

# The Spiritual Path

From the writings of Teresa of Avila, three moments of the mystical path are often applied to the labyrinth.

## **Purgation: The Walk In.**

The walk to the center is often a time of letting go of perceptions, of feelings of an attachment, or into the unknown.

## **Illumination: The Center.**

Meditate and open to connection and the revelation of the divine in the center. Stay in the center as long as it seems right for you.

## **Union: The Walk Out.**

Let the walk out be a time of internalizing and absorbing what you have received before walking back into outer life.

*Feel free to take this brochure with you or leave it for others to use.*

*"Stand beside the earliest roads,  
ask the pathways of old  
which is the way to good, and walk it."*

Jeremiah 6:16



## THE LABYRINTH

### *A Holy Walk*



*Sisters of Charity*  
of Cincinnati

Mount St. Joseph  
Motherhouse

# What is a Labyrinth?

## *A Sacred Path*

A labyrinth is an ancient design found in many cultures throughout the world. This labyrinth is designed like the labyrinth found in the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France dating from 1221. Customarily, medieval Christians made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Rome or when impossible to go these distances, to various major cathedrals. The Chartres Cathedral, Notre Dame, was one of the primary pilgrimage sites. Christians completed their pilgrimage by walking the labyrinth.

The center of the labyrinth represented the New Jerusalem, the fullness of the journey of all Christians. The petals in the center are thought to represent Mary, the mystical rose. A labyrinth, in contrast with a maze, is unicursal, with one path leading to the center and back out again. There are no tricks or wrong turns.

In recent years the labyrinth is re-emerging in human consciousness. Connecting with the body and allowing the unconscious to surface through non-linear modalities are now trusted processes. The labyrinth is once again becoming available as a way to encounter the sacred and receive inner wisdom.

# Walking the Labyrinth?

There is no right or wrong way to walk a labyrinth. There is only your way, which will change from time to time. Entering the labyrinth is like crossing a threshold from ordinary life to inner life.

Pause a moment at this threshold to focus on what is going on inside you, and what you are hoping for as you walk. Simply pay attention to all you experience on the labyrinth. What happens on the labyrinth is often a metaphor for one's life.

When you complete your walk, take a few minutes to reflect on your experience. The wisdom of each walk may continue to be revealed in the hours and days afterward.

# Suggestions for Walking the Path

Take a few deep breaths and begin the journey with an open heart. Feel free to walk with or without shoes.

Pause at the entrance and focus on what you want as you walk the labyrinth. Become aware of your feelings and any sudden thoughts or intuitions that arise. Allow your inner wisdom to speak as you walk.

As you walk the labyrinth you may wish to:

- Begin with a question and listen for guidance.
- Empty your mind and simply walk in the present moment.
- Listen to inner knowing that arises within.
- Repeat a word or phrase as a mantra.
- Be aware of your feelings.

If others are on the path at the same time, follow your own pace. If you are walking faster than the person in front of you, feel free to move around this person. If you meet a person coming toward you, your way of negotiating the space may reflect your way of encountering others in ordinary life.

When you finish, reflect on the experience through journaling, art or clay.

