

PRAYING WITH THE LABYRINTH

IT TAKES TIME



TO FLOWER
TO MATURE
TO COME TO THE CENTRE
OF WHO WE ARE
TO FIND
OUR TRUE SELF
AND
THERE
DISCOVER
THE DIVINE PRESENCE
IN TRUTH
AND
IN LOVE



PRAYING WITH THE LABYRINTH

I invite you to walk an ancient pathway of contemplation, meditation and spiritual renewal.

I invite you to journey along the path—toward the centre and back out again.

Each person approaches the labyrinth differently. One person may be curious or questioning. Another may come with emotions in turmoil, while a third is tired or depressed.

Approach this experience with an open heart and mind. Be receptive to all that is offered.

Some people like to take a few moments to focus themselves before they enter the labyrinth, perhaps to say a prayer. Come to the entrance, stand quietly, and take one or two deep breaths. Let go of as much tension in the body and mind as possible.

You may come to the labyrinth with an event or problem very much on your mind. Take it in with you; think about it as you walk; ruminate.

Walk with a piece of scripture, a mantra, a word, a question, or just enjoy the experience with no particular focus. Remain open to whatever may happen.

Find a pace that is comfortable for you. It may be slow or fast, or somewhere in between.

Be attentive to the parts of the labyrinth—the threshold, the inward path, the centre, the path out. What movements do you experience as you move through the labyrinth? What has caught your eye? What do you feel, emotionally and physically? What touched you? What smells have caught your attention? What do you hear? Be in touch with all of your senses.

When you reach the centre, stay there and focus for several moments. No rush — savour the moment. Stay in the centre as long as you feel the need. Connect with all of your senses. Are there any insights or enlightenment you have been graced to receive?

On the path back, reflect on the experience. Remain open to any insights or enlightenment that may come to you as you journey out.

There is no right or wrong way to experience the labyrinth. We bring to the journey the mystery of who we are, where we have been, and where we long to be. Let the journey be a walk of thanksgiving. Let it be a walk of discernment and/or decision-making.



Some questions to ask:

- What do I bring with me to the labyrinth?
- What do I carry with me through the labyrinth?
- What do I leave at the centre of the labyrinth?
- What do I take away with me?
- Who or what causes me to alter my path?
- How do I meet someone on the path?
- How do I come to the centre? What is the centre of my life?
- What happens to me at the centre?
- What do I wish to receive; what grace do I seek at the centre?

The purpose of any kind of meditation or contemplation is:

- to listen to God;
- to discern God’s will for me in my life as I listen to God through the Scriptures (lectio divina);
- to experience Jesus as a real person (“to know you more clearly, to love you more dearly and to follow you more nearly”), someone I can both talk to and listen to (as in Ignatian prayer);
- to put aside everything else in order to come into the presence of God (as in centering prayer): “I look at him and he looks at me” (Brother Lawrence);
- to allow the Holy Spirit to pray through me;
- to allow God, Father and Holy Spirit to transform me;
- to share with God my innermost desires, fears, and longings

Why does the labyrinth attract people?

- It is a tool to guide healing, deepen self-knowledge and empower creativity.
- It clears the mind and gives insight into the spiritual journey;
- It urges action.
- It calms people in the throes of life transitions.
- It helps them see their lives in the context of a path, a pilgrimage.
- They realize that they are not human beings on a spiritual path but spiritual beings on a human path.
- To those of us who feel we have untapped gifts to offer, it stirs the creative fires within.
- To others who are in deep sorrow, the walk gives solace and peace.
- The experience is different for everyone because each of us brings different raw material to the labyrinth.



“We bring our unique hopes, dreams, history, and longings of the soul.”

(The Rev. Dr. Lauren Artress)

“Although we walk all the time, our walking is usually more like running. When we walk like that, we print anxiety and sorrow on the earth. We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the earth. We can do all this provided we want it very much. When we are able to take one step peacefully and happily, we are working for the cause of peace and happiness for the whole of humankind.” (Thich Nhat Hanh, Peace Is Every Step)

The very slowness of walking is its greatest virtue. The mind automatically adjusts to the speed of the body. As your body stops rushing, your thoughts also quieten. One of the reasons walking is so healing is because it gently rocks the body from side to side, and so balances the two sides of our body and mind. It is like a mother rocking her child...her heartbeat and her walk are the first rhythms of life.