with sons and protégés to prepare them for their transition into manhood, and (ii) with fathers and mentors during which they consider the nature of mature masculinity and the values that they wish to pass on to their sons and protégés.

To sum up, a modern initiation ritual could be a small "r" rite of passage comprising a self-contained program run in a parish setting, or as part of an after-school program, with little or no reference to the adolescent male's family, his school or his church communities.

2. Bruno Bettelheim, *Symbolic Wounds: Puberty Rites and the Envious Male*, (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1954), 93.

Or a modern initiation ritual could be a capital "R" rite of passage. This second option would involve the families of the adolescent males, their school and church communities in the preparation for the initiation experience; families, school and church communities would understand the importance of the transition they were undergoing, and would care about the outcome of the initiation process. The second option would be more time consuming than the first, but be more likely to have lasting impression on the adolescent male participants.

"Borrowing" Initiation Rituals from Indigenous Cultures

Can men in urban industrialized societies look to indigenous cultures for models of initiation into manhood? Can the transformative rituals of tribal people be borrowed? I think not. Male rites of passage of indigenous cultures reflect, as we have seen, each particular tribe's understanding of the spirit world, their social and political organization, the roles of men and women in the tribal group, and their view of what constitutes mature masculinity. In short, the male initiation rituals of each tribe reflect its particular world view, and so are not appropriate for an industrialized urban society.

While mimicking the tribal rituals would not be appropriate, I believe that we *can* look to indigenous cultures for some understanding of the general patterns of male initiation. A rite of initiation for contemporary adolescent males into manhood must involve a number of the elements that characterize rites of passage of pubescent youth in pre-industrial tribal cultures. Namely, the initiation of contemporary adolescent males ought be a time away from the community, ought be a religious experience, ought include nurturing and validation of the adolescent male by his father or male mentor, ought encompass a formal acceptance of the adolescent male into a community of men, and ought be acknowledged by the community.

However, given those similarities, I hold that we must develop new rites of

initiation into manhood suitable for urban industrialized societies. We must develop new rites of initiation into manhood because we live in a complex culture where thresholds stretch for years, and where mastery of the culture is rare. So an initiation ritual in an industrialized urban society ought not attempt what initiation rituals of indigenous cultures do, namely, to change the boy into a man. Rather initiation should focus on engendering values, attitudes and orientations in the adolescent which will assist him in making his way into manhood in our ever-changing culture. To mimic the initiation rites of tribal cultures in a first world setting would not address the issues currently faced by adolescent males in modern society.

A contemporary initiation ritual for adolescent males must take into account the fundamental differences between indigenous and industrial societies. In my view, the chief difference between a pre-industrial tribal society and an industrialized urban society is that indigenous cultures were, and in many areas of the world remain, broadly speaking, static. Modern society, on the other hand is constantly changing. Moore and Gillette point out that the static nature and the inflexible cultural norms of indigenous societies were often reflected in their initiation rituals:

In the past there were powerful rites of initiation presided over by ritual elders to help boys and girls remake themselves into man and women capable of assuming their social responsibilities. The scope of these premodern initiation rituals was often limited by inflexible cultural norms. But they did provide girls and boys with workable blueprints for achieving gender-specific maturity and were based on mythic visions of the tribe's view of the best in human nature - their normative vision of the possible human.³

However, while such initiation rituals may have reinforced inflexible cultural norms, at least they provided younger members of the tribe with a plan for achieving gender-specific maturity and helped turn boys into men capable of assuming their responsibilities as parents and contributing to the well-being of the group.

Responsible adults in industrialized urban societies must likewise provide

3. Ibid., 9f.

contemporary adolescent males with a plan for achieving gender-specific maturity, and help them become men capable of assuming their responsibilities as parents and contributing to the well-being of their community. However, because modern culture changes so rapidly, it is harder for fathers and mentors in industrialized urban societies to know how to form their sons and protégés than it was for tribal elders in more static indigenous societies. Whereas a father in an indigenous tribe could be reasonably certain that the world and the culture his son would inherit would remain basically the same as it had been for him, a father in an industrialized society can be just as certain that the world and the culture his son will inherit will be very different from the world and the culture in which he grew up. A contemporary rite of passage must take into account that a modern father or mentor could barely guess at some of the issues his son or protégé will face as a man.⁴ In an industrialized urban society an adolescent male is being initiated into the unknown, a fact that renders a contemporary initiation process radically different from that of indigenous tribes, where an adolescent male was being initiated into the known. Clearly then, the initiation rites of indigenous cultures are of only limited helpfulness in determining the form and content of a male initiation rituals in an industrialized social context.

*Two Rituals: One Marking the End of Boyhood,
and One Marking the Change in Legal Status*

In many tribal cultures, as we have seen, when a boy reaches puberty he is initiated, by means of a puberty rite, into manhood. Through being accepted into the group of older men the pubescent adolescent's socio-religious status within the community is changed. The physiological change which is occurring in the boy is linked to a clearly defined socio-religious change. Is it possible, in Western society, to link the powerful

⁴. Twenty years ago words such as AIDS, PCP, and drive-by shootings were not in the language.

physiological changes occurring in puberty with changes in the adolescent male's social roles and responsibilities as it is in indigenous societies? No. When a boy reaches puberty in Western society he is not regarded as an adult. Legally he remains a minor. A contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males, who are 13 or 14 years old, would not coincide with a change in their social or legal status. An initiation ritual in an industrialized urban society cannot completely change the status of the boy because, at 13 or 14 years of age he cannot vote, or drive a car, or marry, or leave school and get a full-time job, or legally purchase liquor. Society deems him too young for these activities which are social markers of adulthood. Not until he is 18 will the adolescent male be legally entitled perform these adult activities.

The work of Arnold van Gennep is helpful here. He distinguishes between social and physiological puberty. Demonstrating that physiological puberty and "social" puberty are essentially different and rarely converge, he suggests that it would be better to stop calling initiation rites "puberty rites", as they may not, in fact, occur at puberty.⁵

Following van Gennep, one way to address the gap between attaining sexual maturity at puberty and conferring adult legal status in an industrialized urban society, would be to divide a contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males into two distinct rituals. The first ritual, marking physiological puberty, would occur around age 13. The second ritual, marking the social puberty - the conferral of social and legal obligations - would occur around age 18.

In industrialized urban society social puberty is usually ritually celebrated by means of high school graduation. However, in my view, the more important part of a rite of passage for adolescent males in modern society would be a ritual celebration physiological puberty. I consider it more important because, unless some form of initiation ritual is

5. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 65ff.

performed for adolescent males at that earlier stage, they may receive little nurturing, validation and guidance from their fathers and older males during their adolescent years. For many the only initiation they receive will be from their peers in the teen culture. Without guidance from fathers and older men, adolescent males have only each other to turn to, sometimes with anti-social effects. Perhaps because fathers and older males fail to provide rites of passage for their adolescent sons and protégés, inner-city gangs, which typically put initiates through mindlessly brutal initiation rituals, have little trouble recruiting new members.

I envisage a rite of passage at age 13 would involve fathers and mentors, and be a religious occasion to clearly signify that the adolescent male's boyhood is over, and that the long process of searching out his identity as a man is beginning.

Religious Experience

A contemporary rite of male initiation ought be a religious experience, like the initiation rituals of indigenous peoples. An indigenous tribe usually has common and generally agreed upon religious beliefs into which their pubescent adolescents are initiated. In contrast people in industrialized urban societies have virtually no consensus about spirituality nor any common understanding of religious issues. In a secular culture there is no generally accepted religious understanding into which society at large can initiate adolescents. Moore and Gillette point out the dangers of secularization for the individual:

As a complete cultural system, modernity has largely turned its back on God, on effective processes of initiation, on ritual elders, and even on family, tribe and nation. Consequently, an individual Ego can no longer reach the sober but joyous realization of its *non central* position in the psyche and in the wider universe. Nature fills the vacuum modernity has created with our modern Egos, which expand terrifically to fill the empty space. Where a powerful Transpersonal Other is missing, God is replaced by unconscious pretensions to Godhood.⁶

Given the dangers of secularization, it is both the prerogative and the obligation of the

6. *Ibid.*, 11.

various religious groups within a society to initiate their young into religious truths and into an understanding of what constitutes ethical behavior. To not do so is to contribute, by omission, to the lack of purpose, identity and rootlessness which is endemic amongst the young in our society.

Different Stages of Religious Development

Facilitators of a contemporary rite of male initiation, working with religiously committed fathers and mentors, sons and protégés, must take account of the fact that the adolescent males involved in the rite are likely to be at a different stage of religious development than their fathers and mentors. Vicky Genia terms the stage of religious development of most normal adolescents, *transitional faith*.⁷ It is a stage characterized by spiritual uncertainty, questioning and doubt. It is to be expected that adolescent males will be in the process of critically examining previously held beliefs of boyhood, as they move towards more adult religious values and ideals. Genia comments,

Empirical evidence for the existence of an adolescent transitional stage characterized by doubt and uncertainty emerges from an investigation of age and religious orientation. Data from this study indicate that a stage of religious searching appears to be a transition movement from an immature extrinsic religiousness to a more healthy intrinsic religious commitment. Furthermore, this period of searching appears to peak during adolescence.⁸

During this stage of transitional faith adolescent males may experience a sense of religious groundlessness; they may give up the practice of their faith; they may even switch religious affiliations or experiment with religious traditions different from those of their parents. These behaviors, although alarming for parents, may signify that the adolescent male in the process of making the transition from the earlier faith of boyhood towards a more adult faith.

7. Vicky Genia, "Transitional Faith: A Developmental Step Towards Religious Maturity," *Counseling and Values* 37, (October 1992): 16.

8. Vicky Genia, "Religious Development: A Synthesis and Reformulation", *Journal of Religion and Health* 29, 2, (Summer 1990): 90f.

Religiously committed fathers and mentors, on the other hand, are likely to have already achieved a more adult stage of religious development characterized by internalized morals and ideals, which Genia terms *reconstructed internalized faith*:

Their religious practice is guided by constructive, internalized morals and ideals. Although they are tolerant of religious diversity, residual needs to resolve ambiguities may lead these individuals towards a religious community that proposes definitive answers to their spiritual uncertainties. If their ideological consolidation becomes impermeable to new spiritual insights, their faith will not undergo further progressive transformations.⁹

Facilitators of a contemporary rite of passage need to be aware that the fathers and mentors are likely to have different faith perspectives from their sons and protégés.

A Christological Pattern

From a Christian perspective, I envisage a contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males being patterned on the Paschal Mystery - Christ's passion, his death on the cross, his subsequent resurrection, and his ascent into glory. The Christological pattern of death and resurrection is the theological underpinning which illuminates the theme of the death of boyhood and rebirth into manhood universally found in male initiation rituals. As we have seen, adolescent males in indigenous cultures are taken from their tribes by the older males and put through an ordeal which symbolically represents their sacrificial death. Once the adolescent is ritually dead, he is spiritually reborn into the higher state of manhood.

For the believer, the life of Christ is the exemplar of such initiation. Jesus' death and resurrection is not just an historical event that happened two thousand years ago, but God's revelation that death is not the end, and so has significance for all people. In the Christian world view the pattern of the Paschal Mystery is repeated at various stages of people's lives, human growth requiring dying to an old self and rising to a new self. For

9. Vicky Genia, *Op. Cit.*, 16.

the adolescent male the Paschal Mystery provides a way of understanding his present life-crisis. His old way of being *must* be yielded if the new life of manhood is to be attained. Growth into manhood necessitates that the adolescent sacrifice egocentric orientations of boyhood and begin the process of taking on the responsibilities of manhood.

The Paschal Mystery is a sign that God can bring new life out of death. In initiation the relinquishing of boyhood is symbolized. By bringing together the relinquishing of boyhood and the Paschal Mystery, a contemporary Christian rite of passage provides the adolescent male with a sign that God will bring new and abundant life out of his present life-crisis.

A contemporary rite of initiation into manhood would not just be based on the pattern of Jesus' death and resurrection, however. For the believer, the Paschal Mystery means being incorporated mysteriously into Jesus' death and resurrection. St. Paul, writing to the Colossians about baptism, says: "...when you were buried with Him in baptism, you were also raised to life with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." (Colossians 2: 12) In a similar way I envisage a rite of passage for adolescent males involving burial of the boy with Christ, and his being raised with Him to the new life of manhood by God.

The Sorrowful Mysteries of Life

A painful ordeal is usually an essential feature of male rites of passage in indigenous cultures. As we saw in Chapter Two, there are a number of different theories about the psychological and socio-cultural significance of inflicting pain on initiates during initiation rituals. In *Iron John* Robert Bly proposes that the infliction of pain in ancient initiation practice is to help the adolescent males to learn how to deal with inner wounds:

Ancient initiation practice would affect all these responses, since it gives a new wound, or it gives a calculated wound sufficiently pungent and vivid - though minor - so that the young man remembers his inner wounds. The initiation then tells the young man

what to do with wounds, the new and the old. The old men tell the boys stories as soon as they enter the men's world. If we have no story, we cannot take a hold of the wound. We either climb above it, so far up that we can't reach down to take hold of it, or we become the wound, get stepped on by something so huge we see only the ground below us.¹⁰

A contemporary rite of passage must likewise help an adolescent male "take a hold of" his wounds. Perhaps it will involve his entering into the pain of major events in his life such as his parents' broken marriage, his father's alcoholism, or the death of a grandparent. Perhaps it will involve working through some of the lesser disappointments of life such as not making the basketball team, or not being accepted into the High School he would prefer to have attended. A contemporary rite of passage needs to show the adolescent male how to enter into, rather than avoid, his significant experiences of pain. One strategy a contemporary rite of passage might use would be to show an adolescent male how to pray through the pain of his life by incorporating his sorrowful mysteries with those of Jesus.

Contemporary issues faced by adolescent males

A contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males must address the issues they face in modern culture. I have outlined three key issues for adolescent males which, in my opinion, a modern initiation ritual must address:

- Sexuality and relationships with women
- The modulation of instinctual aggressive energy
- The problem of adolescent suicide

A. *Sexuality and relationships with women*

As with the initiation rituals of indigenous tribes, a contemporary rite of passage ought be a forum in which fathers and mentors share about sexuality and relationships with

10. Robert Bly, *Iron John*, Op. Cit., 34.

women. But whereas an indigenous male initiation ritual would be designed to help the adolescent come to terms with his sexual energy in the context of specific tribal and inter-tribal customs and mores, a contemporary rite of passage would need to help the adolescent male come to terms with his sexuality and learn sexual responsibility in a social context which includes of the spread of AIDS, Herpes, and the rise in teenage pregnancies.¹¹

B. *Modulation of Instinctual Aggressive Energy*

As with the initiation rituals of indigenous tribes, a contemporary rite of passage would be a forum in which fathers and mentors would help the adolescent male face his aggressive energy and begin to learn how to master it. Anybody who has witnessed the ferocity of adolescent males at play recognizes instantly that some form of socialization will help to transform their aggression. Without some channeling of their energy adolescent males can be very dangerous and destructive. If they are to enter into mature manhood, adolescent males must be helped to face their anger and their potential destructiveness.

Moore and Gillette¹² challenge men and women in contemporary society to face the gender asymmetry that lies behind the immature expression of masculine aggression, and suggest that initiation is one way for adolescents to learn to channel what they term Warrior energy.

What is instinctual aggressive or "Warrior" energy? Can it be defined? The Italian therapist Roberto Assagioli gives the following definition of aggression:

[Aggression is] a blind impulse to self-affirmation, to the expression of all the elements of one's being, without any discrimination and choice, without any concern for the consequences, without any consideration for others.¹³

11. The number of unmarried teenagers getting pregnant has almost doubled in the past two decades from 49.4 per thousand teenage women in 1972, to 99.2 per thousand teenage women in 1990. Nearly one million teenage women get pregnant each year leading to approximately 406,000 abortions, 134,000 miscarriages and 490,000 live births. *Source: William J. Bennett, The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, Op. Cit., 8.*

12. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *Op. Cit.*, 203f.

13. Roberto Assagioli, quoted by Piero Ferrucci, *What We May Be: Techniques for Psychological*

This definition indicates that aggression is a natural energy and, as such, is morally neutral. Instinctual aggressive energy is neither good nor bad. However, what adolescent male does with his instinctual aggressive energy may be either good or bad.

Aggression can be transformed into violence directed against others or against oneself. Or its energy can be expressed positively, with discrimination and choice, as Jesus did when he made a whip out of cords and drove the money-changers and the sellers out of the Temple in Jerusalem (John 2: 13-17). The ability to channel instinctual aggressive energy in positive rather than self- and other- destructive ways, is a task an adolescent male must master if he is to become a mature man. Mastery of aggression is not arrived at simply by repressing the energy, although that may be a useful strategy at times. Mastery involves understanding aggressive energy, being able to talk about it, and being able to channel it positively. But whereas an indigenous male initiation ritual would help the adolescent come to terms with his warrior energy in the context of intertribal warfare, the contemporary adolescent male must come to terms with his warrior energy in the context of the increasing availability of handguns, gang violence and drive-by shootings.

C. *Addressing the Problem of Adolescent Suicide*

A contemporary rite of passage for adolescent males must address the problem of adolescent suicide. Approximately 5000 young people between the ages of 15 and 24 commit suicide each year in the United States. Over the last 30 years the suicide rate in this age bracket has tripled, and is currently the third leading cause of death following accidents and homicide.

A study of 120 students in California found among them a 13% suicide-attempt rate. A study in New York of 113 students found a 10% suicide-attempt rate. A study of

293 new students in college in Detroit and Boston found a suicide-attempt rate of 15%.¹⁴ The common factor in 80% of adolescent suicide attempts was depression.¹⁵

Depression, Suicide and the Life-Cycle. Why should depression which leads to suicide attempts occur in adolescence? Jane Hollister Wheelwright hypothesizes that there are periods of withdrawal and depression throughout the life-cycle. She suggests that there is a lifelong pattern of depression and immobilization, followed by exuberance and renewed creativity, resembling a series of minor death and rebirth experiences, at each stage of the life-cycle. Clearly the transition from boyhood to manhood is such a death experience. Because boyhood is renounced and manhood is embraced, mourning lost boyhood is a critical task for the adolescent male. This makes sense of the death and rebirth pattern found in the male initiation rituals of indigenous peoples. Such rites of passage ritualize and normalize the minor death experience the adolescent male is undergoing.

Wheelwright notes that, however, some people may misinterpret the period of depression and withdrawal which accompany a life-cycle transition, with disastrous results:

Parentetically, in my opinion it is a misinterpretation of this process which, more often than not, leads people to suicide. The downwards pull and immobilization that accompany deep depressions are mistaken for sensations of physical death rather than the psychic death, which as a matter of course, precedes psychic rebirth. Suicidal people often fail to recognize that it is nature's demand for a change in attitude or an increase in self-awareness which brings on the depressed state. They do not realize that to bring about a change in their lives, they have experience despair and to face the black night of their tunneled state of mind in order to come out into the light of change.¹⁶

Many parents worry, justifiably, when their adolescent offspring withdraw from the family and become sullen and immobilized. Such depression and immobilization may

and Spiritual Growth through Psychosynthesis (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1982), 86.

14. M. Sandra Reeves and Alina Tugend, "Suicide's 'Unanswerable Logic'," eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Stephen Foster, and Meredith Little, *Between and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation* Op. Cit., 58.

15. *Ibid.*, 47.

16. Jane Hollister Wheelwright, "Old Age and Death", eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Stephen Foster, and Meredith Little, *Between and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, Op. Cit., 407.

represent a moratorium period which will be followed by a period of exuberance and renewed creativity. In this case the depression and immobilization which occur in adolescence are natural parts of the transition experience, and signify that adolescents need a change in attitude or an increase in self-awareness. However some adolescents may not have the psychic resources to cope with this period of depression and immobilization. Parents and older people need to pay special attention to these adolescents during this troubled time of depression.

Psychologically "Immunizing" Adolescents against Depression. Is there a way of psychologically "immunizing" adolescents against depression? Is there a way of intervening with depressed and potentially suicidal adolescent males which can help them through their transition into manhood?

In a fascinating journal article entitled *The Remembrance of Things Past*,¹⁷ Kay Tooley, a psychologist from the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan Medical Center, suggests there is a way of helping adolescents to defend against depression which may lead to suicidal thoughts and gestures. Her idea is, if an adolescent can tap into the story of what he was like when he was born and when he was an infant, the story provides him with an inner treasury that generates hopefulness. However, because he can't remember what he was like at that pre-verbal stage, an adolescent needs to be told his early story by the loving adults who cared for him at the time. This storytelling has deep psychological significance.

Erikson's Epigenetic Principle. Tooley bases her therapeutic intervention on Erik Erikson's Epigenetic Principle. The Epigenetic Principle is the foundational notion Erikson developed that a person's *ego* unfolds in a normative and sequential pattern by the relationship of the self with the environment. Borrowing from the sequential pattern of

17. Kay Tooley, "The Remembrance of Things Past" *Amer. J. Orthopsychiatry* 48, No. 1, (January 1978): 174- 182.

fetal development in the womb, which follows an inherent and well-organized plan, Erikson postulated that ego development too has a ground plan, and that there is a proper rate and sequence to ego development. His theory is based on the hypothesis that the order of growth that occurs during fetal development, known as epigenesis, also occurs during throughout the life span of the individual in terms of psychosocial development.

