

Movement and Stillness. These two states of being form much of my spiritual journey with Christ. One moment seven years ago remains a poignant spiritual lesson in this journey.

Our family was traveling on sabbatical with the theme “Walking with God on Holy Ground.” I had just completed walking the last half of the Camino de Santiago in northern Spain. Our next destination was Chartres about an hour outside of Paris. For eight hundred years, the labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral has beckoned Christian pilgrims to take the spiritual journey inward.

Late on Thursday, our exhausted young family arrived in Chartres. Our weariness sent us to bed early. That spring morning, I rose early and set off on the short walk to the cathedral. I felt so excited and grateful to be in Chartres on Friday. Friday is the one day that chairs are cleared from the floor of the cathedral so that pilgrims may walk.

As I arrived at the plaza, the two iconic towers rising from the cathedral filled my field of vision. Then movement down on the street level and to the right caught my attention. Early morning visitors from Paris streamed out of three buses directly to the cathedral doors. In that moment, I felt perturbed that my hope of solitude inside the cathedral was so quickly dashed.

A moment later I crossed the plaza and almost reached the cathedral doors when two maintenance workers operating gas powered leaf blowers on their backs rounded the corner. While still a safe distance away, I suddenly realized that I stood directly in line with the trash and litter being blowing into an unseen collection point. In that moment, I felt annoyed that my feeling of stillness that spring morning was so totally shattered.

Forward momentum alone carried me up to the cathedral doors. Ordinary and necessary realities of daily life threatened to nullify months of planning for this moment.

Then some dose of God’s amazing grace poured into my soul as I crossed the threshold. Illuminated in the middle of the magnificent sanctuary was the labyrinth. The sight cleansed my spiritual palate.

Suddenly the walls of the sanctuary seemed to be an impermeable membrane keeping the sound of the leaf blowers outside of the sacred space. The spacious cathedral effortlessly absorbed what I feared would be hordes of other tourists.

I took off my shoes and socks so that the soles of my feet felt stones laid by masons in the 13th century. Step by prayerful step, I began to walk the labyrinth.

Time melted away as I walked. There was no hurry toward on the way. I felt no worry when a corner abruptly turned from an inner toward an outer ring. The way always leads inward to the center and then outward to daily life. Every step a prayer. When my mind wandered, as mine always does, I gently brought it back to prayer with the next step.

As growing disciples of Jesus Christ, our congregation is on a transformative journey of faith. The liturgical season of Lent between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday is a perfect opportunity for exploring and deepening many spiritual practices for this journey.

First read the article in this newsletter from your Adult Christian Education (ACE) team. Then mark your calendars for the diverse spiritual practices offered throughout Lent. These are the spiritual disciplines that keep our work, concerns and anxieties within boundaries and balanced in 2019.

Let us cherish God's gift of time this Lent. Join us on the spiritual journey with Jesus Christ as we bring into balance both movement and stillness.