

Conveners Corner

By Stefan Brombach, Ritual Elder, Germany

Almost twenty-one years in the second half of life—and perhaps a bit wiser.

My birth name is Stefan and I've been the Ritual Elder for the Men's Rites of Passage in Germany during the past ten years. This is my story.

In the year 2000, having just arrived at age thirty-three and in the middle of life, I found myself powerlessly facing the perils of life. Even considering one's own death as a positive option and holding on with all one's strength against powerlessness, I was fleeing from having to endure and not wanting to admit the loss of control.

I, unaffiliated, found myself with an unplanned child on the way. Professionally, I felt insecure and disoriented.

"Yes, life is hard, but," I thought (and at this time, it was a big *but*), "I am the designer of my life after all!" I believed Creation meant well and I had been initiated by life.

Then, on August 26, 2000, at 4:25 p.m., I was in a motorcycle accident that resulted in a broken neck and collarbone. In the process, I got a glimpse of "the other side" and faced the ultimate truth: "Yes, I will die."

This raised a question: "Do I want death already, or is there still a task for me?"

I realized I had the choice. A "yes" to life emerged.

Rescue arrived with the help of a vacuum mattress, catheter, intestinal tube, infusion, and later surgery. Everything, literally *everything* was beyond my control, even my bodily functions.

I had to acknowledge, "Yes, I have no control."

In addition, at the scene of the accident, then in the intensive care unit, and also in the operating room, I felt a calm silence, an inner light, and deep peace within me.

I prayed, "Abba, Father, I put my spirit into your hands because, 'Yes, life is not about me!'"

A greater "yes" emerged on the inner horizon, a yes to light *and* shadow, to joy *and* sorrow. It grew into the ultimate YES. A child was coming into the world that needed a father. "Yes, I am not so important," I thought, "but my fatherhood is." By chance, we named our first son Jonas (Jonah).

In 2008, I read *Adam's Return* by Richard Rohr, and found myself bawling my eyes out. I could connect with everything that was written there: check - check - check. Participation in an MROP became an inner requirement.

In 2009, I went to the MROP at Brahmsee (near Hamburg, Germany). The central symbol was Jonah and the Whale! Naked truth, pure blessing!

I found my spiritual name, the Breathing Weasel, and used this for years until a new name emerged.

In the Rites and also afterward, the calling was to "Be a light in the world." The call included being appointed as a Ritual Elder in Germany. For ten years, I've been full of devotion and love for men, "the people," and transformational work. What a grace I have been given here, to be able to serve like this, to be able to contribute my gifts. I hold gratitude and humility before what is greater than all of us together.

And within this long time? Like in the Rites, again and again, we are called to separate oneself, not to go with the crowd, not to deviate from one's stance for "the sake of peace." It's about "having balls," like the cool guy on the triptych in the sacred space.

It's also about dying, a little bit every day; also mourning my failures and the suffering in the world. With every openly shed tear, compassion and love grows, with me, with my fellow human beings, and with creation; nevertheless, the pain grows also. Always, I know that I have to hold those things within me, because God wouldn't pull the thorn out of my flesh.

But, again and again, and deeper and deeper, I come face to face with faith - hope - love!

On August 15, 2021, the Rites are once again "complete and closed." Fifty-two wonderful men are newly initiated, accompanied, and held by a circle of gifted men who had been through the Rites before. My duties are done; I resigned my role and withdrew.

August 26, 2021 – twenty-one years after the broken neck. What’s going on now, Stefan/Breathing Weasel/*Antar Vimukto*? Now, with twenty-one years, am I grown up?

I hope so. The wild goose continues to proclaim my place in the family of things and the world presents itself to my imagination. Who knows what is going to come?

Therefore:

Dive away?

No, what for and from whom should I hide?

To descend?

No, never again may I escape from life.

But one thing I will certainly do—so that the circle closes: I *DIVE IN*, hoping that He holds me when I can no longer hold myself.

And then I want to run out once more with a loud scream of freedom.