There are, for Erikson, predetermined stages of an individual's psychosocial growth which lead from the initial relationship of the infant with the mother to an ever-widening circle of relationships. In this sense normal psychosocial development has a definite direction. The person is drawn toward relationships with others. Those relationships lead to conflict. For Erikson growth comes through those relational conflicts, and in these crises the person is opened up to new psychosocial growth and new strength. If the crisis is negotiated successfully, the ego has an increased sense of inner unity, an increase in good judgment and an increase in the capacity to do well according to the standards of significant others. Successful negotiation of one crisis leads the person on to the next stage of psychosocial development.

Erikson nominated eight stages of psychosocial development in the person and there are particular ego conflicts inherent in each stage. The task of early infancy is the development of basic trust, or, as Tooley prefers to call it, basic hopefulness. But the problem is, if an adolescent does not have enough basic hopefulness because of traumas that occurred in the first year of life, there seems to be little chance to develop it as an adolescent. The lack of a repository of basic hopefulness from early childhood may predispose the adolescent to depression and increase the likelihood of suicidal gestures in adolescence.

Fortunately, according to Tooley there is a way of combating a lack of basic hopefulness. That is for the parents to tell the adolescent what he was like when he was born; what his birth was like; how his parents felt about him; how he behaved when he was

an infant. The idea is that these stories will strengthen him against despair, and give him the basic hopefulness that will sustain him as he makes his way into manhood. Tooley comments:

The sense of a self unremembered, but accepted as truly existing in the past, inoculates against despair by suggesting that a new but lovable self could exist in the future. It has been suggested that young adolescents - objectless and striving to assemble an identity and ego ideal components for developmental reasons - are prone to suicidal depression if they have not developed a narcissistically cathected introject of a stronger self-that-was.¹⁸

A contemporary rite of passage ought attempt to give an adolescent male a sense of basic hopefulness by providing him with the opportunity to hear about his unremembered self which may sustain him through periods depression.

The developmental tasks of adolescent males, fathers, and mentors

A. Identity Achievement

A contemporary rite of passage must take account of the psychosocial task of adolescence: identity achievement. For a young male, adolescence is a period of great change both physically, and psychologically, as he seeks his identity. As Erikson shows us, the developmental task of adolescence is identity achievement versus role confusion. Adolescence is a time during which a male "tries himself out " as a man. It is a time of trial and transition into manhood, whether the culture provides for it or not. It is a time when a male's sense of himself as a man is formed which will last a lifetime. However, as we have seen, many men do not feel adequately initiated into manhood and never feel in possession of their masculinity. Because these men have a diffuse sense of gender identity, they may believe they have to keep proving themselves as men.

¹⁸. Ibid., 179.

Unfortunately, as has been demonstrated, the adolescent male in his quest for a firm sense of gender identity, usually receives little help from older men in modern culture. He may even find them competing with him. Often an adolescent refuses the help he needs from his father because he is trying to establish his own separate identity. It is often assumed that an adolescent male who is seeking to form his identity must distance himself from the expectations of his father and mother. But recent research has shown that quality relationships with a mother and father contribute significantly to an adolescent's ability to achieve a sense of personal identity.¹⁹ An adolescent with a poor relationship with his parents will tend to require constant reassurance from them and show a tendency to have a diffused identity. Identity achievement is, therefore, a relational process, which suggests that a contemporary rite of passage ought aim to help improve the father-son relationship.

Identity achievement is also a relational process with the Transcendent One. In examining the question of identity achievement it is sometimes assumed that a person in and of himself has an identity to be discovered and embraced. While identity questions are indeed self-focused, in the Christian understanding of identity, the person is not self-grounded, and therefore does not have within himself the rudiments necessary for accepting or arriving at an identity. Ultimately the solution to adolescent male's search for identity is spiritual. In the final analysis, an adolescent male's sense of himself as a man is confirmed by his relationship to and service of God.

The achievement of identity involves the idea of *vocation*. The word vocation, which comes from the Latin *vocare*, meaning "to call", is not merely about a career or a profession. It concerns a reason for a young man's being in the world, which is about God's purpose for him. A vocation "... is the voice of the initiating One who calls persons to a destiny. Maturation is coming to terms with that givenness of God's purpose in our

19. J. Kroger and S.J. Haslett, "Separation-individuation and ego identity status in late adolescence: A two-year longitudinal study, *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 17 (1988): 59-80.

lives."²⁰ In this sense identity achievement is a question of answering God's call. The call of God initiates the adolescent male into his identity, and provides him with a sense of ultimate purpose.

Indigenous rites of passage into manhood are, as we have seen, deeply religious. The dynamic of male initiation, of which identity achievement is a central piece, ultimately concerns the relationship between God - the One who calls, and the adolescent male - the one who hears the call. As Walter Brueggemann notes:

And we are not speaking here of our mother's ambition for us or an institutional blue-print for our lives, but of dreams of the One in whom we are grounded. Because God is God, there are purposes to which we belong which are larger than our purposes.²¹

The task for an adolescent male at the threshold of manhood is to attempt to discern God's purpose for his life. This is not an easy task. Clarity in understanding God's alphabet is rare. The adolescent male will find himself drawn in many different directions, not all of which are life-giving. So he needs guidance from elders to help him negotiate his direction in life. He also needs a habit of prayer to help him discern his life's direction.

An adolescent male's spirituality is central in the attempt to discern God's purpose for his life. A habit of prayer will help him to become gradually attuned to the presence of God in his life, and little by little he will develop a sense of God's will in his life, which is synonymous with that which is truly life-giving for him. A sense of what is life-giving and an attitude of discerning God's call are one and the same thing. God's will ought not be viewed as something imposed from the "outside" - some divine blue-print that a adolescent has to follow. Rather, God's will for draws him to be fully and authentically himself. To become fully alive. In responding to life, he becomes open to the possibility that God might have "an idea" for him, that it might be different from his own.

²⁰. Walter Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation: a discussion of the relation of Bible and Pastoral Care", *Interpretation* 33(1979): 115-129.

²¹. *Ibid.*, 126.

B. *Generativity*

A contemporary rite of passage needs to assist fathers and mentors in their generative task. According to Erikson, the crisis which unfolds in middle adulthood involves generativity versus stagnation. Generativity encompasses an interest in and a care for the next generation. In terms of initiating of an adolescent male, generativity requires of a father or mentor a continuing emotional investment in and a nurturing of his adolescent son or protégé as he grows into manhood. A contemporary rite of passage must take account of this psychosocial task.

However, in many cases we find fathers exhibiting the negative pole of this developmental stage: stagnation. Many fathers find themselves unable to invest emotionally in their sons. Some fathers, because their lives have been impoverished through their own lack of fathering, tend towards self-preoccupation that precludes ongoing interest in their sons. A father's abdication of his generative role in the gender identity struggles of his son perpetuates a generational problem. The likelihood is that his son will probably abrogate *his* responsibility to *his* sons in middle adulthood.

Because fathers and older men are not guiding adolescent males into manhood, some mothers, particularly in single parent families, find they are burdened with the responsibility of somehow accompanying their adolescent sons through their transition into manhood. Considering that one of the developmental tasks initiation is designed to facilitate is precisely the separation of a young man from the feminine energy of his mother, the responsibility of guiding a son through his transition into manhood is not one which a mother is equipped for, or ought be expected to handle.

If, however, a father or mentor takes an active role in initiating and guiding his son or protégé into manhood, he will be not only facilitating his son's achievement of gender identity, but also moving towards the achieving the task of his own developmental crisis,

which is the generative guiding of the next generation. One of the best ways in which a father can be truly generative is by providing his son with a glimpse of his own ethical and spiritual framework. A father cannot coerce his son to adhere to his (the father's) religious and ethical values. A son must encounter the mystery of God firsthand and fashion his own moral codes which flow from his encounter with God. But if a son perceives his father's faith to be authentic and alive, the shared experience is indeed generative.

A contemporary rite of passage will provide fathers and mentors with an opportunity to share their ethical and spiritual frameworks with their sons and protégés.

PART 2

The Practice of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

In Part Two of this thesis I use Gerard Egan's model of system design, functioning, and assessment¹ to translate the idea of a *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, as an initiatory moment in the life of an adolescent male, into workable program.

1. Gerard Egan, *Change Agent Skills in Helping and Human Services Settings*, (Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1985).

CHAPTER 4

ASSESSING THE NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT MALES AND THEIR FATHERS OR MENTORS

This chapter identifies ten psychological, spiritual and developmental needs of (i) adolescent males who are making their transition from boyhood to manhood, and (ii) fathers and mentors who are supporting them in this transition. This chapter also designates the pastoral responses the facilitators of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* undertake to meet those needs.²

Most of the ten psychological, spiritual and developmental needs of adolescent males and their fathers or mentors specified in this chapter have already been alluded to in Part One. This chapter serves to systematize those needs and to link them with a number of pastoral responses. Clearly it would be quite unrealistic to expect that the pastoral responses made during the weekend *Fathers and Sons Retreat* would fully meet all needs outlined below. However, I think it is realistic to expect some movement towards meeting the following needs during the retreat. The hope is that the movement towards meeting these ten needs would continue after the retreat weekend.

2. Gerard Egan's model of system design, functioning, and assessment recommends that one of the first tasks of any human service system is to identify the needs of their clients. Hence this chapter provides the facilitators of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* with a systematic assessment of the psychological and spiritual needs of adolescent males at the time of their transition into manhood, and the psychological and spiritual needs of their fathers and mentors.

The Needs of Adolescent Males and their Fathers or Mentors, and the Pastoral Responses of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

Need 1: Healing the father-son relationship.

As outlined in Chapter One, a serious issue facing the family today is the rending of the father-son bond. The Jungian analyst Fred Gustafson comments:

In today's culture, the father-son relationship is in a terrible condition. It is both wounded and wounding. It is armored with a rage that rarely gets defined and tightly conceals a pain and a sadness that, once touched, usually brings tears or uncontrolled weeping. When the father-son bond is not intact in a way that nourishes a son's growth, and when a father does not act as a vehicle for transmitting some masculine mysteries to the son, that child will grow up with a limited and crippling sense of his masculinity.³

Pastoral responses: (i) to provide fathers and sons a secure environment within the retreat setting where they can relate openly and honestly with each another; (ii) to make a time for a reconciliation ritual during which fathers and sons can ask each other for forgiveness for the ways in which they may have hurt each other. The hope is that the renewed and reconciled father-son bond will continue to nourish the son's growth after the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. Similarly the hope is that the mentor-protégé relationship built up during the retreat will likewise continue to nourish the fatherless adolescent's growth after the retreat.

Need 2: Faith-sharing by adolescents males and their fathers or mentors.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, indigenous cultures regard the deepest need of the adolescent male at the time of his transition into manhood as spiritual. In his book *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, in which he attempts to decipher the meaning of initiation, Mircea Eliade writes:

³. Fred Gustafson, "Fathers, Sons and Brotherhood", eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Stephen Foster, and Meredith Little, *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, Op. Cit., 168.

The meaning is always religious, for the change of existential status in the novice is produced by religious experience. The initiate becomes another man because he has had a crucial revelation of the world and life. ⁴

The deepest need of an adolescent male as he makes his passage into manhood in a modern industrial culture is also spiritual. In my view there are two aspects of the adolescent male's spiritual need. The first is for validation of his religious experience. In my view the initiating Spirit of God prompts the adolescent male's movement towards mature manhood. However the adolescent male cannot validate his experience of God's prompting. He needs older men with experience of the world of the Spirit, to confirm his spiritual awakening into manhood.

The second aspect of the adolescent male's spiritual need is for guidance in negotiating the inner journey which spiritual maturity requires. So the adolescent male requires two interconnected things from his elders at the time of his spiritual awakening. These are: (a) confirmation of his experience of God, and (b) spiritual guidance.

With whom can the modern adolescent share his religious experiences? Who will guide him on his spiritual journey? Traditionally adolescent males in indigenous cultures have shared their experiences of the Spirit with their fathers and the religious leaders of their tribe. These tribal elders have in turn validated the religious experiences of the adolescent males and guided their continuing growth in the Spirit. In my view, adolescent males in industrialized urban societies have a similar need to share their faith experiences with their fathers and older men who are committed to their emotional and spiritual development, and who in turn help them become more open to the movements of the Spirit.

Guiding adolescent males as they become more open to the movements of the Spirit in their lives does *not* mean imposing a set of moral and ideological tenets upon them. Rather it requires of the retreat facilitators, the fathers, and the mentors an openness to God

⁴. Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: the mysteries of birth and rebirth*, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975), 1.

in their lives, and a readiness to talk of their personal experience of God with their sons and protégés who are making their unique spiritual journeys into manhood.

Pastoral Responses: (i) To provide a prayerful atmosphere in which fathers and mentors, sons and protégés can experience the spiritual nourishment of faith-sharing, which is intrinsically validating in and of itself, and thus confirming of the adolescent male's experience of God. (ii) The retreat facilitators, as guides of the small group faith-sharing, can provide the adolescents with spiritual guidance when necessary. Hopefully a good retreat experience of faith-sharing in small groups will draw the fathers/mentors and sons/protégés to continue regular faith-sharing after the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, perhaps in prayer groups guided by the retreat facilitators.

Need 3: The modulation of instinctual aggressive energy.

As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the arrest rates for juvenile violent crime in the United States have increased by more than 300% over the last 25 years. My hypothesis is that one of the key factors in this increase is the failure of fathers and older men to perform the crucial task of modeling for adolescent males constructive ways of channeling their male aggression. Moore and Gillette hold that a key reason for initiation in tribal cultures was to modulate the instinctual aggressive energy of adolescent males and limit their potential destructiveness.⁵

Pastoral response: to provide time during the retreat for the adolescent male participants and their fathers and mentors to share what causes them to feel angry, how they deal with their aggression, and how they cope with any tendencies they might have towards violence.

5. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *The Warrior Within: Accessing the Knight in the Male Psyche*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), 203.

Need 4: The blessing of adolescent males by their fathers or mentors.

Adolescent males need to be noticed, affirmed, admired, and delighted in by their fathers and older males. They want to relate on an intimate level with their fathers and older men, and to receive from them a sense of personal validation as men. Another term for this is blessing. In their book *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette state that young men today are starving for blessing from older men. Without blessing, they say, adolescent males struggle for wholeness. But if they are blessed by their fathers or mentors, they experience healing and wholeness:

Being blessed has tremendous psychological consequences for us. There are even studies that show that our bodies actually change chemically when we feel valued, praised, and blessed.⁶

Pastoral responses: (i) to present the adolescent male participants with a number of letters of affirmation written by people who know them well; (ii) to hold a blessing ceremony during the retreat at which the adolescent male participants can be recognized, prayed over, anointed, and blessed by their fathers and mentors.

Need 5. A sense of belonging to a community of men.

In my view, most adolescent males experience a deep desire to belong to and feel accepted by a community of adult men whom they respect, and to whom they can look for models of what it means to be men. Rudolf Dreikurs notes:

The desire to belong is the prime motivation. The individual may develop devious means to find a place, and he may have a distorted concept of his possibilities to do so; but he never loses his desire to belong. According to Adler, social interest - the ability to participate and the willingness to contribute - is an innate human potentiality. The development of sufficient social interest is a prerequisite for adequate social functioning; its lack is the cause of deficiency and social maladjustment.⁷

6. Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, Op. Cit., 61.

7. Rudolf Dreikurs, "Group Psychotherapy from the point of view of Adlerian Psychology", in *Group Psychotherapy and Group Function*, edited by Max Rosenbaum and Milton Berger, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1963), 169f.

The desire to belong, or as Dreikurs puts it, the longing "to find a place" with a group of men, is a prime motivation for adolescent males.

The other, usually unexpressed, longing on the part of most an adolescent male is for a model of what it means to be a man. It is to older men the adolescent male rather naturally looks for these models, and, when he finds a model, he apprentices himself to that man. John Shea comments on this phenomenon:

Perhaps the best way to begin is by noticing something that often goes unnoticed. An inescapable part of our lives is apprenticing ourselves to others. This is obviously true in childhood when we are in a continual learning posture. Our parents teach us everything from how to walk to how to talk to how to eat. We become who we are by apprenticing ourselves to them. But this process of learning through watching others continues beyond childhood. We find our models in the teenage years, our mentors in the middle years, and our examples of graciousness in the senior years. We find in other people possibilities of living for ourselves. And, lo and behold, when we turn around we notice that other people are apprenticing themselves to us at the same time that we are apprenticing ourselves to others. It is a circle, not vicious, but interdependent and unavoidable in the huddled human condition.⁸

However, for many adolescent males, finding adult men of faith to whom they can "apprentice" themselves, and from whom they can learn "possibilities for living", as Shea puts it, can be a very indiscriminate process. Because of the wounded father-son relationship described above, many adolescent males have difficulty relating to their fathers. In adolescence they react against their fathers rather than learn ways of living from them. Consequently few adolescent males receive neither the modeling nor the sense of personal validation they need from their fathers.

In their book *The Wild Man's Journey*, Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos quote a startling observation by one psychologist that most boys lose their respect for their fathers by the time they reach the age of sixteen.⁹ If this is true, and I suspect it is, and if no attempt is made to counteract this, then fathers - usually the primary male figures in the lives of adolescent males - are unlikely to represent "possibilities for living" for them. As a

8. John Shea, *The Spirit Master* (Chicago: The Thomas More Press, 1987), 17f.

9. Richard Rohr and Joseph Martos, *The Wild Man's Journey: Reflections on Male Spirituality*, (Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1992), 88.

result, many adolescent males, and many older men too, have an unsatisfied yearning for a deep relationship with a father or an older man to whom they can apprentice themselves and learn what it means to be a man.

As we have seen, indigenous cultures address the adolescent male's desire for belonging, acceptance and validation by way of male initiation rites. The structures for validation and masculine connection are at the heart of the tribal initiation process, but are not readily available to adolescent males in an industrialized urban society. As a result many adolescent males make their own often haphazard and dangerous ways into manhood because there is no community of men to support their transition, and specific communal rituals are not provided to signify this transition in our culture. So the unmet desire for a feeling of belonging, acceptance and validation remains.

Pastoral response: to give the adolescent males an experience of belonging to a community of men in which they will be validated and in which they may find models for their lives.

Need 6. To assist adolescent males in finding their personal vision

Aspirations and desires are the driving force of actions. An integral aspect of achieving a sense of personal identity, or self-definition, comes through forming aspirations, hopes and dreams. Aspirations, visions and hopes give shape to the life of an adolescent male and empower his acting. An adolescent male cannot achieve, or *be*, what he cannot imagine. So, desiring and naming his vision and desires makes good psychological sense. If an adolescent male is to realize his aspirations in his life, he needs to focus them. If he is clear about his aspirations, which, of course, change through life, he will continue, as a man, to translate them into reality.

A vision involves the adolescent male daring to say where his story will go in the future. However, he often finds a discrepancy between the story that he would like his life

to tell and the story that his life actually tells. But it is precisely this sense of incompleteness which leads the adolescent male to realize that the achievement of his dream is a gift, and not achievable by his human strength alone. Jesus, the basis of the Christian hope, enables his dream to become a reality in his life.

Of course an adolescent male's aspirations may be either beneficial or destructive. If he has a life-giving vision, it will correspond to what is meaningful, good and worthwhile for him and his community. If he has a life-denying vision, he will be tragically deluded about the reality of his life and may attempt to force reality to conform to the shape of his illusions.

Pastoral Response: to help each adolescent male in the life-long process of recognizing and claiming his aspirations, desires, and vision.

Need 7. To encourage deeper respect in men's relationships with women.

Many fathers avoid discussing relationships with women and sexual issues with their adolescent sons because they feel awkward. Conversely, many adolescent males are just as reluctant to discuss about sexuality and their relationships with women with their fathers. But for men in indigenous cultures, initiation is precisely the period when fathers and tribal elders broach sexual and relational issues with the adolescent males of their group. Sexual and relational issues are usually regarded as sacred in indigenous cultures. As Eliade comments, "In a great many cases puberty rites, in one way or another, imply the revelation of sexuality - but, for the entire pre-modern world, sexuality too participates in the sacred." ¹⁰

In my view fathers and older men in industrialized urban society, like their counterparts in indigenous cultures, need to take responsibility for educating their sons

10. Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation; the mysteries of birth and rebirth*, Op. Cit., 3

about the mysteries and the sacredness of sexuality. Fathers and older men need to encourage a deep respect in adolescent males for their sexuality, and instruct adolescent males how to act lovingly, respectfully, and justly in their relationships with women.

Pastoral response: To provide adolescent males with a secure place where they may openly share with their fathers and older males, their relationships with women, and explore their understanding of sexuality.

Need 8. To instill in adolescent males a sense of basic hopefulness.

As Chapter One demonstrates, there is a crisis in masculine ritual process in modern culture. Because of this, the deep spiritual changes which accompany the passage of an adolescent male into manhood are generally disregarded. Initiation into manhood, which ideally signifies an opening to deeper religious meaning in the adolescent male's life, finds little cultural support in industrialized urban society. Edith Sullwold, the founder of the Hilde Kirsch Children's Center at the C.G. Jung Institute of Los Angeles, notes the lack of support for an adolescent's spiritual development may have disastrous effects :

Some of the investigators who are concerned with the rapidly increasing suicidal rate of adolescents, especially those from fifteen to nineteen years of age, speculate that this lack of spiritual sustenance may be one of the complex factors leading to despair and suicide for the teenager.¹¹

Mindful of the adolescent male's potential for despair and suicide, the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* attempts to address his need for spiritual support and sustenance at a time of great change in his life. As has been stated in Chapter Three, the psychic death involved in the transition into manhood may lead the adolescent towards suicidal gestures. So the retreat explicitly addresses, by way of ritual in the Blessing Ceremony, in the reading of the Passion during the Eucharist, and also in homilies, the experience of psychic death

11. Edith Sullwold, "The Ritual-Maker Within at Adolescence", eds. Louise Carus Mahdi, Stephen Foster, and Meredith Little, *Between and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*, (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987), 116.

involved in the adolescent male's renunciation of boyhood. The retreat also attempts to instill in the adolescent male a sense of basic hopefulness, as described in Chapter Three, as a way of immunizing him against depression of this psychic death, and strengthening him during his psychic rebirth into manhood.

Pastoral responses: (i) to make a time during the retreat when the father (or the mentor, if the father is not available) tells the adolescent male the story of his birth and his infancy; (ii) to ritualize and otherwise acknowledge the experience of psychic death involved in the adolescent male's renunciation of boyhood.

Need 9. To assist in the task of adolescence: achieving identity.

As was outlined in Chapter Three, the developmental task of adolescence is identity achievement versus identity diffusion. Quality relationships an adolescent has with his mother and father contribute significantly to his ability to achieve a sense of personal identity. Also an adolescent's relationship with and service of God is crucial to identity achievement.

Pastoral responses: (i) to help the adolescent male begin to discern how he can serve God and serve his neighbor in his life; (ii) to enhance the quality of relationships the adolescent males have with their fathers or male mentors, which will facilitate their achievement of identity.

Need 10. To assist fathers/mentors in their psychosocial task: generativity

As has been outlined in Chapter Three, the crisis which unfolds in middle adulthood for fathers and mentors involves generativity versus stagnation. In terms of initiating an adolescent male into manhood, generativity requires of a father or mentor a continuing emotional investment in and a nurturing of his adolescent son or protégé.

Pastoral response: to provide a program which will support a father or mentor in his generative task towards his son or protégé. Hopefully the emotional investment in and nurturing of the adolescent males by their fathers or mentors will continue after the retreat.

CHAPTER 5

PREPARING FOR THE *FATHERS AND SONS RETREAT*

The overall purpose or mission of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, in the light of the assessment of the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of adolescent males and their fathers or mentors outlined in Chapter Four, is to help fathers and older males foster the ongoing development of adolescent males into psychologically and spiritually mature manhood.¹

The three major aims of the retreat facilitators, flowing from this mission are:²

- A. To prepare for the retreat (Chapter Five)
- B. To facilitate the retreat (Chapter Six).
- C. To evaluate the retreat and provide follow-up (Chapter Seven).

Preparing for the Retreat

The responsibility for leading and coordinating the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* falls ultimately upon the retreat facilitators, although the success of the retreat is dependent upon the cooperation of all the participants. Essentially this chapter is a check-list of things the retreat facilitators need to attend to in planning and preparing for the retreat. The

1. Gerard Egan's model of system design, functioning, and assessment recommends that having identified the needs of their clients, the next task of any human service system is to define the overall purpose or mission of the system, as I have done for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*.

2. Because the overall purpose of a human service system is often written in mission-statement language, it tends to be too general. So it is broken up into major aims which generate specific programs.

preparation which the facilitators need to do for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* has four separate, but interconnected, components:

- (1) The personal preparation of the retreat facilitators.
- (2) The organizational tasks the retreat facilitators need to perform, and the material resources they need to muster.
- (3) The selection and preparation of the adolescent males for the retreat.
- (4) The preparation of the fathers and the mentors for their role of accompanying their adolescent sons and protégés as they make their passage into mature manhood.³

1. The Personal Preparation of the Retreat Facilitators

Inner work. In preparation for his role as facilitator during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, each retreat facilitator needs to have reflected deeply and prayerfully on the issues which will be covered during the course of the weekend and how they apply to him. The issues each retreat facilitator needs to address are: (i) his own transition into manhood; (ii) his relationship with his father, and, if he is a father himself, his relationship with his son; (iii) his way of being a man of faith; (iv) how he deals with anger and violent tendencies; (v) his attitudes about his sexuality; (vi) his relationships with women; (vii) his vision for himself.

The method that each retreat facilitator uses to do his inner work will vary. He may choose to discuss these issues with a close friend; he may pray; he may journal; he may talk with a counselor. Whatever route, or routes, he chooses, it is important for the sake of the fathers and mentors, sons and protégés who will make the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* that

3. This is the corner stone of the retreat process, because the fathers and mentors give much of the input during the weekend. If they are well-prepared for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, and open to the process, the weekend is likely to be effective.

each retreat facilitator face these issues courageously. The inner work of each retreat facilitator will help him understand similar struggles of the adolescent males and their fathers and mentors, and deepen his capacity to respond to them with empathy.

Interpersonal skills. Responding with empathy to the adolescent males and their fathers and mentors requires the retreat facilitators to be well-practiced in basic listening and communication skills. They need to know how to guide a small group in sharing experience and faith. This is particularly important as males in a group usually tend to discuss ideas, rather than share faith and life experiences. The retreat facilitators need to model appropriate behavior for the fathers, mentors, and adolescent males on the retreat, especially in terms of their willingness to take risks by sharing their stories and their faith.

A specific interpersonal problem will arise for the retreat facilitators if some of the retreat participants speak a different first language from theirs. If the adolescent males are the sons of migrants, it is particularly helpful if one of the retreat facilitators is able to speak the language of the fathers, and is aware of pertinent cultural differences.⁴

A good working relationship with each other. The retreat facilitators need to be aware of one another's strengths and weaknesses as group leaders, so that they can collaborate most effectively. They need to be compatible with one another, so consequently they need to take time to get to know each other before the retreat.

Willingness to collaborate with the participants: The retreat facilitators need to be willing to collaborate with the fathers, mentors, and adolescent males on the retreat. This entails listening carefully and respectfully to their ideas and incorporating their suggestions in the retreat program where appropriate. When the retreat facilitators do this, they find that the retreat participants are more likely to "own" the retreat process; that is, they are more

4. For instance, many of the parishioners in inner-city parishes in the United States speak Spanish as their first language. If a *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is being facilitated for Hispanic participants, it would be ideal if one of the retreat facilitators was fluent in Spanish. When the large group is divided into separate smaller groups, the Spanish-speaking retreat facilitator could work with the Spanish-speaking fathers and mentors, while the other facilitator worked with the English-speaking sons and protégés.

committed to the success of the retreat, and are more likely to continue working towards meeting the pastoral goals of the retreat after the weekend is over.

Working knowledge of the retreat. The retreat facilitators need to understand the purpose and process of the initiation retreat. They need to have a basic understanding of the process of initiation in indigenous societies, and how rites of passage for males in an industrialized urban society might work. They need an appreciation of the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of adolescent males as they make the transition from boyhood into manhood, and a grasp of the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of fathers and mentors as they assist their adolescent sons and protégés to make the transition into manhood.

2. Organizational Tasks and Material Resources

There are a number of organizational tasks the retreat facilitators need to perform, and material resources they need to muster, in order for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* to work. These are outlined below.

A. Creating a Retreat Program and a Timetable

One of the organizational tasks of the retreat facilitators is to create a retreat program and a timetable. A retreat timetable, that has been used in facilitating the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, is located in Appendix A. The details of retreat program are expanded upon and explained in full in Chapter Six. The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is organized as a weekend retreat, beginning on Friday evening and finishing late on Sunday afternoon. Given work commitments and time constraints of most fathers and mentors, a weekend seems to be the most satisfactory period for the retreat. However, if a longer period is feasible it would be very helpful in deepening the retreat process, as more time could be spent on each topic.

Retreat facilitators will find it very helpful to have a retreat timetable ready for the

first preparatory meeting with fathers and mentors. A timetable is a very useful because the retreat facilitators can point out the occasions during the program where mentors and fathers will be asked to give input, and they can jot in the volunteers' names in the blank spaces.

B. Planning and Preparing Eucharist and the Blessing Ceremony

Eucharist

There are two important elements incorporated into the Eucharist on the Saturday evening of the retreat: (i) a reconciliation ritual for fathers and sons, and (ii) a reading of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

(i) Reconciliation ritual. A reconciliation ritual is incorporated into the penitential rite at the start of the Mass. During this ritual fathers and sons can, if they wish, move to a private corner in the room where the Eucharist is being held, and quietly share any division or pain which might have arisen between them over the years. They can ask each other for forgiveness for the ways in which they may have hurt each other. Both fathers and sons need to be notified, during their respective preparatory meetings prior to the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, that this reconciliation ritual will be a part of the weekend, so that they have the time to examine their consciences in preparation.

The retreat facilitators may choose to interweave the penitential rite and the story of Peter's betrayal of Jesus, and his subsequent reconciliation with Him, as portrayed in the Gospel according to John. The ritual could begin with John 18:17-27, and end with John 21:15-19. In introducing the reconciliation ritual, one of the retreat facilitators could mention that trust and betrayal are usually closely linked, because it is in relationships of trust, like that between a father and his son, that a person is most likely to experience the deepest pain of betrayal. For instance, betrayal by a father who did not keep his promises

to his son; betrayal by a father who, because of career goals and employment commitments, did not give time to his son; betrayal by the son who shows little appreciation of his father; betrayal by the father who has abandoned his son as the result of a marriage break-up. Through these and other betrayals the bond between fathers and sons is wounded.

The danger is that the father or the son, carrying within him a sense of betrayal, may become mired in unwillingness to forgive. An unwillingness to forgive deeply effects the spiritual and psychological life of the one who cannot forgive. With this danger in mind the retreat facilitators invite the fathers and sons to confront their feelings of having been hurt, abandoned or failed. And they ask the fathers and sons incorporate their stories of betrayal with the story of Jesus' betrayal by Peter, and his subsequent forgiveness of him. Then, as suggested above, the retreat facilitators invite the fathers and sons to speak of these hurts to one another, and seek forgiveness.

(ii) Reading of the Passion. Three retreat participants read the account of the Passion of Our Lord in the Gospel according to Matthew (Matthew 27:11-54). The theme of the Mass is the parallel between Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection, and the dying to boyhood and rising to manhood of the adolescents on the retreat. The celebrant speaks about this theme in his homily. He notes that the death and rebirth pattern of the initiation rituals practiced in indigenous cultures is reminiscent of the Christological pattern of passion, death and resurrection. For the believer, the pattern of the crucifixion and death of Jesus Christ, and his subsequent resurrection from the dead, and ascension to God's right hand, is the example par excellence of all rites of passage. It is a pattern which the Christian is exhorted to live out in life. The believer dies to old ways of behaving and rises to new, graced ways living. The suffering involved in this death and rebirth is interpreted as a participation in the sufferings and crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

The Blessing Ceremony

One of the crucial tasks of the retreat facilitators of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is to prepare a Blessing Ceremony for the adolescent males which is performed just before the conclusion of the retreat. An example of the Blessing Ceremony which has been used in *Fathers and Sons Retreats* can be found in Appendix B. The Blessing Ceremony is designed as an initiation ritual, and its purpose is to symbolize the psychosocial and spiritual development of the adolescent males as they prepare for the roles they will assume and the challenges will face as adult men .

A number of themes can be symbolized by means of the Blessing Ceremony. These include: the new identity of the adolescent male as one in the process of becoming a man; membership of, acceptance by, and solidarity with a group of older men; being blessed by his father or mentor; being celebrated as a man; acknowledging in faith his link to a sacred past; delineating the boundary between boyhood and manhood and dramatically symbolizing the crossing of that boundary; reframing the adolescent male's relationships with his mother and father; signifying the relinquishing of old ways and the taking on of new ways.

Because the value of any ritual resides in its symbolic and communal significance for the participants, one key to creating a significant ritual to initiate adolescent males is that they, their fathers, and mentors ought participate with the retreat facilitators in preparing the ritual. They ought also understand the meaning of what will happen during the Blessing Ceremony. During the separate preparatory meetings of fathers/mentors and sons/protégés prior to the retreat, the subject of the Blessing Ceremony is discussed, and their ideas incorporated into the liturgy. Also, during the actual retreat when time is assigned for liturgy preparation, the adolescent males and their fathers or mentors ought to be involved in shaping the Blessing Ceremony. In this way both the fathers/mentors and sons are

personally invested in the ritual.

An effective rite of initiation will both signify the transition into manhood already taking place in the lives of the adolescent males and, in some way, facilitate that transition. That is, an initiation ritual will both mark, and help produce, a major shift in those young men who are entering a new stage of life.

The need for an initiation ritual arises because the adolescent male is facing major changes in his life and he wants the outcomes of those changes to be life-giving. Yet he is aware that there are forces at work within his very being which threaten him. These forces, such as his sexual drive, his anger and violence, and his reluctance to leave his boyhood take on manhood, are often beyond his control or even his understanding. The adolescent male finds himself moving away from his parents, differentiating himself from them. He is no longer a boy, yet he is not fully a man either. He is in an in-between place. He is ambivalent. He both wants his freedom from his parents and doesn't want it. He desires security of boyhood dependency while at the same time realizing that it is unhealthy for him to remain a boy. An initiation ritual enables him to participate in an action which puts some order and meaning onto the chaos of his inner world and settles some of his ambivalence towards his new status.

In indigenous cultures which perform rites of passage at puberty, there is a convergence of psychological, spiritual and sociological influences by which the process of transition from boyhood into manhood is facilitated. When they attain puberty, boys are removed by the older males from their normal living situation in the village and taken to a sacred place. At this place the boys undergo a series of often painful and terrifying ordeals and rituals. Usually a central aspect of rite of passage is a symbolic death. The boys in certain Australian Aboriginal tribes, for instance, are placed into shallow graves and have their faces painted white to represent the fact that they are now ghosts. After they undergo their ritual "death" the "ghosts" of the boys rise to new a life as mature men. Having faced

death they can now be spiritually reborn.

Psychologically the adolescent male has reframed his relationship with his mother and father. Sociologically, when the young man returns to his village after his ordeal, he is viewed as having a different status by the other members of his tribe. He now has the rights and privileges of a mature man. He also has the responsibilities of mature manhood. Spiritually he has been introduced to the secrets of the world of the Spirit which are open only to those who have been initiated. The adolescent male is made spiritual by means of his introduction to the myths and sacred rituals of his tribe. The rite of passage thus has significant psychological, spiritual and sociological consequences for the male at puberty. By means of an initiatory ritual the boy has died and the man has risen. In a similar way, the Blessing Ceremony during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* signifies the death and rebirth of the adolescent male.

C. Promoting the retreat

The most challenging preparatory task the retreat facilitators face is attracting fathers/mentors and their sons/protégés to the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The retreat facilitators must ask themselves two questions: (a) What would attract fathers and mentors, sons and protégés to the weekend? (b) What is the best way to promote the weekend?

A. *What would attract fathers and mentors, sons and protégés to the weekend?*

Unfortunately experience shows that those fathers and sons who most need such a weekend will find it least attractive, and be least likely to participate. If the father-son relationship is very wounded, there will be a reluctance on the part of both father and son to attend, as the idea of a *Fathers and Sons Retreat* will be emotionally threatening to both. Even for those fathers and sons whose relationship is relatively healthy, there is usually some initial resistance to the idea of a father-son retreat.

What then will attract adolescent males, fathers and mentors to attend the retreat?

Although few males would admit to this, the prospect of being a part of a male community of faith in which they can share deeply is an attractive, if anxiety-producing, proposition. There is also the appeal, for both fathers and sons, of a retreat structure which prompts and assists them to address some of their interpersonal struggles they might not otherwise be inclined to face. The possibility that the weekend might enhance personal relationship between father and son is particularly attractive for fathers.

The adolescent males will be more likely to find the idea of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* attractive if they know the others who are going on the weekend. Knowing the others who will attend the weekend helps them feel more secure as there will already be some sense of intimacy, friendship and mutual support prior to the gathering.

B. What is the best way to promote the weekend? Advertising the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* - in a parish or school bulletin for instance - is only a one step in promoting the weekend. To do this alone will probably fail to attract retreat participants. Fathers and sons, mentors and protégés must be personally invited by the retreat facilitators, or the other people who are promoting the weekend. This entails the retreat facilitators making personal contact with the fathers and mentors by way of phone calls, letters, personal conversations. Advertisements in parish bulletins or leaflets about the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* are no substitute for personal contact between the retreat facilitators and potential retreat participants.

D. Group composition

The retreat facilitators need to determine the composition of the group. The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is designed for a group of adolescent males in the 13 to 16 year-old age bracket, and their fathers and mentors. However, retreat facilitators may choose to facilitate the retreat with an older group of adolescent males, 18 year-olds for instance. The life concerns of this older group - for example, leaving high school and going to college or

beginning full-time employment - are quite different from the life concerns of 13 - 16 year-olds. However the issues which the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* addresses remain as relevant to 18 year-olds as they are to 14 year-olds.

In general members of an older group of adolescent males will tend to be more articulate than members of a younger group. Because they are more articulate and feel less awkward, the retreat facilitators may consider asking members of an older group to give some of the inputs during the retreat. With the younger group, who tend to be self-conscious and reluctant to speak in public, it is better to ask only the fathers and mentors give the inputs.

Ideally the adolescent participants should know each other before the retreat, so that there is already some community feeling built up between them. For instance, the adolescent participants may be drawn from the same parish-based youth group, or from the same school. In my experience selecting the adolescent participants from the same grade, or even the same classroom is very helpful for the retreat process, as they already have a shared history.

With two retreat facilitators, 20 to 22 would be the maximum size of the whole group - that is, fathers, mentors, adolescent males and facilitators. This maximum size is recommended because during the retreat the large group is split into smaller groups of father/son, mentor/protégé pairs, the optimum size of each small group being approximately four father/son, mentor/protégé pairs and one of retreat-facilitator. Eight to ten is the optimum number for sharing in small groups during the retreat.

The retreat can be made with smaller numbers of participants and one facilitator. If the overall number on the retreat is small, say six or eight, one retreat facilitator can guide the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* on his own. The disadvantage of this is that the retreat facilitator has no colleague with whom to discuss the dynamics of the actual retreat process.

E. Communicating with the School community.

If the adolescents will be away for school for a period because of the retreat it is important that the retreat facilitators negotiate their absence with the authorities, and explain what the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* process is about.

F. Communicating with the Church community.

If the participants are affiliated with a Church, it is good to notify the parishioners about the retreat in the parish bulletin, and ask them for their prayerful support.

G. Finding a suitable site for the retreat.

In indigenous cultures, initiation usually takes at a sacred site to which the older men take the adolescent males. It is here that they are instructed in the sacred mysteries of their tribe. Likewise with the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. A quiet place which is suitable for a retreat and which is close to nature is best. An open fireplace around which the participants could sit and talk would be good. Because most adolescent males seem to be in a constant state of hunger, good meals are important. Rooms with two beds, so that a father can share a room with his son, and a mentor share a room with his protégé, would be ideal.

H. Material resources the retreat facilitators need to muster

- Transportation to the retreat center.
- Writing materials for each participant: journals and pens.
- Bread and wine, lectionary, candles and other relevant items for the liturgies.
- Photocopies of the retreat timetable.

4. The selection and preparation the adolescent males for the retreat

A. *Screening.*

It is vitally important to assess each adolescent male's suitability for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. In order to ensure that there will be a secure and prayerful climate in the group, special attention should be given to his religious sensibility, sophistication, readiness to participate in such a retreat and personality style. In screening prospective participants for the retreat it is important to ask two questions:

- (i) *Is this adolescent male likely to benefit from a father-son retreat?*
- (ii) *Is this particular group the best one for this adolescent male to go on retreat with?*

For instance, mixing unsophisticated or underdeveloped adolescents with others who are much more physically, emotionally, and spiritually mature may hinder the group process. Including a very withdrawn or psychologically disturbed adolescent in the group could be disastrous both for the group and for that individual.

If the retreat facilitators are not based in a school or a parish where they already have a relationship with the adolescents, the ideal would be to interview each prospective participant for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* at least once on an individual basis before the weekend. The interview prepares the adolescent for the retreat and helps alleviate any anxiety he may have. It also helps to establish a connection between the retreat facilitators and the adolescent male.

B. *Meeting with the adolescent males as a group prior to the retreat.*

If the retreat facilitators are in the fortunate position of teaching or being otherwise pastorally involved with the adolescent males in the group, they can prepare them over a

long period of time for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*.⁵ However, if the retreat facilitators are not based in a school or a parish where they already have a relationship with the group of adolescent males who will be involved in the retreat, it would be important for both men to meet and establish relationships with the adolescents as a group prior to the retreat weekend. This will give them a sense of how the adolescents will operate as a group, and help them to determine if any of the participants will need special attention during the retreat.

At this preparatory meeting it would be important to notify to sons that, during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, there would be a reconciliation ritual included in the Eucharist. This would give them time to examine their consciences in preparation for that ritual.

At this meeting it would also be useful to point out that there will be no television during the weekend, and that none of the adolescents are to bring walkman cassette players, video games, cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, slingshots, crossbows, BB guns, knives or other weapons. If this list seems somewhat overstated, I note that before one *Fathers and Sons Retreat* which I facilitated, I was asked by three of the adolescent males whether they would be allowed to bring the following items on the retreat: walkman cassette players, video games, a crossbow, and a hunting knife.

Adolescents and groups. Much of the reflection and sharing during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is done in small groups. Small groups are used during the retreat because an adolescent male will feel secure in small group of his peers. This is because groups

5. One of the facilitators of the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat* taught a weekly religious education class to the adolescent males, so he had a good deal of time to prepare them for the experience. He noted some initial resistance to the idea of a father-son retreat. The resistance did not come, as might be expected, from the fatherless adolescents for whom the retreat might be a painful reminder of the absence of a father in their lives. Rather the resistance came from two sons who were experiencing difficulty relating to their fathers. One adolescent male, whose father is in recovery from alcoholism, was particularly resistant to attending the retreat with his father, possibly because of the hurt he has experienced in that relationship. The retreat facilitator surmises that he attended the retreat he wanted to participate in the weekend with his peer group.

offer the individual adolescent some anonymity and distance⁶. There is less pressure to contribute in a group than in a one-to-one situation. An adolescent can often express his thoughts and feelings more readily in a supportive group of peers than he could in a one-to-one setting.

Adolescent groups also have their drawbacks. For instance, peer pressure may inhibit an adolescent from speaking out on a particular issue. There may also be some reticence on the part of the adolescents to express opinions because they are in small groups which include their fathers and older men. They risk losing face if their comments are laughed at by their peers and older men. The retreat facilitators need to be particularly vigilant in ensuring that no belittling occurs in the small groups.

C. *Assisting fatherless adolescents to find mentors.*

Because a father/ritual elder is one of the keys to an adolescent's crossing the threshold into manhood, one of the preparatory tasks of the retreat facilitators is to assist fatherless adolescents to find mentors. As was stated in the introduction to this thesis, those adolescent males who are without fathers, but who wish to make the retreat with their peers, have two options. One is that they can seek out mentors whom they invite to attend the retreat with them. The other is that the fathers on the retreat can accompany those adolescents without fathers, and assume the father role for the weekend. The retreat facilitator will probably need to assist the adolescent male whatever option he chooses. Not having a father can be very painful for an adolescent male, and the retreat facilitators need to be aware that the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* may serve to accentuate his lack of a father.

If the adolescent male chooses to seek out a mentor, the retreat facilitator needs to have some understanding of the mentor relationship. Daniel J. Levinson remarks about the

6. Saul Scheidlinger, "Group Treatment of Adolescents: an overview.", *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 55(1), January, 1985

mentoring relationship in his book, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*:

The mentor relationship is one of the most complex, and developmentally important, a man can have in early adulthood. The mentor is ordinarily several years older, a person of great experience and seniority in the world the young man is entering. No word currently in use is adequate to convey the nature of the relationship we have in mind here. Words such as 'counselor' or 'guru' suggest the more subtle meanings, but they have other connotations that would be misleading. The term 'mentor' is generally used in a much narrower sense, to mean teacher, adviser or sponsor.⁷

The roles of a mentor are varied. In terms of the initiation retreat, the mentor's functions are mainly that of guide and model. As a guide the mentor leads the adolescent male into the adult world. As a model he exemplifies a way of living and achieving as a man which the young man may feel drawn to emulate in his own life.

The mentor serves as a transitional figure for the adolescent male:

The mentor represents a mixture of parent and peer; he must be both and not purely either one. If he is entirely a peer, he cannot represent the advanced level toward which the younger man is striving. If he is very parental, it is difficult for both of them to overcome the generational difference and move towards the peer relationship that is the ultimate (though never fully realized) goal of the relationship. The actual parents can serve certain mentoring functions, but they are too tied to their offspring's pre-adult development (in both his mind and theirs) to be primary mentor figures.⁸

The mentor also models for the adolescent male what it means to be a man of faith. This raises the question, how is faith transmitted to young men? How is faith nurtured in young men? Faith is about relationships; specifically, the relationship to God and the relationship to other people. As John Shea notes his book *The Spirit Master*:

What we immediately experience are the attitudes, outlooks, and actions of people towards one another and their situations. People relating to people, the faith relationship towards neighbor, is what is observable. If these attitudes, outlooks, and actions are of a particular quality, we judge they must be supported and encouraged from a relationship with a deeper reality. But this deeper relationship is for the most part private, unavailable to anyone but the person involved. We may catch him or her at prayer, but we cannot eavesdrop on the interior dialogue. Our access to a person's faith in God comes mainly from his or her faith relationship towards us, the neighbor. We surmise a relationship to God because of the quality of the relationship towards us. We see the relationship to neighbor; we guess at the relationship to God.⁹

7. Daniel J. Levinson, *The Seasons of a Man's Life*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), 97.

8. *Ibid.*, 99.

9. John Shea, *The Spirit Master*, Op. Cit., 30.

For Shea, the dynamic of faith transmission is relational. The adolescent male sees the relationship of his mentor to the neighbor (the horizontal dimension), and make assumptions about his mentor's relationship to God (the vertical dimension). In terms of the transmission of faith to an adolescent male, my thesis is that he needs to encounter older men who have sought to embody lives of faith and service of others. When older men share with younger males their life struggles and their experience of God in the midst of those struggles, they are communicating how they have found meaning in their lives. In short, they show the adolescent males how they have found a way to live. They are communicating the attitudes and orientations which have helped them to make sense of their lives and have given them direction.

4. Preparing the Fathers and the Mentors for the Retreat

The preparation of the fathers and the mentors for their role of accompanying their adolescent sons and protégés as they make their passage into mature manhood is the corner stone of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. There are a number of aspects of their preparation for the retreat which need to be attended to very carefully.

A. *Letters and phone calls to the fathers and mentors.*

Once the retreat facilitators have decided on a group of adolescent males whom they invite to make the weekend retreat, they write letters to their fathers or mentors informing them about the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, and inviting them to participate with their sons and protégés.

In many schools or parishes in larger cities of the United States there are large numbers of Hispanics, so it is helpful to send two letters to the fathers and mentors, one written in Spanish and one in English, as many of the fathers are not fluent English speakers. English and Spanish versions of the letter are sent to the bilingual fathers and

mentors. This is done for two reasons: (i) to insure they clearly understood the details of the retreat; and (ii) as an implicit sign the retreat facilitators respect their cultural and language differences, and are aware of the bicultural nature of the parish from which the participants were drawn. The day, date, place and time for the first preparatory meeting of the fathers/mentors with the retreat facilitators is given. It is helpful to send these letters out six weeks before the first preparatory meeting. A week later the fathers are sent another letter giving them details of the retreat center. There are two versions of this letter too - one in English and one in Spanish. Two weeks after the second letter is sent, one of the retreat facilitators who is fluent in Spanish telephones each father and speaks to him about the retreat, encouraging him to come. Finally, on the evening before the meeting, additional phone calls are made to the fathers or mentors reminding them of the meeting. If the group of adolescents is school or parish-based, verbal reminders of the meeting can be sent to the fathers and mentors via their sons or protégés.

B. *Meetings with the fathers/mentors prior to the retreat.*¹⁰

In preparation for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, fathers/mentors need to meet *at least twice*, and preferably three times, to build up their shared sense of mutual support and community. Hopefully in those meetings they would begin to experience some sense of community and a sense of the possibility of the deeply spiritual dimension of manhood. Clearly, if adolescent males are going to be initiated into a faith community of men, there first must *be* a community into which they can be initiated. The fathers and mentors would need to meet together as men of faith and decide, as a group, who they are as followers of Jesus Christ, and what they want to initiate their sons and protégés into. These meetings would help the fathers and mentors become more aware of their inner spiritual selves.

10. The meeting with the fathers and mentors before the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat* went very well. Both retreat facilitators were surprised and gratified by the willingness of the fathers and mentors to volunteer to give input during the weekend, and the seriousness with which they viewed the retreat.

The format of the first preparatory meeting with fathers and mentors would be as follows:

Gospel reflection. The meeting begins with a Gospel reading and some silent reflection. One suggestion is Luke 2:41- 52, which tells the story of the twelve year-old Jesus being lost and his anxious parents finding him in the Temple in Jerusalem talking with the elders. The Gospel reading is followed by a period of quiet reflection and sharing.

Retreat program and timetable. A suggested retreat program and timetable are handed out, and it serves as a point for discussion about the retreat. The retreat facilitators need to carefully explain the idea of the retreat to the fathers and mentors. The retreat program and timetable may be altered considerably following feedback from fathers and mentors during the meetings

Personal inputs. The retreat facilitators invite the fathers and mentors to give personal inputs on various topics during the retreat. A willingness on the part of the fathers and mentors to give inputs, and to take active leadership roles during the retreat, is essential to the success of the retreat. Hearing the personal inputs from the fathers and mentors is, for the adolescent males, the most moving and illuminating aspect of the retreat process. So the fathers and mentors need to think carefully and prayerfully about the personal inputs they will give during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The retreat facilitators may need to assure those fathers or mentors who do not speak English that their inputs will be translated.

The dispositions required of the fathers and mentors. The retreat facilitators state explicitly what is need of the fathers and mentors during the retreat: (i) to be willing to share openly and generously with each other; (ii) to be non-judgmental in the group; (iii) to keep what is said in the group confidential.

Letters of affirmation for the adolescent males. During the retreat the each

adolescent male will receive a number of affirming letters from significant people who have known him well in his lives, including, if possible, his father. A half a page noting something about his personality and something good about him is fine. The ideal is that he receive as many letters as possible from people who know and love him - his mother, relatives, teachers, friends. It is best not to tell him where he fails, nor state areas in which he could grow, but merely note some aspects of his character which make him unique and lovable. It is fine to suggest what his talents are and how, as man, he could use these talents to serve others. The letters are brought in sealed envelopes to the retreat, and kept secret until they are distributed on the Saturday morning of the retreat.

Contact telephone number. The phone number of the retreat center is given to the men so that family members can contact them during the retreat weekend in case of an emergency.

The retreat center facilities are itemized. For instance, if the meeting room has a fireplace it is noted. Reading areas, chapel, dining room, and sleeping arrangements are noted.

Cost. The cost per person is stated. Whether this includes the cost of meals for the weekend is noted.

What to bring. What each person needs to bring is listed. For instance, warm clothes, a waterproof pair of shoes or boots, a sleeping bag, towels and toiletries.

Travel arrangements. The route to the retreat center is given. Cars and vans are organized to carry the people and the luggage.

The format of subsequent meetings would be similar: Gospel reading, quiet reflection, discussion of organization issues of the retreat. At the second and third meetings suggested revisions of the retreat timetable could be discussed. Also the fathers and mentors could discuss their inputs with each other. The recommendation could be made that the fathers and mentors write their inputs before the retreat so that they are clear about what they want to say and are not too verbose.

CHAPTER 6

FACILITATING THE *FATHERS AND SONS RETREAT*

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a practical, step-by-step approach to facilitating the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. Twelve different topics are explored during the retreat; these are:¹

1. The Father - Son relationship.
2. The Sorrowful Mysteries of Life.
3. Affirmation.
4. Anger and Violence.
5. A Personal Vision.
6. What the Adolescent was like as an Infant.
7. Relationships with Women.
8. Reconciliation between Father and Son.
9. The Paschal Pattern found in the Death of Boyhood and Rebirth into Manhood.
10. Encountering God.
11. The Call to Serve.
12. The Blessing Ceremony.

1. The sequence of topics addressed in Chapter 6 follows exactly the sequence in the timetable for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The retreat timetable is found in Appendix A of the thesis.

The Goals of the Retreat Process

The goal of the process used during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is to help the fathers and sons, mentors and protégés to share deeply their personal experiences of the aforementioned topics. This goal transcends intellectual discussion of these particular topics; sharing deeply involves a willingness on the part of each participant to be open and vulnerable with the others in the group.

Attending to Relationships

Because relationships are at the heart of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* process, the retreat facilitators need to be aware of and attend to relational issues likely to be raised during the weekend. The father - son relationship is crucial, and the retreat facilitators need to pay special attention to it. The adolescent male on the retreat is, as has been stated, in time of transition in his life. He is shifting away from being a boy in relation to adults, towards becoming a man in adult relationships with women, with other men, and particularly with his father.

The relationships which the retreat facilitators need to be attentive to during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* include:

- *The father - son relationship.* This relationship is in the process of being reframed from parent-child towards adult-adult.
- *The mentor - protégé relationship.* This relationship may be particularly significant for the fatherless adolescent male seeking a male role model. Moreover those adolescents males who have fathers may also look for role models or mentors among the other older men on the retreat.
- *The relationships between the adult males.* The sense of community the fathers and mentors build up between them enhances the retreat process, in that it gives

their sons and protégés a positive experience of a group of older men who have religious faith.

- *The relationships between the adolescent males.* Good relationships between the adolescent males on the retreat are important because, if they can trust each other, they will feel more secure in sharing their faith and their life experiences with the others in the small groups. It may be very helpful if the adolescent males on the retreat attend the same church, youth group, school, or are in the same class, because a sense of community will have already grown between them, which can be deepened by their shared experience of the retreat process.
- *The relationship between the retreat facilitators.* For the retreat to be a success the facilitators need to have a good working relationship with each other. If there is discord between them it will quickly become apparent to the retreat participants. Also the retreat facilitators need to be aware of one another's strengths and weaknesses as group leaders, so that they can collaborate most effectively. They need to consult during the retreat to monitor the process. They should build into the timetable meeting times with each other to discuss issues raised during the retreat. They might consider the possibility of including the fathers and mentors in those meetings.

The Adolescent Male's Relationship with God

This initiatory moment for an adolescent male is situated in the context of a retreat because his existential transformation, from a boy to a man, is produced primarily by his relationship with God. During the retreat there are three different kinds of opportunities for the adolescent male to increase his awareness of and openness to the movements of the Spirit in his life. These three ways are:

- Personal prayer and reflection.
- Shared prayer in the small groups.
- Liturgical prayer. This includes the Eucharist and the Reconciliation Ritual on Saturday evening, and the Blessing Ceremony on Sunday afternoon.

In each of these three ways the adolescent males, fathers, and mentors are invited to deepen their awareness of and contact with God. For all the retreat participants, particularly the adolescent males, the experience of hearing other males speak of their relationship with God will be supportive of their own journeys of faith. It is probable that the most spiritually influential moments for the adolescent males on retreat will be those occasions when they have the privilege of witnessing the faith of their fathers and the older males.

An Atmosphere of Trust

An atmosphere of trust is a necessary prerequisite for sharing deeply-felt life experiences during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. So the retreat facilitators begin creating an atmosphere of trust in the group during the separate preparatory meetings with the fathers and mentors, and with the sons and protégés prior to the retreat. The trust-building continues during the weekend.

A key to the on-going development of trust in the group during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* will be the willingness of the retreat facilitators to be appropriately open and vulnerable about their own deeply-felt attitudes and life experiences. If they are open and honest, it is likely that the fathers and mentors will feel freer to tell their stories in the large group. If an atmosphere of trust develops in which the facilitators and the older men feel safe to openly share their experiences, it is likely that adolescents will feel freer to share their experiences too. The hope is that the atmosphere of trust will flow over to each father and son, mentor and protégé pair encouraging them to share openly and honestly with each other when they are alone. If such an atmosphere of trust can develop during the retreat it

is likely that it will continue after the retreat concludes.

The Retreat Process

The process used during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is outlined below. It is designed to assist the participants to reflect deeply on their experience. A five-step process helps the participants deepen their awareness of each topic in order that their sharing of personal experiences in the small group will be deep, open and honest:

- A. A brief introduction to the topic by one of the retreat facilitators.
- B. Input from three of the fathers or mentors on their lived experience.
- C. An imaginative exercise or a meditative prayer led by one of the facilitators.
- D. Quiet reflection with focus questions and journal writing.
- E. Small group sharing of life experiences that concludes with shared prayer.

A. Brief Introduction to the Topic.

One of the retreat facilitators gives a two-minute² introduction to the topic, and situates the topic in the on-going process of initiation into manhood. This may take the form of an appropriate Gospel story, personal anecdote, or even a suitable folk tale. A creative and interesting introduction by the facilitator will set a good tone for the session.

B. Input from Three of the Fathers or Mentors.

This is the storytelling component of the five-step retreat process. For each topic three of the fathers or mentors, who have volunteered at the meetings prior to the retreat, tell stories. The stories of the three fathers or mentors engages the interest of the other

². In the timetable for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, (see Appendix A), 90 minutes is the recommended time for each session. Times are also indicated for the five parts of the retreat process used during each session. It will be noticed that the times given add up to less than 90 minutes. This has been done deliberately to give the retreat facilitators built-in flexibility with respect to the times. Often the input of the mentors and fathers will go over time, or small group sharing will last longer than anticipated.

participants and elicits memories of similar experiences. In hearing the stories, issues are raised for the listeners, and they begin to reflect on similar personal experiences they have had. In this way the retreat participants begin to discover their common ground, building a sense of trust and community. Since the fathers or mentors speak for only three minutes, each input should be clear and pertinent to the topic.

C. An Imaginative Exercise or a Meditative Prayer.

One of the facilitators leads the group through an imaginative exercise or a meditative prayer appropriate to the particular topic. This third part of the retreat process helps each participant to deepen his awareness of the topic. The imaginative exercise or meditative prayer usually takes around ten minutes.

D. Quiet Reflection and Journal Writing.

During the fourth part of this retreat process, the participants take 15 minutes for personal reflection. They may use the focus questions, which are dictated by one of the facilitators, or they may write about their experiences of the imaginative or meditative exercise, or they may write about their reactions to the stories of the fathers or mentors, or they may write their reminiscences and reactions in their journals. Journaling helps the participants to enter more deeply into their life own stories, and enhances the quality of small group sharing. The retreat facilitators supply the notebooks and ball-point pens.

E. Small Group Sharing and Shared Prayer.

During the fifth part of the process, which takes 30 minutes, the large group is broken up into small groups of eight to ten fathers and sons, mentors and protégés with a retreat facilitator as the guide of the group. In these small groups each person has the opportunity to share his experience of the topic. The retreat facilitator who is guiding the

group will usually conclude the 30 minutes by inviting those who wish to make a spontaneous prayer. This shared prayer lasts for about 5 minutes.

Fathers and Sons in Small Groups

The fathers and their sons, mentors and their protégés are usually paired in the same small group during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. However, for the first session of the retreat on the Friday night, during which each participant talks about his experience of his father, the retreat facilitators may consider it advisable to separate the large group along generational lines into two groups of: (i) fathers and mentors, and (ii) sons and protégés. This separation may be prudent because, as we have seen, the father-son relationship tends to be very wounded in industrialized urban society. It will probably be too difficult for the sons to express their feelings about and experience of their fathers in a small group on the first night of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, with their fathers present in the same small group. However, in a group of their peers, the adolescent males will usually feel more comfortable sharing about their relationships with their respective fathers.

In facilitating the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* I have used both approaches. I have separated the large group along generational lines for the first session. I have also mixed fathers and sons, mentors and protégés in small groups for the first session. The former approach is more comfortable for the participants. However, the latter approach - of mixing fathers and sons, mentors and protégés in small groups - is particularly beneficial for the sons, because they often hear that their fathers had difficulties with their grandfathers, and they may begin to learn that the patterns of interacting they have with their fathers mirror the relationships their fathers had with their grandfathers. A son's hearing about his father's relationship with his own father often helps the son understand his father, grow in compassion for his father, and move towards forgiveness of his father. Hearing this story helps to heal the father - son bond, and bring the son towards a sense of

wholeness.

The question of whether to place fathers and sons together in the same small groups on the first evening of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* presents the retreat facilitators with a dilemma. If they choose to put father-son pairs in the same group, and the sharing is open, honest and loving, a good tone will be set for the weekend. However, if fathers and sons are very reluctant to share openly, or if the group interactions are laced with recriminations, and blaming, the atmosphere for the remainder of the weekend may be adversely affected.

A Step-by-Step Approach to Facilitating the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

Friday Evening 8.00 p.m.

Preliminaries

A. Welcome and opening prayer.

The *Fathers and Sons Retreat* begins with a welcome by the retreat facilitators followed by a short opening prayer.

B. Housekeeping and boundary-setting.

The rules and housekeeping details of the retreat center are noted. If possible it is best that each father - son, mentor - protégé pair share a room during the retreat. There are two reasons for this: (i) each father - son, mentor - protégé pair can continue sharing together in the privacy of their room in the evening; (ii) the adolescent males are less likely to make a lot of noise if they are sharing a room with their fathers.³

³. Arranging for fathers and sons, mentors and protégés to share rooms is a good strategy for getting the adolescent males to bed at a reasonable hour - a perennial problem with adolescents on retreat.

C. The themes of the retreat.

The retreat facilitators then briefly introduce the principle themes of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, outlined in Part 1 of the thesis. This should take about 10 minutes.

D. Commitment and punctuality.

The retreat facilitators ask for a commitment on the part of each retreat participant to attend each session of the retreat; they also make the point that there will be *no* pressure brought to bear on any of the participants to share painful personal stories in the small groups that they are not ready or willing to share.

Punctuality is a value during the retreat, particularly because the retreat program is full, so the participants are asked to adhere as closely as possible to the retreat timetable.

E. Confidentiality.

The retreat facilitators stress the importance of confidentiality to the retreat participants. They note that a commitment confidentiality will add to the atmosphere of trust that grows during the weekend. There are two aspects of confidentiality which need to be stated:

[1] For their part the retreat facilitators emphasize that they will not break the confidence of the retreat participants by disclosing what they hear during the weekend.⁴

[2] The retreat facilitators advise the retreat participants to consider in advance how they will talk to others about the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* after the weekend is over. They suggest that special care be taken not to break confidences in talking about what happened during the retreat. It is fine for a participant to disclose what he learned about himself during the weekend. However, to repeat the stories that he heard during the retreat, even if he takes care not to identify the persons involved, may unintentionally

4. For a licensed mental health professional working as a group facilitator, there are exceptions to the confidentiality rule. These exceptions include: (i) if one of the participants is suicidal; (ii) if the group facilitator judges that one of the participants is likely to do serious physical harm to another person; (iii) if there is evidence of sexual or physical abuse. In some States disclosure of such cases by a group facilitator to proper authorities may be mandated.

breach confidentiality. So repeating stories is to be avoided. They also point out the great privilege it is to hear the story of another person, and the respect and trust that hearing such a story ought elicit in the hearer. Finally the retreat facilitators admit that there is no way of insuring confidentiality in such a group, but that keeping confidences is a way of loving the other participants, and growing in trusting relationships with them.

F. Communication.

The retreat facilitators stress that good communication is at the heart of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The retreat facilitators ask that no one give advice, or attempt to analyze or solve another's problem in the small groups. The retreat facilitators note that, as small group guides, they will intervene if this happens, because advice-giving, analyzing and problem-solving can demean the person who is sharing in a small group. Disclosures in both the large and the small groups are "horizontal" rather than "vertical". That is, the emphasis is on sharing as equals, rather than lecturing. If the adolescent males on the retreat feel they are being lectured to by the older men, they will probably not listen.

G. Issues covered.

The retreat facilitators insure that every participant has a retreat timetable. Using the timetable as a guide they point out the twelve issues which will be touched upon during the weekend. These are: (1) the father - son relationship; (2) the sorrowful mysteries of life; (3) affirmation; (4) anger and violence; (5) a personal vision; (6) what the adolescent was like as an infant; (7) relationships with women; (8) reconciliation between father and son; (9) the Paschal pattern found in the death of boyhood and rebirth into manhood; (10) encountering God; (11) the call to serve; (12) the blessing ceremony.

It is important that each participant knows exactly what the retreat is about, and is clear what is expected of him during this weekend together.

H. The retreat process.

One of the retreat facilitators introduces the basic retreat process which will be

followed during the weekend. The facilitator explains that this process is designed to deepen awareness on the part of each participant about the twelve topics. He emphasizes the value of journaling, the fourth part of the process, which is designed to help the participants focus their thoughts and feelings before small group sharing. The importance of journaling is mentioned because, with younger adolescents, there is some resistance to writing, as some of them view it in the same light as an exercise they might be expected to perform during an English lesson at school. In general the fathers and mentors enjoy the journaling part of the retreat process more than their sons and protégés.

I. Each participant introduces himself.

After these preliminaries each participant introduces himself. It is helpful for the retreat facilitators to begin the introductions, as they model for the fathers, mentors, sons and protégés a way of introducing themselves to the large group. Hopefully the other introductions will be more than a perfunctory, "Hi, my name is ..." Introductions should take around 15 minutes at most. Following these preliminaries, Session 1 begins.

9.00 p.m. Session I: The Father-Son Relationship

A. A brief introduction to the topic of Fathers and Sons by one of the retreat facilitators.

One of the retreat facilitators talks briefly about the importance of the father-son relationship.

B. Input from three of the fathers or mentors on their relationships to their fathers.

In the large group three fathers or mentors tell the stories of their relationships with their fathers. The stories, carefully prepared before the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, are about three minutes in length.

C. An imagination exercise or a meditative prayer led by one of the facilitators.

One of the retreat facilitators invites the participants to relax their bodies, shut their

eyes, and breathe deeply in preparation for the following imaginative exercise. For around ten minutes the retreat facilitator slowly and gently leads them through the following exercise:

If you would, could you imagine yourself walking alone along an isolated and long stretch of beach. As you walk along you can feel the sand under your bare feet. Every now and then a small wave laps over your feet. The water is cool and refreshing. A slight breeze is blowing. You can hear the waves breaking.

Up ahead you see a small figure in the distance. This person is walking towards you. As you get closer you have a peculiar experience. You realize that it is you, as you were when you were a small boy. What is the small boy wearing? What is the look on his face? How do you feel as you come towards the small "you"? As you come closer and closer, see what happens. Does the boy run to you? What happens? Let whatever happens, happen.

You, and the small you, proceed to walk together up the beach. You talk about your life. Up ahead you see another figure in the distance. This person is coming towards you also. As you get closer you realize that it is your father as he was when you were a small boy. How do you feel as you come towards your father in the fantasy? What is the look on his face? As you come closer and closer together, see what happens. What does the small "you" do? Does he approach his father? How does the small boy feel? What happens? Let whatever happens, happen.

After a few minutes silence, the retreat facilitator invites the participants to end the fantasy exercise, and become aware of the room where they are sitting. The retreat facilitator requests that the silence of the exercise be maintained during the next part of the process: journaling.⁵

D. *Quiet reflection using focus questions and writing on the topic in the journal.*

For 15 minutes the retreat participants reflect in silence. They may want to write about their experience of the imaginative exercise; or they may prefer to reflect on the stories the three fathers or mentors told, and how those stories touched them; or they may use the following focus questions which one of the retreat facilitators dictates to the group:

- What is my first memory of my father?
- What were/are my father's good points?
- What were/are my fathers more difficult characteristics?
- How am I like my father? How am I unlike him?

5. At the end of this imaginative exercise, the retreat facilitator hands out notebooks and ball-points.

E. *Small group sharing.*

The fathers and mentors, sons and protégés share in small groups about their respective relationships with their fathers. As mentioned above, the retreat facilitators may choose to place the fathers and mentors, sons and protégés in separate groups along generational lines for this session, but together for the other sessions during the weekend.

10.30 p.m. Night Prayer

The theme of evening prayer, which recurs throughout the weekend, is being crucified with Christ. The death of boyhood and the rebirth to manhood is connected with the Paschal Mystery. It is the theme of dying to oneself, dying to ego-centricity, so as to be for Christ in the service of others. The reading is:

"I have been crucified with Christ; I no longer live as myself, but Christ lives within me; the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." [Galatians 2:20]

Following the reading there is a short period of reflection, some shared prayer and a final blessing. Evening prayer should take about ten minutes at most.

Saturday

9.00 a.m. Session II: The Sorrowful Mysteries Of My Life

A. *A brief introduction to the topic of suffering in life.*

One of the retreat facilitators notes that painful events, or sorrowful mysteries, in the lives of the retreat participants may continue to adversely effect them today. He talks about the need for retreat participants to face those painful events with Jesus, so that they can be healed of any harmful effects. The retreat facilitator also notes that the ways in which the retreat participants responded to the sorrowful mysteries of their lives may be

critical in their formation as men.

B. *Inputs from three of the fathers or mentors on their lived experience of suffering.*

Following the brief introduction by one of the retreat facilitators, three of the fathers or mentors tell stories of being hurt in life, how they dealt with it, and if new life came from that hurt.

C. *An imagination exercise or a meditative prayer led by one of the facilitators.*

One of the retreat facilitators invites the participants to get comfortable, relax their bodies, shut their eyes, and breathe deeply in preparation for the following prayer exercise which he will slowly lead them through:

Maybe you carry within you wounds from the past that still rankle in your hearts. It is helpful to return to the events that produced these negative feelings so as to drain them of any harmful effect that they might be having on you today.

Return to some scene in the past where you have felt pain or grief or hurt or fear or bitterness...Relive the event. See the place and the people and what was done in detail...But this time seek and find the presence of the Jesus in it...In what way was He present?

Or, imagine that the Jesus himself is taking part in the event...What role is he playing?...Speak to him. Ask him the meaning of what is happening...Listen to what he says in reply...

Return to the event again and again in imagination until you are no longer affected by the negative feeling that is produced. ⁶

D. *Quiet reflection using focus questions and writing on the topic in the journal.*

One of the retreat facilitators reemphasizes the efficacy of each participant writing personal reminiscences of pain, grief, hurt, fear, or bitterness. Journaling helps each participant to appropriate painful events in his life story and grow from them. Participants may choose to reflect on the following focus questions dictated by one retreat facilitator:

- How was I wounded?
- Am I still angry at what happened to me?
- Did this wounding help me to grow?
- Where was the presence of Jesus in this experience?

⁶. Anthony de Mello, *Sadhana: A Way to God, Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*, (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1984), 73f.

E. *Small group sharing.*

The fathers and mentors, sons and protégés share in small groups how they have been hurt in life, and if this has helped them to grow. For this small group sharing, and for the remaining topics explored during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, it is best that the retreat facilitators place each father with his son, and mentor with his protégé in the same small groups, rather than in generational groups.

11.30 a.m. Session III: Anger and Violence

A. *A brief introduction by one of the retreat facilitators on anger and violence.*

This may be an appropriate time to mention violence against women in our society, and to reiterate that any violence, and particularly violence towards women, is wrong.

B. *Input from three of the fathers or mentors on their lived experience.*

Three fathers or mentors share what makes them angry and frustrated, and how they deal with anger, aggressive energy and violence.

C. *An imaginative exercise or a meditative prayer led by one of the facilitators.*

One of the retreat facilitators invites the participants to relax and breathe deeply in preparation for the following prayer exercise which helps a person to deal with anger:

First, imagine that you see the person you resent there in front of you. Tell him or her of your resentment, express all your anger to him or her as forcefully as you can. Do not baulk at your choice of words! After expressing all your resentment, but only after, look at the whole incident that caused the resentment from the other person's point of view. Take the other person's place and explain the whole thing. How does the incident look when seen through his or her eyes?

Another way of ridding yourself of anger and resentment is this: imagine, that you see Jesus on the Cross...Take all the time you need to picture him in vivid detail...

Now go to the scene of your resentment...Stay with it for a while... Then return to Jesus crucified and gaze at him again...Keep alternating between the event that caused your resentment and the scene of Jesus on the Cross...until you notice the resentment slipping away from you and feel the freedom and joy and light-heartedness that follows. You'll begin to realize that there is hardly any instance when someone deliberately slights or attacks or hurts you out of malice. And you'll begin to feel compassion for the other person. ⁷

7. *Ibid.*, 75f.

D. Quiet reflection using focus questions and writing on the topic in a journal.

For 15 minutes the retreat participants reflect and journal on anger, aggression and violence in their lives. The participants may choose to reflect on the following guide questions which are dictated to the group by the retreat facilitator:

- What makes me angry and frustrated ?
- How do I deal with my anger and violence?
- It is normal to feel angry, but what do I *do* with this feeling?
- Could anger be expressed in my prayer?

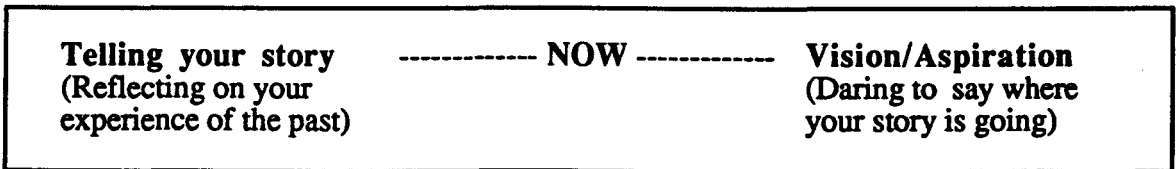
E. Small group sharing.

The fathers and mentors, sons and protégés share in small groups what makes them angry, and how do they deal with their anger and violence.

1.30 p.m. Session IV: A Personal Vision

A. Introduction by one of the retreat facilitators on the importance of vision in life.

One of the retreat facilitators gives a brief introduction on the importance of a man developing a vision in his life. Up until this point in the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* the participants have been reflecting on their past experience. Now they will dare to say where their story will go from here. One of the retreat facilitators may use a blackboard to write up the following definitions to help clarify for the group the nature of a vision or aspiration:



The retreat facilitator makes the point that all the retreat participants have aspirations and visions. One of the aims of this section of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is to help each participant recognize, retain and realize his life's aspirations and visions. He also notes that

a large part of a man's self-definition, or identity, is formed in terms of his aspirations and vision for the future.

However, a man often finds that there is a discrepancy between the story that he would like his life to tell and the story that his life actually tells. However, it is precisely this sense of incompleteness which makes a man realize that the achievement of his aspirations is a gift, and not achievable by his human strength alone. Jesus, the basis of the Christian hope, enables a man's dream to become a reality in his life.

B. *Input from three of the fathers or mentors on the personal vision.*

Three of the fathers or mentors speak about the desires, dreams, personal visions they had early in their lives or as adolescents, and how those desires, dreams, personal visions have, or have not, been enacted.

C. *Prayer exercise.*

One of the retreat facilitators leads the participants through the following prayer exercise, entitled "Holy Desires". It is about a person's desire to do great things for God:

Place before God the desires you have for each one of the people you wish to pray for ... See each one of them, in imagination, as having the things you desire for them ... You need not make an explicit prayer for them. It is enough to expose your holy desires to God ... and to see those desires fulfilled. What you have done for individuals, do now for families and groups and communities ... for nations, for the Church ... Have the courage to overcome all pessimism and defeatism. Desire and hope for great things ... and see these great things actually fulfilled by the mighty power of God ...

Now place before God the desires you have for yourself, as a worker or a student. Lay before God all the great things you desire to do in God's service ... The fact that you will probably only achieve a few of them, or that you don't feel very capable of doing them is irrelevant ... What is important is that you gladden the heart of God by showing him how immense your desires are even though your strength is very small ... it is thus that lovers speak when they express the immensity of their desires, which far out-distance their limited capacity.⁸

D. *The Walk.*

Following this exercise the fathers, mentors, and the adolescents leave the prayer room and spend the afternoon on a walk, which is made alone and in silence. There are

8. Ibid., 134.

some focus questions which they may choose to take on the walk:

- What am I searching for in my life?
- What dream draws me on?
- Where is God calling me?
- What is my personal vision?

The facilitator makes the point that the more vivid the picture the retreat participants paint in their imaginations, and the deeper the feelings accompanying that picture, the more powerful their personal visions will be.

E. *Small group sharing.*

Following the two-hour walk, the retreat participants return at 4 p.m. to share their hopes and aspirations with each other in the small groups. Because hopes and aspirations are so personal and delicate, the retreat facilitators must be very careful to insure that none of the fathers, mentors, or adolescents make fun of the others when they express their vision for the future. Ridiculing a person's aspirations or vision will be devastating for him and will harm the atmosphere of trust which has been growing during the retreat process.

5.00 p.m. Session V: What the Adolescent was like as an Infant.

During this exercise, which lasts for an hour, each father and mentor shares in the small group what was his son or protégé was like when he was young. The fathers and mentors are encouraged to bring photos of their sons or protégés when they were young. The mentors learn from their protégés' mothers and/or other relatives, what their protégés were like as infants.

The idea behind this exercise, which is outlined in more detail in Chapter 4, is that a lack of a repository of basic hopefulness from early childhood may predispose the

adolescent to depression and increase the likelihood of his making suicidal gestures in adolescence.

However, there is a way of combating a lack of basic hopefulness. That is for the father or mentor to tell the adolescent son or protégé what he was like as an infant: what his birth was like; how his parents felt about him; how he behaved. These stories will strengthen him against despair, and give him the basic hopefulness that will sustain him as he makes his way into manhood.

7.30 p.m. Session VI: Relationships with Women

A. *Introduction.*

One of the retreat facilitators introduces the topic of relationships with women. He makes a distinction between "relationship" and "sexual intercourse" - two seemingly interchangeable words nowadays. Both may contain the other, but not necessarily. A man can have sexual intercourse without much of a relationship with the woman involved. Conversely, he may have a relationship with a woman without having sexual intercourse.

B. *Input from three of the fathers or mentors on their lived experience.*

Three of the fathers or mentors tell the stories of their relationships with women. These may be about their relationships with their mothers and sisters. They may also choose to talk about their experiences of falling in love. Or they may share their experiences of being a man in a long-term relationship with a woman, and speak both the joys of living with a woman and sharing life with her, and the difficulties of relationships.

C. *An imagination exercise led by one of the facilitators.*

One of the retreat facilitators invites the participants to relax their bodies, shut their eyes, and breathe deeply in preparation for the following imagination exercise, which is similar to the exercise that was used on the first night of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*: The following imaginative exercise concerns a man's relationship with his mother, which may

set the pattern of his relationships with other women:

If you would, could you imagine yourself walking alone along an isolated and long stretch of beach. As you walk along you can feel the sand under your bare feet. Every now and then a small wave laps over your feet. The water is cool and refreshing. A slight breeze is blowing. You can hear the waves breaking.

Up ahead you see a small figure in the distance. This person is walking towards you. As you get closer you have a peculiar experience. You realize that it is you, as you were when you were a small boy. What is the small boy wearing? What is the look on his face? How do you feel as you come towards the small "you"? As you come closer and closer, see what happens. Does the boy run to you? What happens? Let whatever happens, happen.

You, and the small you, proceed to walk together up the beach and you talk about your life. Up ahead you see another figure in the distance. This person is coming towards you also. As you get closer you realize that it is your mother as she was when you were a small boy. How do you feel as you come towards your mother? What is the look on her face? As you come closer and closer together, see what happens. What does the small "you" do? Does he approach his mother? How does the small boy feel? What happens? Let whatever happens, happen.

D. *Quiet reflection using focus questions and writing on the topic in a journal.*

For 15 minutes the retreat participants reflect on their relationships with women.

They may choose to answer one or all of the following guide questions:

- How am I like my mother?
- What is my experience of relating to a woman?
- What happened when I first fell in love?

E. *Small group sharing.*

In the small group fathers and sons discuss their personal experiences of relationships with women.

9.30 p.m. Eucharist: the Crucifixion of Our Lord

Two important aspects of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* are emphasized during this Eucharist. First there is time for reconciliation between the fathers and sons on the retreat, which is incorporated into the Penitential Rite at the beginning of the Mass. Secondly, the account of Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection as it occurs in the Gospel of Matthew in

is read in parts by the adolescent males on the retreat.

(a) **Penitential Rite:** During the penitential rite fathers and sons can, if they wish, move to a corner of the room where they can ask each other for forgiveness for the ways in which they may have hurt each other. Both the fathers and sons know from the preparatory meetings that this reconciliation ritual will occur during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The reconciliation ritual ends with a communal recitation of the "I confess". The penitential rite should last for about 20 minutes.

(b) **Gospel Reading:** The story of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection in the Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 27:11-54) is read by in parts by three of the retreat participants. The theme, as it was in Night Prayer on Friday evening, is the parallel between Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection, and the process of dying to boyhood and rising to manhood which the adolescent participants are undergoing. This parallel is drawn by the homilist after the Gospel reading.

Sunday

9.00 a.m. Session VII: Encountering God

A. *Introduction by one of the retreat facilitators.*

The retreat facilitator speaks about images that the retreat participant may have of God. When we talk about God in our lives, the best way to talk of God is in metaphors. Images of God in the Judeo-Christian tradition are numerous. God is: father, mother, fortress, shepherd, rock, wind, potter, shield, river, teacher, friend, fire, fountain.

B. *Input from three of the fathers or mentors on their experience of God.*

Three of the fathers or mentors share their experiences of God in their lives.

C. *An imagination exercise or a meditative prayer led by one of the facilitators.*

One of the retreat facilitators invites the participants to relax their bodies, shut their eyes, and breathe deeply in preparation for the following prayer exercise, which is one way

of getting in touch with the participants' images of God and their images of themselves. With the large group the retreat facilitator may choose to only use the first part of this exercise, down to the sentence which begins, "Now change the fantasy ..." :

Imagine you are sitting on the top of a mountain that is overlooking a vast city. It is twilight, the sun has just set, and you notice the lights coming on in the great city... Watch them coming on until the whole city seems like a lake of lights ... You are sitting there all alone, gazing at this beautiful spectacle ... What are you feeling?

After a while you hear footsteps behind you and you know that they are the footsteps of a holy man who lives in these parts, a hermit. He looks at you gently and says just one sentence to you: "If you go down to the city tonight you will find God". Having said this he turns around and walks away. No explanations, no time for questions ...

You have a conviction that this man knows what he is talking about. What do you feel now? Do you feel like acting on his statement and going into the city? Or would you rather stay where you are?

Whatever your inclination, go down now into the city in search of God ... What do you feel as you go down?

You have now come to the outskirts of the city and you have to decide where to go to search for God and find him ... Where do you decide to go? Please follow the dictates of your heart in choosing the place you go to. Don't be guided by what you think you 'ought' to do, or go to where you 'ought' to go. Just go where your heart tells you to go ...

What happens when you arrive at this place? ... What do you find there? ... What do you do there? ... What happens to you? ... Do you find God there? ... In what way? ... Or are you disappointed? ... What do you do then? ... Do you choose to go somewhere else? ... Or do you just stay where you are?...

Now change the fantasy. Choose some symbol for God: anything that for you symbolizes God best- the face of a child, a star, a flower, a tranquil lake ... What symbol do you choose? ... Take your time in choosing it. Having chosen your symbol, stand reverently in front of it ... What are you feeling as you gaze at this symbol? ... Say something to it ... Now imagine that it speaks back to you. What does it say?

I want you to become this symbol ... and, having become this symbol look at yourself standing out there reverently ... What do you feel as you see yourself from the viewpoint and attitude of the symbol? ... Now return to yourself standing there in front of the symbol ... Stay for a while in silent contemplation ... then say good-bye to your symbol ... Knowing that you can and will come back to it ... Take a minute or two for this and then end the exercise.⁹

C. *Quiet reflection using focus questions and writing on the topic in the journal.*

There is now a time of personal reflection and writing for 15 minutes. The participants may find the following focus questions helpful:

- Can I name an experience in which I felt touched by God in my life?
- What are my difficulties in believing in God?

⁹. Ibid., 85f.

- What was my image of God in the meditative exercise?
- What did my image of God feel about me?

It may be helpful for the retreat participants to write down or draw their image or symbol of God in their journals.

D. *Small group sharing.*

In the small groups the fathers and sons, mentors and protégés share what happened for them in the "Symbolic Fantasies" exercise, and where they found God. They may share with the small group where they have felt touched by God in their lives. They may also share where they have difficulties in believing in God.

11.00 a.m. Session VIII: The Sacrifice of Self for Others

A. *Introduction.*

One of the retreat facilitators makes the point that true fulfillment in life is to be found in sacrificing oneself to serve God and others. The point is also made that whenever a person is touched by God, he naturally wants to express his gratitude to God by loving others and sacrificing himself for their sake.

B. *Input from three of the fathers or mentors on their lived experience.*

Three fathers or mentors illustrate, by way of concrete examples from their own lives, how they attempt to serve God and others.

C. *Quiet reflection using guide questions and writing on the topic in a journal.*

- What have I done for Christ?
- What am I doing for Christ?
- What ought I do for Christ?
- How do I see myself as loving and serving others?

D. *Small group sharing.* The small groups share on the above questions.

1.30 p.m. Liturgy preparation

The fathers and sons, mentors and protégés meet with the two retreat facilitators for an hour to discuss and prepare for the Blessing Ceremony. The retreat facilitators try to incorporate the suggestions of the fathers, mentors, and adolescent males into this liturgy.

2.30 p.m. Session IX: Blessing Ceremony

The Blessing Ceremony, which is the highlight and the solemn conclusion of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, is held. This liturgy, as it is outlined in Appendix B of this thesis, is self-explanatory.

3.00 p.m. Evaluation: hand out Evaluation Questionnaires¹⁰

The retreat facilitators hand out evaluation questionnaires (Appendix C) to the retreat participants, giving them sufficient time to write their evaluations of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. If there is enough time it can be helpful to have some discussion of their initial impressions of the retreat.

4.00 p.m. Organize a follow-up meeting to the retreat

Immediately prior to the group leaving the retreat center, the retreat facilitators organize a time and a place for a follow-up meeting with the retreat participants.

Conclusion

Attempting to address all twelve of these topics in one weekend retreat, as has been suggested here, may be considered overly ambitious by some retreat facilitators. They may judge it better for the retreat participants to address fewer of these topics in greater depth.

10. See the Evaluation Questionnaire in Appendix C of this thesis.

CHAPTER 7

EVALUATING THE INITIAL MODEL OF THE *FATHERS AND SONS RETREAT*

In this chapter I evaluate the initial model of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*.¹ I evaluate it in two ways:

(a) Quantitatively, by means of the data obtained from the Evaluation Questionnaires completed by the retreat participants.²

(b) Qualitatively, by means of information gathered by three methods. Firstly, both the fathers and the sons were asked to write their impressions of the retreat on the above-mentioned Evaluation Questionnaires. Secondly, during a follow-up dinner two weeks after the retreat ended, comments of the fathers were recorded onto cassette tape, and many of their verbatim remarks are quoted below. Thirdly, observations and assessments I made in my role as one of the facilitators of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* are interspersed throughout this chapter.

The overall purpose or mission of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is to help fathers and older males foster the ongoing development of adolescent males into psychologically and spiritually mature manhood. In this chapter I also record some of the on-going concerns of the fathers and mentors who are attempting this task.

1. The evaluation is of the initial model of the Fathers and Sons Retreat. Since that first weekend, the retreat timetable (Appendix A) and the retreat program (Chapter 6) have been considerably modified. Hence some of the newer components of the retreat, such as the reconciliation ritual incorporated in the Eucharist on the Saturday evening, are not included in this evaluation.

2. The Evaluation Questionnaire is in Appendix C.

The Pastoral Outcomes

In planning for the first *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, ten pastoral outcomes were formulated by the retreat facilitators. The pastoral outcomes were designed to respond to the perceived needs of the fathers/mentors and sons/protégés. The pastoral outcomes, outlined in more detail in Chapter Four of this thesis, are:

1. To begin to heal the father-son relationship.
2. To provide a prayerful atmosphere in which fathers/mentors and sons/protégés can share their experiences of God.
3. To help each adolescent male on the retreat learn to deal with his instinctual aggressive energy.
4. To provide an opportunity for each adolescent male to be blessed by his father or mentor.
5. To give the adolescent males on the retreat an experience of belonging to a community of men in which they may find models for their lives.
6. To assist each adolescent male in the life-long task of determining his personal vision.
7. To provide adolescent males with a secure place where they may openly share, with their fathers and mentors, about their relationships with women.
8. To instill in each adolescent male a sense of basic hopefulness.
9. To assist in the task of adolescence: achieving identity.
10. To assist the fathers/mentors in their psychosocial task: generativity.

As was stated in Chapter Four, to expect the pastoral responses made during the weekend *Fathers and Sons Retreat* to fully meet all ten needs of the fathers/mentors and sons/protégés, at a time when the latter group are making their transition from boyhood to manhood, is quite unrealistic. However, I think it is realistic for the retreat facilitators to expect some movement during the retreat towards achieving the above-mentioned pastoral outcomes. The hope is that, as a result of the retreat experience, the relationship between father and son would begin to be healed and enhanced, and the relationship between mentor

and protégé strengthened, so that the fathers and mentors would be better able to foster the psychosocial and spiritual growth of the adolescent males following the weekend.

Some Inherent Difficulties in Evaluating the Retreat

There are inherent difficulties in attempting to assess whether there was movement towards meeting the needs of fathers and sons, mentors and protégés as a result of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. Attempting to quantify the developmental, psychosocial and interpersonal outcomes of the retreat has limitations.

For instance, how do you determine whether the goal of instilling in each adolescent male a sense of basic hopefulness, has been met? Or, how do you decide whether the retreat has assisted each adolescent male in his psychosocial task of achieving a sense of personal identity? Will the data from Evaluation Questionnaires determine whether the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* has assisted the adolescent male achieve a more coherent sense of identity? Clearly not. However the results of the Evaluation Questionnaire *can* indicate to the retreat facilitators what the participants did or did not like about weekend in general, and about the retreat process in particular. The data obtained by the Evaluation Questionnaires can point to aspects of the retreat which need improvement, and are very useful in this respect.

The facilitators of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* must resign themselves to never being very certain what the long-term impact of the weekend was upon the participants, and this thesis makes no extravagant claims about the effectiveness of the retreat as a way of initiating adolescent males into manhood. At the very least the facilitators of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* can justifiably claim that an attempt was made on the weekend to meet the special needs of adolescent males in the process of their transition into manhood, and also to meet the needs of their fathers and mentors who are guiding them.

Two of the key questions which this chapter addresses, then, are: (i) Did the

fathers, mentors, and adolescent males find the process used during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* helpful?³ (ii) Did the pastoral responses made during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* begin to meet some of the needs of the fathers, mentors, and the adolescent males and serve their on-going relationships?

a. Quantitative Evaluation of the Initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

There was a follow-up meeting two weeks after the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, to which all of the retreat participants were invited. Following an excellent meal of *chilli con carne* and rice prepared by one of the retreat facilitators, the Evaluation Questionnaires were given to the retreat participants. Of the ten adolescent males who attended the retreat weekend, seven attended the follow-up meeting. Of the seven fathers and mentors who attended the weekend, five attended the follow-up meeting.

The results of the Evaluation Questionnaires have been compiled and appear in Table 1 below. The figures are the mean of the responses to the evaluation statements of (i) the fathers/mentors, and (ii) the sons/protégés. For the fathers/mentors N=5, and for the sons/protégés N=7. While the size of the samples was too small to make the results statistically meaningful, the figures presented in the table below nonetheless gave the retreat facilitators some broad "hints" about the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. The information gathered from the quantitative and qualitative evaluations of the initial weekend retreat were used to modify the program for the second *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, which was held in Wisconsin from April 2 - 4.

3. The five-step process used deepen sharing during the retreat is outlined in Chapter Five.

Table A: Results of a survey of the fathers'/mentors' and adolescent males' responses to the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. **

	Mean responses for Evaluation Statements:	
	Fathers/mentors N=5	Sons/protégés N=7
1. Hearing other men talk about their relationships with their fathers helped me to relate better with my father.	3.8	3.7
2. Using the notebooks to write out my personal reflections helped me to focus my thoughts and feelings and share better in the small groups.	4.2	2.6
3. (For sons/protégés) Receiving the letters of affirmation during the retreat has helped me to feel good about myself.	N/A	3.9
4. (For fathers/mentors) My letter of affirmation gave me an opportunity to affirm my son/protégé.	4.6	N/A
5. I was relieved to hear other men talking about anger and violence, as at times I have thought I was the only one who felt those feelings.	4.4	3.7
6. It is important to have a vision of what I might be and do in life. The retreat helped me to focus my vision.	4.8	3.3
7. I enjoyed the Eucharist on Saturday evening.	5.0	3.9
8. I was glad of the opportunity to share my experience of relationships with women.	4.4	3.9
9. Because of the sharing on the retreat I now have a deeper and growing respect for women.	3.8	3.3
10. Because of my retreat experience I now feel more comfortable about sharing with others how I feel God has touched me in my life.	4.6	3.4
11. Despite the retreat experience I still have difficulties believing in God at all.	1.8	2.0

** In this Table, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

Table A (cont.): Results of a survey of the fathers'/mentors' and adolescent males' responses to the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. **

	Mean responses for Evaluation Statements:	
	Fathers/mentors N=5	Sons/protégés N=7
12. Hearing the stories of how other men on the retreat attempt to serve God and their neighbors prompted me to consider how I can serve God and my neighbor.	4.2	4.0
13. (For the fathers/mentors) I was touched by the Blessing Ceremony for our sons and protégés.	4.9	N/A
14. (For the fathers/mentors) It was good to have the chance to bless my son or protégé by laying my hands on his head and praying for him.	5.0	N/A
15. (For the sons/protégés) I was glad that my father/mentor laid his hands on my head and blessed me.	N/A	4.0
16. It would have added to the retreat to have had one or two of our grandfathers with us.	3.2	1.9
17. The retreat has helped my father-son relationship.	4.8	4.0
18. In the retreat I enjoyed telling stories from my life.	4.2	3.5
19. (For the sons) The retreat has helped me to feel better about myself as a man.	N/A	3.7
20. (For the fathers/mentors) I have been glad of the opportunity to help my son and the other young men.	4.6	N/A
21. I would recommend a <i>Fathers and Sons Retreat</i> to my friends.	4.8	3.7

** In this Table, 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree

Evaluating the five-step retreat process

One of the key questions I wanted to address in the evaluation of the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat* was how well the five-step process worked with (i) the fathers and

mentors, and (ii) adolescent males. The results from Table A show the mean scores of the fathers and mentors are consistently higher than those of their sons and protégés. Most of the adolescent males' responses to evaluation statements fall within the 3 (neutral) to 4 (agree) range, whereas most of the fathers' and mentors' responses fall within the 4 (agree) to 5 (strongly agree) range. This indicates that, in general, the fathers and mentors were more positive about the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* than the adolescent males. This confirms an observation that I made during the retreat that the fathers and mentors seemed to enjoy the process used during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* more than the adolescent males. Why? The figures may reflect the fact that the five-step process used during the retreat was an "adult" process, and so more suited to the needs of fathers and mentors and less suited to the needs of younger adolescent males. This hypothesis is born out by results of the evaluation of the retreat process in Table B below.

Table B: Results of a survey of responses to the five-step process used during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. **

	Mean responses for	
	Fathers/mentors N=5	Sons/protégés N=7
<u>Retreat process</u> [that is, the procedure used namely (a) an introduction by the retreat facilitator, (b) input by the fathers or mentors, (c) imaginative or prayer exercise, (d) written reflection, and (e) small group sharing of life experience].	5.0	3.5
<u>Content</u> [the material, preparation and presentation by the various speakers, including the retreat leaders, fathers and mentors]	5.0	3.6
<u>Written reflection</u> [writing reflections in notebooks]	4.5	2.4
<u>Small group participation</u> [the sharing in small groups of life experience]	5.0	4.6

** This table uses a scale in which 1 equals poor and 5 equals excellent.

Table B shows that, in general, the fathers and mentors scored the retreat process higher than their sons and protégés. The discrepancy between the responses of fathers/mentors and the responses of the sons/protégés is especially marked in their responses to the fourth part of the process used in each session, namely the 15 minute period of personal and written reflection.

The fathers found that the writing exercises helped them to reflect more deeply and focus their thoughts. There was agreement among the fathers that 15 minutes was not enough time. Most of the Spanish speakers wrote their reflections in Spanish, although all except one father shared their experiences in English. One of the fathers commented, "I've never written anything like that before in my life. I found it scary to put those thoughts and feelings down on paper, but it was good, really good."

There was general agreement from the fathers, mentors and the adolescent males, that the older men appreciated the writing component of the retreat process more than their sons or protégés. The fathers and mentors found that they could become focused on the task of writing more quickly than their sons or protégés. I surmised that the writing exercise reminded the adolescent males of school work. The responses to Question 2 in Table A confirm that sons and protégés were considerably less enthusiastic about using notebooks to write their personal reflections than their fathers and mentors. However, while the adolescents males disliked written reflections in the retreat process, the figures show that they were enthusiastic about small group sharing. This result was confirmed by the sons, one of whom wrote in his evaluation: "I would have liked less writing, more group discussion and I would have liked to have spent more time with our fathers and mentors."

Does the finding that the five-step retreat process is better suited to fathers and mentors than to sons and protégés present a problem for the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*? It does in terms of the retreat utilizing a co-development model. That is, the retreat is

designed to *simultaneously* address (1) the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of adolescent males as they begin the transition from boyhood into manhood, and (2), the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of fathers and mentors as they assist their adolescent sons and protégés to negotiate the transition into manhood. In my view the retreat process adequately addresses the psychological, spiritual, and developmental needs of fathers and mentors, but does not address the needs of the adolescent males as well it might. The problem of how to improve the five-step retreat process so that it is more effective for the adolescent males is a question for further study.

The effectiveness of the pastoral responses

The other key question I wanted to address in the evaluation of the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat* was, did the pastoral responses made during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* begin to meet some of the needs of the fathers, mentors, and the adolescent males and enhance their on-going relationships? Below I compare the pastoral aims of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* with the results of the Evaluation Questionnaires:

1. *To begin to heal the father-son relationship.* The mean responses to evaluation statement 17 in Table A show the fathers/mentors, and sons/protégés groups both agreed that the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* had helped their father-son relationship.
2. *To provide a prayerful atmosphere in which fathers/mentors and sons/protégés can share their experiences of God.* The mean responses to evaluation statement 10 in Table A show the fathers/mentors were more comfortable in sharing with others how they feel God has touched them than the sons/protégés. This indicates that this need was met for the older men, but it is uncertain whether it was met for the adolescents.
3. *To help each adolescent male on the retreat learn to deal with his instinctual aggressive energy.* The mean responses to evaluation statement 5 in Table A show the

fathers/mentors were helped by hearing other men talk about anger and violence more than the adolescent males. It is unclear whether the sharing about anger and violence helped the adolescent males on the retreat learn to deal with their instinctual aggressive energy.

4. *To provide an opportunity for each adolescent male to be blessed by his father or mentor.* The mean responses to evaluation statements 12, 13 and 14 in Table A show both the fathers/mentors and sons/protégés groups agreed, or strongly agreed, that the Blessing Ceremony touched them, and that both groups were pleased that they were given the opportunity to participate in the ritual laying-on of hands.

5. *To give the adolescent males on the retreat an experience of belonging to a community of men in which they may find models for their lives.* Unfortunately, due to an oversight on my part, there was no evaluation statement included in the Evaluation Questionnaire which could help determine whether the adolescent males had an experience during the retreat of belonging to a community of men in which they found models for their lives. However, the written responses to question 11, "Did you feel as though you belonged with this group of men during the retreat? In other words, did you feel a sense of community?" addressed this need. All five fathers and mentors who filled in the Evaluation Questionnaires stated they felt as though they belonged and felt a sense of community with the other men on the retreat. Some of their reasons the fathers and mentors gave as to why felt they belonged during the retreat are:

"Because I had the chance to hear from other fathers who are dealing with the same problems that I am dealing with now, I felt that I belonged with this group on the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*."

"Yes, I felt as though I belonged with this group of men because, basically, we have the same hopes for our sons."

"I felt that no matter what backgrounds we come from, we were united with a single purpose to get to know our sons better and improve our relationships with them."

"I felt that I belonged because the other men were the Dads of my son's friends, and therefore they are my friends. Secondly because they are Catholics like myself."

All but one of the seven adolescent males who filled in the Evaluation

Questionnaires experienced a sense of belonging and felt a sense of community with the other men on the retreat. The one who did not experience a sense of belonging during the retreat stated that he felt "neutral". Some reasons the adolescent males gave to explain why felt they belonged during the retreat were:

"I felt that I belonged because I could share my thoughts with them. I felt that I could trust them."

"I felt that I belonged because when the fathers were talking I learned things that I didn't know before."

"Yes, because we felt like a family."

"Because I felt part of the group, and everyone listened to me."

"I could relate to the other guys."

6. *To assist each adolescent male in the life-long task of determining his personal vision.* The mean responses to evaluation statement 6 in Table A show the fathers/mentors agreed that the retreat helped them to focus their vision. The sons/protégés were less sure.

7. *To provide adolescent males with a secure place where they may openly share, with their fathers and mentors, about their relationships with women.* The mean responses to evaluation statement 8 in Table A show the both fathers/mentors and sons/protégés agreed that they were glad of the opportunity to share their experience of relationships with women during the retreat.

8. *To instill in each adolescent male a sense of basic hopefulness.* As stated above, it is very difficult to determine whether the goal of instilling in each adolescent male a sense of basic hopefulness, has been met.

9. *To assist in the task of adolescence: achieving identity.*

It is also very difficult to determine whether the goal of assisting each adolescent male in his psychosocial task of achieving a sense of personal identity has been met.

10. *To assist the fathers/mentors in their psychosocial task: generativity.*

The mean responses to evaluation statement 20 in Table A shows the fathers

/mentors agreed that they were glad of the opportunity to help their sons and protégés during the retreat. In my view this suggests that they were assisted in their psychosocial task of showing generativity to the next generation.

2. Qualitative Evaluation of the Initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

During the follow-up meeting following the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, I tape recorded the verbatim comments of the fathers and mentors. There was general agreement among the fathers and mentors that the retreat had helped to improve their father-son relationship. They also appreciated having the opportunity to meet the fathers of their sons' friends. One 44 year-old father said: "For me the retreat was beautiful. I think that I have a better relationship with my son now. More open. And another thing that is very, very important is that I met the other fathers, whom I had never met before."

Solidarity between the fathers

The fathers and mentors reported that, despite being from different ethnic and racial groups, the time they spent together helped them to discover that, whether they were Filipino, Guatemalan, Mexican, El Salvadoran or Anglo-American, they all experienced similar problems in raising their adolescent sons, and they had similar hopes and desires for their sons. One father commented, "We are all trying to direct our sons towards a better life than we had, and to avoid the pitfalls that we have encountered." A sense of solidarity was felt through shared experience. Another father said,

"When you're doing something that's difficult you have a tendency to think, 'I'm the only one who has to face this'. But when you look around and you see that there are other people with the same problem, it makes it easier. It helps to know that other people have similar problems and that I'm not the only one."

Apprehensions about the retreat

There was some fear about the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* before the weekend. One of the adolescent males, whose father abandoned his mother when he was born, had been initially reluctant to go on the retreat. Before the weekend one of the fathers spoke to him about his fear. The adolescent told him he was afraid he would be asked questions in front of the group. He did not want to be asked questions about his father, whom he had never met, particularly in front of his peers. He was afraid of being ridiculed. He said that he was ashamed of not having a father. The father told him that he would not be forced to talk or participate any more than he wished. The father also said to him, "I will be your father for the weekend."

The fathers and mentors on the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* were afraid of ridicule too. English was a first language for only one of the six fathers and one mentor who attended the retreat. One of the fathers, a Spanish-speaker, commented, "I was afraid of being ridiculed for my English pronunciation and my poor writing."⁴

The Blessing Ceremony

The fathers were all very moved by the Blessing Ceremony. One father commented, "I participated in something very holy and beautiful." Another said, "I didn't know that I could feel that close to God." Participating in the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* and the Blessing Ceremony has helped some of the fathers return to the practice of their faith in the two weeks since the retreat. One father commented, "I've never been into religion. I mean, the last time that I went to confession was twenty years ago when I got

4. This Spanish-speaking father told me he wrote his letter of affirmation to his son in English even though he knew his spelling and grammar was poor. I surmised that this was a sign of reaching out to his son in vulnerability. He also he told me wished that there had been more time between the meeting with the fathers and the actual retreat, so that he could have asked friends of the family to write letters of affirmation to his son in addition to those written by him, his wife and the teachers in the school.

married. Now I'm thinking about going to confession again."

Of the six fathers and one mentor who attended the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, two attend Sunday Mass regularly, two attend "about ten times a year," two go to church "about once per year" and one virtually never attends church. But, following the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, one of the "about ten times a year" men has started attending Sunday Mass regularly. He added, "My kids were proud of me when I went to church."

2. Ongoing Concerns of the Fathers and Mentors

The overall purpose or mission of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* is to help fathers and older males foster the ongoing development of adolescent males into psychologically and spiritually mature manhood. At the follow-up meeting the fathers expressed a number of concerns about their role of guiding of their sons into manhood. These concerns were also recorded. Although not strictly a part of the evaluation of the retreat weekend, I have included the comments of the fathers and mentors because they illustrate some of the difficulties faced by present-day fathers raising their sons in Chicago.

Communication between father and son. One theme, which was repeated by a number of the fathers during the follow-up meeting, was the difficulty most have in communicating with their sons. In general there is an uneasiness in the father-son relationship and a reluctance to share openly. Some adolescent males assume that their fathers could have no understanding of the personal issues they face. As one 35 year-old father commented about his relationship with his 13 year-old son: "I try to be open with my son. Still I understand that he sometimes does not want to be open with me. I think that he thinks that I never lived what he is living."

It appears that both fathers and sons have difficulty being intimate with each other. Often there is a painful silence between them. There is a point at which communication ceases, and both fathers and sons don't seem to know how to bridge the silence. One

father said,

"I've tried to talk with my son and maintain a certain openness with him. He'll talk about certain things. But with certain other things, he'll just ... I don't know whether he feels uncomfortable or what. I've told him, 'I don't draw any lines. Whatever you want to talk about, we'll talk about. You just bring it to me.' And there are certain things that he just doesn't bring to me. Like if he's having a hard time with girls and things like that, he won't talk to me about that. If I bring it up, he cuts it off."

A number of the fathers commented that they have difficulty is negotiating the father-son relationship, which is in the process of changing as their sons move from childhood into adolescence. One 45 year-old father noted that his role as disciplinarian intruded upon his friendship with his 15 year-old son:

"It's hard to maintain a relationship where you try to be friends with your son, because usually it comes down to the fact that you have to be the father and he has to be the son. And sometimes that friend thing gets in the way. You know that with my son, a lot of times, I'll be joking with him and sometimes I'll get serious and he doesn't know whether I am serious or whether I am still joking or what, you know? And I've got to have, like, veins popping out of my head before he figures, 'Oh, he *is* mad'."

A 44 year-old father commented that he has the same issue with his 13 year-old son. The issue seems to be one of boundary-setting:

"That's one of the things about being a father. You play around with them a lot. But sometimes I tell him, 'Stop', and he doesn't know when to stop. Then you have to get really heavy with him. But it's part of the deal I guess."

Communicating about sexuality. The problems fathers and sons have communicating is particularly apparent in the area of relationships with females and sex. Most fathers are extremely uncomfortable in talking about relationships and sexuality with their adolescent sons. However, when they do attempt to discuss sexuality, their sons usually cut them off, as we see below. One father, at a loss as to how to talk to his adolescent son about sexuality, sees it as particularly important for him to do so. He looks to the school to fulfill a role that he knows he should take, and he asks:

"What kind of sex education, if any, is being taught in the school? I'm talking about normal things such as masturbation and things like that. I don't really know how to talk with him about sex."

He says he had difficulty in talking with his own father about his sexuality. This particular

father had his first sexual experience with a prostitute at age 13, and recognizes the danger of such acting-out on the part of his son in the AIDS era. I asked him whether his father had talked with him father ever talked with him about sex, and he answered:

“He tried to. And I stopped him completely, you know. I didn’t let him talk. But I did have four older brothers. Plus, also I didn’t have that sort of problem. For me it was different, because when I was thirteen, I had already had a relationship with a woman. In my country there was prostitution and in those days it cost 25 cents. In my country if you’re old enough to go into any bar, you go. I mean you were supposed to be eighteen or older, but if you’ve got money you’re eighteen, no matter how old you are. If you have money you’re ‘Mister’. So for me it was not a big deal. But my son, he doesn’t talk to me about women. He will change the conversation completely. It’s like, ‘I know, I know, I know’. And clearly he doesn’t want to talk to me about the topic. I wonder what they teach them in school about their sexuality. I mean, we learned about sex on the streets. But these days that’s just too dangerous.”

Another father is worried about his son contracting AIDS, a reasonable fear considering that the numbers of HIV-positive teenagers in the is reaching epidemic proportions. He notes:

“Our kids are facing a lot of things that we never faced. When we were young, if we messed around we might end up with the clap. And you had to go and get a few shots and some embarrassment. But now, you mess up once, you could *die*. You become HIV positive and eventually, somewhere down the road, you’re gonna get AIDS. I mean, they try to make such a big differentiation between Magic Johnson having the HIV virus, but not having AIDS. A friend of my boss is a Doctor, and we were all talking in the shop one time, and he said, ‘Listen, it’s all bullshit. He’s HIV-positive and eventually he’s gonna get AIDS, because that’s what happens. The incubation period could be anywhere from 6 months to ten years, but eventually, somewhere down the line, he’s gonna get it’. So they face a lot of problems that we never faced when we were kids. They have a lot of problems that we never had.”

Given the numbers of HIV-positive teenage males and females, fathers are faced with a moral dilemma concerning the use of prophylactic contraceptives. As one father asked:

“Do I say to my 14 year-old son, ‘Use condoms’ or not? I don’t know if he *needs* to use them or not. So do I say it or not? I mean, the Church says, ‘No pre-marital sex.’ And in the Catholic school the teachers don’t tell the kids to use condoms because the kids are not supposed to be doing it. They’re supposed to abstain from sex. I mean, abstinence is a good religious policy, but sometimes it’s not reality. From a religious point of view it is what we would *like* for our kids, but sometimes it’s not practical.”

Another father, concerned that his 15 year-old son be sexually responsible, added:

“I try and tell my son that he doesn’t have to do it. I tell him that he shouldn’t play around because, Number 1, the worst thing that you can do is get yourself into a situation where you’re going to have to get married or something like that. Or you’re going to father a child that you have to be responsible for. And then you won’t have an education. And then what are you going to do with your life? No, that’s one thing that I definitely bring up to him, because I think that one of the problems of our world is the fact that too many men

father children and then say, 'Hey, see you later'. And I don't see how people can live like that. I don't see how a man can father a child and then never think of that child again. Just leave and just forget it. You got to have some special kind of conscience to do that."

Gangs, drugs and random violence. Another issue which concerns these inner-city fathers is the possibility that their sons might be subjected to random violence on the streets.

"We never had the problems with the gangs. I mean, in our neighborhood we never worried about standing on the corner. We never thought about getting shot. That was just something that happened in the movies. Now they're shooting each other over gym shoes and jackets and God knows what else - wearing their hat the wrong way. It's crazy. Ridiculous."

Some fathers live in fear any time that their sons venture out onto the streets.

"We can't know what their world will be like because it's an unsure period. All of us are raising our kids to be good people. And they are good people. But I think any of us would be lying if we didn't say that when they leave the house we worry about them. Not that my son is going to do anything evil or basically bad, but kids can be swayed by other kids; peer pressure is one of the dominant forces of adolescence. And other kids can take advantage of our kids because they are innocent. They are naive to a point. And I don't care how street-wise they think they are, because of their environment and Catholic education and so on, they're not as street-wise as kids from places like Cabrini Green. I'm scared of random violence. It could happen and it could involve any of those kids - just because they are kids - just because of the shoes they've got on - the jacket they got on - the hat they got on - the way the hat is cocked. Or if these gang-bangers don't like the way that the kid looks at 'em, they'll shoot 'em. It's all so random. It's all so senseless. You *have* to worry when your kids leave the house. My Ma worried about me, but she was always a worrier. But stuff like that didn't face any of us when we were kids. You know? We had gangs, but I don't think that they would be called 'gangs'. I think cliques would be a more appropriate term for what we had when we were young. Young guys from the same neighborhood all kind of hung together. We didn't get into any type of gang stuff. I mean we did our share of delinquent stuff, busting street lamps and stuff like that. Kids nowadays look at gang members and they're business people. They're into drug-dealing and intimidation. Kids see a friend of theirs who has dropped out of High School and all of a sudden he's driving a new car and he's got wads of money in his pocket which he's made from dealing drugs, and they think, 'Wow, this is great. What do I have to go to school for?' I mean, it's hard to take a kid who wants stuff *right now*, and say to him, 'Well you've got to go to High School and get a good education, and then go to College, and then, in 10 or 15 years, you can have a good life.'"

The fathers and mentors all grapple with the question of how do you teach an adolescent male about what are and what are not correct ways of behaving. They believe that television gives their sons false expectations of what it means to be a man and a father.

"You know, you never see on T.V. where a father has to make a living; where he can't be at home with his kids because he has to be out earning the money. On T.V. they've always got a beautiful woman and they've always got a new car. And that's what our kids

have grown up with. Whether it's right or wrong, it's a fact of life."

All the fathers agree that the world in which their sons live is a lot harder than the one they lived in as adolescents. They say that it is harder to function morally in present day society because the pressures are greater than they experienced. They wonder how they can teach their sons to act morally. In the opinion of one father good example is only one way:

"The only way that I know of teaching morality is by example. I can't say to my son, 'Don't steal, it's wrong', if I go to the supermarket and change the price of something or I put something in my pocket and walk out with it because it is just a small thing and because of all the taxes that they take away from us. How are we going to teach them not to steal if they see me doing it? Or, how can I say, 'Don't do drugs' if I do it myself? I talk to him about things and tell him what I think about it. And I give him my rationale. But it's often a one-sided conversation. I talk - he listens - I get no feedback. I talk some more - he listens. Finally I talk myself out and I ask him if he understands, he nods his head, still no response, I get up and leave. You know? But, during the whole thing, I try to get feedback, but I never do. What can I do? Jump on his chest? You know I can't *make* him talk. If he doesn't want to talk to me he's not going to talk."

These are the concerns of contemporary fathers who are trying to guide their sons into manhood. These are the men the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* has attempted to serve.

Conclusion

The main goal of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, stated in the introduction to this thesis, was that it be an initiatory moment, or rite of passage, for the adolescent male participants in the ongoing process of their becoming men. What was done in practice?

During the retreat *something* was done for this group of adolescent males and their fathers and mentors. But what was the *something* that was done? Were the adolescent males initiated into manhood? The efficacy of the initiatory moment aimed at during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* cannot be easily evaluated. Were the adolescent males fully initiated into manhood in this one weekend? Clearly not. Initiation into manhood in an industrialized urban society is an on-going process. What, then, actually occurred during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* in terms of the initiation of the adolescent males into

manhood?

Consciousness raising. In that initiation into manhood was explicitly addressed with this group of adolescent males and older men in the meetings prior to the retreat, *something* was done. In preparing the fathers, mentors, sons and protégés the retreat, the significance of what we were aiming to do during the retreat was explained to them. In my view, the dynamic of bringing to consciousness the notion of transition into manhood was important for the participants. By explaining the initiation rituals of indigenous cultures to the adolescent males, and by acknowledging that something similar was going to be done for them by means of this retreat, the facilitators acknowledged the importance of the transition into manhood which was already happening in their lives, and perhaps nurtured that passage.

Spiritual regeneration. As we saw in Chapter Two, initiation in indigenous societies is a regenerative religious experience for whole tribe. While the retreat was definitely a religious experience, could it be said to have been regenerative? I think it was. There were some small examples of this religious regeneration: following the retreat, two fathers began to attend Sunday Mass with their families; one father began to attend week day Mass once a week; another one father decided to receive the sacrament of reconciliation for the first time in twenty years.

There is an attitude among males in industrialized urban societies that spirituality is for women. However during the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* this attitude was conspicuously absent among the fathers, mentors and the adolescent males. One of the fathers, giving his input on spirituality, spoke of the day his son was born, saying, "When I held my newborn son in my arms I was filled with such love for him, and I knew then that God existed." In saying this the father was saying that the relationship he had with his son was much more than a bond of affection: he was saying that his son was the locus of God's self-revelation to him. And the son, hearing his father's statement, not only heard his

father publicly proclaim that he loved him; he also heard that his father believed in God, and that in seeing him (the son) the father saw God. In holding his son in his arms the father found the depth of his belief in God.

Participation in a Sacred Ritual. I was concerned before the Blessing Ceremony that some of the father, mentors and adolescent males might feel very uncomfortable with the liturgy, and choose to opt out of being involved in such a personal ritual. They were all given the option of whether they wanted to participate or not, and they all chose to be involved. The ritual was a powerful experience for all involved. I will long cherish the memories of fathers hugging their sons at the completion of the ceremony, and one father kissing his 13 year-old son. The retreat in general, and the Blessing Ceremony, in particular, was a source of healing of the father-son relationship; it also had the effect of healing the spiritual fabric of the lives of the older participants. In my view a regeneration of spiritual growth of the older males was wrought by a healing of the father-son bond. The fathers and mentors were spiritually reborn by their participation in the retreat and through helping their sons and protégés.

The Wounded Father-Son Bond. During the weekend, and subsequently, I pondered on those three adolescent males on the retreat whose fathers had abandoned them, and also those sons who were experiencing difficulties in their relationships with their fathers. There was one son who had a great deal of difficulty relating to his father - an alcoholic in recovery who had acted brutally towards his son when he was drinking. James Hillman, the prominent Jungian analyst, helped me in my reflections.

Hillman suggests that the archetypal murderous father, is mysteriously essential to fathering. He notes:

Fathering ... is impelled by its archetypal necessity to isolate, ignore, neglect, abandon, expose, disavow, devour, enslave, sell, maim, betray the son - motives we find in biblical and Hellenic myths as well as folklore, fairy tales, and cultural history.⁵

5. James Hillman, "Fathers and Sons" ed. Charles Scull, *Fathers, Sons and Daughters*:

Hillman maintains that, in a paradoxical way, it is precisely the cruel and murderous traits of the father which initiate fathering in the son. This initiation occurs because, when the son encounters these shadow traits in his father, the experience kills the idealization of the father by the son. This was certainly the case with the son of the alcoholic father. There is no idealization of the alcoholic father by his son.

But, as Hillman points out, in his disillusionment with his father, a son may say, "When I am a father, I will never do to my son what my father did to me." The paradox is that when the son makes such a statement, it is precisely the moment the father has unknowingly initiated fathering in his son.

The destructive father destroys the idealized image of himself. He smashes the son's idolatry. Whenever, wherever we idealize the father, we remain in sonship, in the false security of a good ideal. A good model, whether kind analyst, wise guru, generous teacher, honest chief, holds these virtues of kindness, wisdom, generosity and honesty fixed in another, projected outside. Then, instead of initiation, imitation. Then the son remains tied to the person of the idealized figure.⁶

The son is been initiated into fatherhood by seeing his father as he really is. He sees his father's shadow. Seeing the terrible shadow traits of his father is an initiatory experience for the son, because it has subtly introduced the son to his own shadow.

The pain of his father's failings teaches him that failing belongs to fathering. The very failure fathers the son's failings. The son does not have to hide his share of darkness. He grows up under a broken roof which nonetheless shelters his own failings, inviting him, forcing him, to be dark himself in order to survive. The commonality - and commonness - of shared shadow can bond father and son in dark and silent empathy as deep as any idealized companionship.⁷

The reality of this shadowy bond between the alcoholic father and his son will probably becomes painfully obvious to the son later in his life when he notices himself responding just as badly to various situations exactly like his father used to, even though he vowed at an earlier stage of his life that he would not. Hopefully this realization that he is indeed his father's son will be an opening for a deep compassion and empathy for the

Exploring Fatherhood, Renewing the Bond, (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1992), 77.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., 78.

alcoholic father to grow in his son. My hope and prayer is that those sons who have been hurt by their fathers may be initiated into fatherhood by the psychic wounds inflicted on them by their fathers, and that they will grow to become great fathers themselves.

One Evening Six Months Later

One evening six months after the initial *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, I had a meal with the families of two of the adolescents who had made the retreat. Both families are Hispanic. One of the adolescent males, aged 14, is the only child of a single mother. The other adolescent male, also aged 14, lives with his mother and father, and one younger sister. The single mother and the married couple sat around the table after dinner and talked with me about the effects of the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* on them and on their sons. I tape-recorded their comments, some of which are quoted below.

I had some specific questions for them. I wanted to know whether there was any change after the retreat. Were there any noticeable differences in their sons' behavior? I asked. Was it better or worse? Were they more mature? More responsible? The single mother said, "They liked the retreat, but they are still the same." The other mother agreed. She said:

I was so happy when they (her husband and her son) went on the retreat with the boys and the fathers. He liked it, but he hasn't really changed. I think it would be good if they had more retreats like that one. One is not enough.

Her husband disagreed with her assessment that there had been no change in their son since the retreat:

He changed a lot. Now I don't need to tell him over and over again what he has to do. Today I got a big surprise that his room was tidy. My son listens a little more. And I tend to trust him more with going out. I show him more trust. After the retreat we have talked more than we did before. When we are alone we sometimes talk. We have talked about girls and things like that and I have opened myself up to him. I think the fathers see the difference more than the mothers. I think that for my wife, he will always be her baby, no matter how big he is.

I asked the younger sister in the family whether she had noticed a change in her older

brother since the retreat. The girl, aged 12, replied: "Are they (the adolescent males) different? Not really. The boys are friendlier with one another. They not as mean to the girls as they used to be."

The father noted that since the retreat he knows his son's friends better, and he felt he could trust them. He also knows each of the fathers and mentors:

I like that I know all of the fathers now. I am glad that I got a chance to talk to them on the retreat. We had a chance to speak openly. Also I have had the opportunity to talk with my son about things that I never had a chance to talk to my father about. Now when I see other fathers I can talk to them and it helps to know everybody. My father was always too busy to talk with me. I never talked to my parents about sex for instance.

So there have been some subtle changes since the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*. Personally I think that the deepened sense of community among the all the retreat participants is a very welcome outcome. The father with whom I had dinner hoped that the adolescents in the Eighth Grade class next year would have the opportunity to experience a similar retreat with their fathers and mentors, and that the *Fathers and Sons Retreat* program would continue after I left the United States. If a deeper sense of community among the male participants and enhanced communication between fathers and sons is the outcome of the next *Fathers and Sons Retreat*, as happened with the initial retreat, then I too hope that the program continues.

Appendix A: TIMETABLE FOR THE FATHERS AND SONS RETREAT

Friday

7.00 p.m. Assemble at retreat center.

8.00 p.m. PRELIMINARIES

- Welcome and thanks by one of the retreat facilitators. (2 mins)
- A. Opening prayer. (2 mins)
- B. Housekeeping details and rules of retreat center. (5 mins)
- C. Facilitator introduces the retreat. (30 mins)
- *Commitment to see the weekend through.*
 - *Punctuality is a value, so let's stick to the timetable.*
 - *Confidentiality: stories stay here.*
 - *Communication: no advice-giving, no analysis of another's "problems".*
 - *Disclosures are "horizontal" rather than "vertical". That is, sharing rather than lecturing. This is helped by talking about personal experience.*
 - *Issues covered: (1) The Father - Son relationship. (2) The Sorrowful Mysteries of Life. (3) Affirmation. (4) Anger and Violence. (5) A Personal Vision. (6) What the Adolescent was like as an Infant. (7) Relationships with Women. (8) Reconciliation between Father and Son. (9) The Paschal Pattern found in the Death of Boyhood and Rebirth into Manhood. (10) Encountering God. (11) The Call to Serve. (12) The Blessing Ceremony.*
 - *Each participant introduces himself, beginning with the retreat facilitators.*

9.00 p.m. Session I: THE FATHER - SON RELATIONSHIP

- A. Introduction by one of the retreat facilitators (2 mins)
- B. 3 fathers talk about their relationships to their own fathers:
- (1) (3 mins)
- (2) (3 mins)
- (3) (3 mins)
- C. Imagination exercise about the father-son relationship. (10 mins)
- D. Writing exercise (15 mins)
- Facilitator hands out exercise books and pens, and speaks of the value of writing
- My experience of my father:
- *What were/are his good points?*
 - *What were/are his more difficult characteristics?*
 - *How am I like him? How am I unlike him?*
- E. Small group discussion after writing. (30 mins)
[Fathers/mentors, and sons/protégés in separate groups]
- 10.30 p.m. Evening Prayer [Galatians 2:20-21] (10 mins)
Theme: being crucified with Christ

Saturday

8.00 a.m. BREAKFAST

9.00 a.m. Session II: THE SORROWFUL MYSTERIES OF LIFE

- A. Introduction by retreat facilitator (2 mins)
- B. 3 fathers tell their story of how they were wounded in life ,
how they dealt with it, and what new life came from that wounding.
- (1) (3 mins)
(2) (3 mins)
(3) (3 mins)
- C. Prayer exercise: the sorrowful mysteries of my life (10 mins)
- D. Focus questions for personal reflection / writing (15 mins)
- *How was I wounded? Am I still angry at what happened ?*
 - *Did this wounding help me to grow as a man?*
 - *Where was the presence of Jesus in this experience?*
- E. Small group sharing (30 mins)
[Father - son, mentor - protégé pairs in the same groups]
- G. Affirmation. The letters are handed out just before the coffee break.

10.30 a.m. COFFEE BREAK

11.00 a.m. Session III: ANGER AND VIOLENCE

- A. Introduction retreat facilitator (2 mins)
- B. 3 fathers share their experiences of dealing with their anger and violence?
- (1) (3 mins)
(2) (3 mins)
(3) (3 mins)
- C. Prayer exercise: Release from resentment. (10 mins)
- D. Personal reflection and writing (15 mins)
- *What makes me angry and frustrated ?*
 - *How do I deal with my anger and violence?*
 - *It is normal to feel angry, but what do I do with it?*
 - *Could anger be expressed in my prayer?*
- E. Small group sharing. (30 mins)
[Father - son, mentor - protégé pairs in the same groups]

12.30 p.m. LUNCH

1.30 p.m. **Session IV: A PERSONAL VISION**

- A. Introduction by facilitator: *the importance of a vision.* (5 mins)
- B. Prayer : the "Holy Desires" exercise in *Sadhana.* (10 mins)
- C. Questions to take on the walk, which is made alone and in silence:
- *What am I searching for in my life?*
 - *What dream draws me on?*
 - *Where is God calling me?*
 - *What is my vision?*

4.00 p.m. D. Small group sharing (60 mins)
[Father - son, mentor - protégé pairs in the same groups]

5.00 p.m. **Session V: WHAT THE ADOLESCENT WAS LIKE AS AN INFANT**

Fathers and sons sharing together: *What the adolescent was like as an infant*
(*The fathers are encouraged to bring photos of their sons when they were young.*)

6.00 p.m. DINNER

7.30 p.m. **Session VI: RELATIONSHIPS WITH WOMEN**

- A. Introduction by retreat facilitator (2 mins)
- B. Three fathers each share their experience of being a man in relationship with a woman. Both the joys of living a woman and sharing a life with her and the difficulties of relationships.
- (1) (3 mins)
- (2) (3 mins)
- (3) (3 mins)
- C. Imagination exercise about the mother-son relationship. (10 mins)
- D. Personal reflection and writing (15 mins)
- *How am I like my mother? How do I relate with my mother?*
 - *What is my experience of relating to a woman?*
 - *What happened when I first fell in love?*
- E. Small groups (30 mins)
In the small group fathers, mentors and adolescent males discuss their personal experiences of relationships with women.

9.30 p.m. **MASS:** the Crucifixion of Our Lord

- (a) **Penitential Rite:** There is a time during the penitential rite when, if they wish, fathers can move off privately to a corner of the room with their sons and they can ask each other for forgiveness for the ways in which they may have hurt each other. Peter's betrayal of Jesus and his subsequent reconciliation with Him could be woven into the penitential rite.
- (b) **Gospel Reading:** Three participants read the Passion (Matthew 27:11-54) (*The theme of the Mass is the parallel between Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection and our dying to boyhood and rising to manhood.*)

Sunday

8.00 a.m. BREAKFAST

9.30 a.m. Session VII: ENCOUNTERING GOD

- A. A retreat facilitator introduces topic (2 mins)
- B. 3 fathers share their experiences of feeling touched by God in their lives; they also share their difficulties in believing in God.
- (1) (3 mins)
- (2) (3 mins)
- (3) (3 mins)
- C. Meditative exercise: symbolical fantasies.
- D. Personal reflection and writing (15 mins)
- *Can I name an experience in which I felt touched by God in my life?*
 - *What are my difficulties in believing in God?*
 - *What was my image of God in the meditative exercise?*
- E. Small Group Discussion (30 mins)

10.30 a.m. COFFEE BREAK

11.00 a.m. Session VIII: THE SACRIFICE OF SELF FOR OTHERS

- A. Introduction by facilitator. Theme: the grain of wheat dying (2 mins)
- B. 3 fathers share their personal reflections on the service of God and neighbor
- (1) (3 mins)
- (2) (3 mins)
- (3) (3 mins)
- C. Prayerful reflection: (15 mins)
- *What have I done for Christ?*
 - *What am I doing for Christ?*
 - *What ought I do for Christ?*
 - *How do I see myself as loving and serving others?*
- D. Small group sharing: (30 mins)

12.30 p.m. LUNCH

1.30 p.m. Liturgy preparation

2.30 p.m. Session IX: BLESSING CEREMONY

3.00 p.m. Coffee break followed by clean-up.

3.30 p.m. Evaluation: hand out questionnaires.

4.30 p.m. Organize follow-up meeting before departure.

Appendix B: BLESSING CEREMONY

OPENING PRAYER

Priest or leader: We come together
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Priest or leader: Peace be with you.

All: And also with you.

Priest or leader: We are here this afternoon to celebrate the beginning of
the journey into manhood of these young men gathered here.

Let us pray quietly for them now
and thank God for their lives. (Pause)

All: God our Father,
source of all life and all love,
in the lives of these young men
you have given us a glimpse of the
wonder of your gift of creation.
Let them be a reminder to us all of
your power and your love.
We make this prayer through Christ,
Our Lord.
AMEN.

TO THE SONS

Priest or leader: What is your desire?

Sons: [in unison] We want to become men who
deeply believe in the Lord Jesus.

We ask God from the wealth of his glory
to give us power, through the Spirit,
to be strong in our inner selves,
and we pray that Jesus Christ
will make his home in our hearts.
We pray that we may understand the
length and the breadth, the height and
the depth of Jesus' love for us.
We pray that we will love all people,
and that we will be kind and compassionate men.

All: Amen.

Priest or leader: Is there anyone here who shares your hopes
and who is prepared to help you in your quest?

Sons: There is, our fathers and mentors.

TO THE FATHERS AND MENTORS:

Priest or leader: Fathers and mentors, do you understand that,
in agreeing to help these young men,
you are undertaking to love them and guide them,
and to help them to become closer to God?

Fathers and mentors: We do.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

Priest or leader: The Church, those of us gathered here this
afternoon and, in fact, all people
who profess Jesus Christ as the Savior,
welcome you young men. Your fathers and mentors
have promised to help you become men of faith.
We trust that you will learn to love God,
to love his Church and to love your fellow men and women.

All: Amen.

Priest or leader: The adult faith we welcome you to, we now all
profess:

All: We believe in God,
the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, Our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

Priest or leader: This is our faith and we are proud to profess it in Christ Jesus Our Lord.

All: Amen.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

Priest or leader: The Christian community welcomes you young men with great joy.
In its name we claim you for Christ our Savior by the sign of His Cross.
May this cross + which I, and your father or mentor
now trace on your forehead be a constant sign in your life
and a reminder to all that you are a man of Christ. Amen.

The priest (or leader) and the father (or mentor) step forward and, with the thumb, make a cross on the young man's forehead.

GOSPEL READING

Priest or leader: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Priest or leader: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke. (Luke 2:41 - 52)

All: Glory to you Lord.

Priest or leader:

Annually at the Passover Feast his parents traveled up to Jerusalem. And when he was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem as was the custom of the feast. When the days were ended and they returned, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem without his parents being aware of it. Supposing that he was in the caravan, they traveled a day, and then they looked for him among relatives and acquaintances, and not finding him, went back to Jerusalem in search of him. The third day they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and his answers.

When his parents saw him they were amazed, and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us this way? Your father and I have been anxiously looking for you."

He said to them, "Why have you been seeking me? Did you not know that I ought to be in my Father's house?"

But they did not understand the saying which He spoke to them.

He went down with them and submitted himself to them and his mother treasured all these matters in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and men.

And this is the Good News of the Lord.

All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

HOMILY: The priest or leader speaks on the transition into manhood.

ANOINTING

The priest or leader calls the young men forward.

Priest or leader: Would those young men who wish to be anointed as they begin their journey into manhood please step forward.

The young men step forward together. Their fathers or mentors accompany them. The priest or leader anoints each young man by making the sign of the cross on both of his palms with the oil of Chrism. The father or mentor is standing behind and slightly to the left of the young man with his right hand placed on the young man's left shoulder. Each young man is anointed separately, and the following words are said for each.

Priest or leader: N,
I anoint you with the oil of salvation, in the name of Christ our Savior;
may he strengthen you, may he enlighten you, and may he give you peace.

All: Amen.

Father or mentor: N,
may you be a good and holy man. May your ears listen to the truth.
May your lips speak only kindness and welcome.
May your hands reach out in comfort and support.

All: Amen.

All: Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord, Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the
Father,
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord.
You alone are the most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, In the glory of God the Father. Amen.

THE ADOLESCENT MALES PRAYED FOR BY THE OLDER MEN

The adolescent males lie face down on the floor in a line, resting their heads on their hands. Lying down symbolizes entering into the grave. This symbolic death represents the death of boyhood and rebirth into manhood. It also represents the incorporation of these young men into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While the young men are lying on the floor, the Litany of Saints led by the priest or leader. The young men remain silent during the Litany which is being prayed for them by their fathers and mentors.

The response of the fathers and mentors during the Litany is: **Pray for us.**

BLESSING OF EACH YOUNG MAN BY HIS FATHER OR MENTOR

At the completion of the Litany of Saints, the young men rise up from the floor and kneel in a line together. The fathers and mentors silently approach the young men. Each young man has his father or mentor lay his hands on his head and pray for him in silence for a couple of minutes. At the completion of this laying on of hands, the young men stand up.

OUR FATHER (all stand for the Lord's Prayer)

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Priest or leader: Let us offer each other a sign of peace.
(Each man offers the sign of peace to all the other men)

FINAL PRAYER AND BLESSING

Priest or leader: May the Lord be in our hearts and on our lips, so that wherever we go and whatever we do, in the midst of the most ordinary human affairs, we may all be known as witnesses of Christ.

All: Amen.

Priest or leader: May Almighty God bless us all,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Priest or leader: Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Appendix C: FATHERS AND SONS RETREAT EVALUATION

Name: _____

Age: _____

1. Your impression of the process used in the *Fathers and Sons Retreat*

On a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), please rate the following. Comments and suggestions about any of these are welcome and very helpful, so feel free to add any comments you'd like to make. Your comments are confidential.

_____ Retreat process [that is, the procedure which we used, namely (a) introduction by the retreat facilitator, (b) input by three fathers or mentors, (c) imaginative or prayer exercise, (d) personal reflection, and (d) small group sharing of life experience].

_____ Content [the material, preparation and presentation by the various speakers, including the retreat facilitators, fathers and mentors]

_____ Personal reflection and journaling [writing our reflections in our notebooks]

_____ Small group participation [the sharing in small groups of our life experience]

2. Which aspect of retreat did you enjoy the most and why?

3. Would you make any changes in planning the retreat? If yes, what?

4. Was there enough explicitly religious content in the retreat? If yes, what was it that impressed you? If no, what would you liked included?

5. Did you need more time and space during retreat to consider the typed reflection questions?

YES NO (please circle one)

Was 15 minutes enough time? Too much? Too little?

6. Did the short talks of the retreat leaders and the fathers/mentors assist your reflections on the typed questions which were handed out?

YES NO (please circle one)

7. What would you like to have heard more of? Less of?
-
-

8. Did you get a chance to talk on a one-to -one basis with the retreat leaders about any religious/moral/ personal matters which affect you?

YES NO (please circle one)

Would you have liked to have talked on a one-to -one basis with the retreat leaders about religious/moral/personal matters which affect you?

YES NO (please circle one)

9. Did you feel uncomfortable sharing about the various topics (anger, violence, relationships with women, God) with your son or father/mentor present? (In other words, did the presence of your son or your father or mentor prevent you sharing openly?)

YES NO (please circle one)

10. Were there times when you felt overwhelmed by what was being presented?

YES NO (please circle one)

If yes, when?

11 Did you feel as though you belonged with this group of men during the retreat? In other words, did you feel a sense of community?

YES NO (please circle one)

Whether your answer is "yes" or "no", could you please state why?

On each of the following statements, could you please circle the number which most accurately reflects your personal opinion.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Hearing other men talk about their relationships with their fathers helped me to relate better with my father.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Using the notebooks to write out my personal reflections helped me to focus my thoughts and feelings and share better in the small groups.	1	2	3	4	5
3. (For sons/protégés) Receiving the letters of affirmation has helped me to feel good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5
4. (For fathers/mentors) My letter of affirmation gave me an opportunity to affirm my son or protégé.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I was relieved to hear other men talking about anger and violence, as at times I have thought I was the only one who felt those feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is important to have a vision of what I might be and do in life. The retreat helped me to focus my vision.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
7. I enjoyed the Eucharist on Saturday evening.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I was glad of the opportunity to share my experience of relationships with women.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Because of the sharing on the retreat I now have a deeper and growing respect for women.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Because of my retreat experience I now feel more comfortable about sharing with others how I feel God has touched me in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Despite the retreat experience I still have difficulties believing in God at all.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Hearing the stories of how other men on the retreat attempt to serve God and their neighbors prompted me to consider how I can serve God and my neighbor.	1	2	3	4	5
13. (For the fathers/mentors) I was touched by the Blessing Ceremony for our sons and protégés.	1	2	3	4	5
14. (For the fathers/mentors) It was good to have the chance to bless my son or protégés by laying my hands on his head and praying for him.	1	2	3	4	5
15. (For the sons/protégés) I was glad that my father or mentor laid his hands on my head and blessed me.	1	2	3	4	5
16. It would have added to the retreat to have had one or two of our grandfathers with us.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The retreat has helped my father-son relationship.	1	2	3	4	5
18. In the retreat I enjoyed telling stories from my life.	1	2	3	4	5
19. (For the sons/protégés) The retreat has helped me to feel better about myself as a man.	1	2	3	4	5
20. (For the fathers/mentors) I have been glad of the opportunity to help my son and the other adolescents.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I would recommend the <i>Fathers and Sons Retreat</i> to my friends.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you very much for your time. Your comments, while remaining confidential, will be an important part of the planning for future *Fathers and Sons Retreats*, and so are greatly appreciated.

Fr. Michael Smith SJ

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bettelheim, Bruno. *Symbolic Wounds*. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1954.
- Bly, Robert. *Iron John: A Book About Men*. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1990.
- Brueggemann, Walter. "Covenanting As Human Vocation: A Discussion of the Relation of Bible and Pastoral Care." *Interpretation* 33 (1979): 115-129.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*. New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1959.
- de Mello, Anthony. *Sadhana: A Way to God, Christian Exercises in Eastern Form*. New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1984.
- Dreikurs, Rudolf. "Group Psychotherapy from the point of view of Adlerian Psychology." *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy* 7 (4 1957): 363-375.
- Egan, Gerard. *Change Agent Skills in Helping and Human Service Settings*. Monterey, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1985.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.
- _____. "Sacred Tradition and Modern Man: A conversation with Mircea Eliade." *Parabola* 1 (3 1976): 74-80.
- Erikson, Erik H. *Identity and the Life Cycle*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980.
- Ferrucci, Piero. *What We May Be: Techniques for Psychological and Spiritual Growth through Psychosynthesis*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1982.
- Genia, Vicky. "Religious Development: A Synthesis and Reformulation." *Journal of Religion and Health* 29 (2 1990): 85-99.
- Genia, Vicky. "Transitional Faith: A Developmental Step Towards Religious Maturity." *Counseling and Values* 37 (1992): 15-24.
- Gilmore, David D. *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Guzie, Tad, and Guzie, Noreen Monroe. *About Men and Women: How Your "Great Story" Shapes Your Destiny*. New York: Paulist Press, 1986.
- Henderson, Joseph L. *Thresholds of Initiation*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1979.

- Keen, Sam. *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*. New York: Bantam Books, 1992.
- Kroger J., and Haslett, S.J. "Separation-individuation and Ego Identity Status in Late Adolescence: A two-year longitudinal study." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 17 (1988): 59-80.
- Langness, L.L. "Oedipus in the New Guinea Highlands?" *Ethos* 18 (4 1990): 387-406.
- Levinson, Daniel J. *The Seasons of a Man's Life*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1978.
- Lidz, Theodore and Lidz, Ruth W. "Turning Women Things into Men: Masculinization in Papua New Guinea." *Psychoanalytic Review* 73 (4 1986): 117-135.
- Mahdi, Louise Carus, Foster, Stephen, and Little, Meredith, eds. *Betwixt and Between: Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Initiation*. La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987.
- Mitscherlich, Alexander. *Society without the Father*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1993.
- Moore, Robert and Gillette, Douglas. *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990.
- _____. *The King Within: Accessing the King Within the Male Psyche*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992.
- _____. *The Warrior Within: Accessing the Knight in the Male Psyche*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992.
- Morinis, Alan. "The Ritual Experience: Pain and the Transformation of Consciousness in Ordeals of Initiation." *Ethos* 13 (2 1985): 150-174.
- Munroe, Robert L.; Munroe, Ruth H. "Psychological Interpretation of Male Initiation Rites: The Case of Male Pregnancy symptoms." *Ethos* 1 (4 1973): 490-498.
- Nash, John. "The Father in Contemporary Culture and Current Psychological Literature." *Child Development*, 28, (1, 1965): 261-297.
- Osherson, Samuel. *Finding our Fathers: How a Man's Life is Shaped by his Relationship with his Father*. New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1986.
- Ottenberg, Simon. "Oedipus, Gender and Social Solidarity: A Case Study of Male Childhood and Initiation." *Ethos* 16 (3 1988): 326-352.
- Podles, Mary Elizabeth, and Podles, Leon J. "Saint-Makers in the Desert." *America* 167 (14 1992): 348-361.
- Raphael, Ray. *The Men from the Boys: Rites of Passage in Male America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988.

- Rohr, Richard, and Martos, Joseph. *The Wildman's Journey: Reflections on Male Spirituality*. Cincinnati, Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1992.
- Scull, Charles, ed. *Fathers, Sons and Daughters*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1992.
- Scheidlinger, Saul. "Group Treatment of Adolescents: an overview." *Amer. J. Orthopsychiatry* 55 (1 January, 1985)
- Sexton, Patricia. "How the American Boy is Feminized." *Psychology Today* (1970): 23-29.
- Shea, John. *The Spirit Master*. Chicago: The Thomas More Press, 1987.
- Thompson, Keith, ed. *To be a Man: in Search of the Deep Masculine*. Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1991.
- Tooley, Kay. "The Remembrance of Things Past: On the Collection and Recollection of Ingredients Useful in the Treatment of Disorders Resulting from Unhappiness, Rootlessness, and the Fear of Things to Come." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 48 (1 1978): 174-182.
- Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Michael Peter Smith has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Peter Gilmour
Assistant Professor,
Institute of Pastoral Studies
Loyola University of Chicago

Dr. Tad Guzie
Adjunct Professor,
Institute of Pastoral Studies
Loyola University of Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the Committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters in Pastoral Counseling.

Date

7/26/93

Director's Signature

Peter A. Gilmour