

## **Home Labyrinth Guide for Holy Week**

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*April 2020*

### **What is a Prayer Labyrinth:**

Pilgrimages to holy sites have been a part of the Christian tradition for thousands of years- many disciples visit the Holy Land, and Orthodox or Catholic believers may make pilgrimages to places like Lourdes or Fatima. Yet, when pilgrimages aren't accessible, and specifically in this time when travel isn't possible- the discipline of a pilgrimage can still be honored through the symbolic act of praying through a labyrinth.

A labyrinth is tracing or walking through a marked path that can be seen as a metaphor for life. This differs from a maze in that there is only one way in and one way out. There is one continuous path that turns and curves, eventually leading to the center. There are no dead ends, and there is nothing to “figure out” or “check off your to-do list” when you're walking the labyrinth. You simply follow the path to the center and go back the same way you came.

For labyrinths, there is a distinct center, and in our Christian tradition that would resemble the presence of God that we are journeying towards on our pilgrimage. We are slowly making our way to God's peaceful and powerful presence. Just like in life, there are times when we feel close to the center and times when we feel distant- yet we always are making our way towards God's presence. Once in the center, we take time to listen for God's voice and even feel the embrace of God's love. This is a poignant time in the labyrinth to simply “be still and know.” However we don't stay there forever, as we “leave” the center we aren't leaving God's presence behind, we trust that God goes with us and is within us in our journeys, and has even inspired us to live in a new way.

The pattern is then boiled down to:

- 1. Release** (As we journey towards the center we release the burdens we may be carrying, letting go of the details in our life, and releasing anything that holds us back from union with God. This is an act of shedding thoughts and emotions, allowing your mind to become empty and quiet.)
- 2. Receive** (Once in the center, and you feel as though your mind is emptied, you are invited to hear what God may be saying to you, experience God's presence, and feel God's love. Stay here as long as you'd like. This is a place of meditation, prayer, and connection. Whatever you may receive is good.)

3. **Return** (After you have taken the time you need in the center, we return the same way we entered through the labyrinth with gratitude and insights that you may have received. As you walk back you may even think of how you might integrate this experience into your daily life as you leave the sacred space of the labyrinth.)

### **How might I walk a Prayer Labyrinth in my home?**

For some of you, you may have a labyrinth available to you whether it is a “traceable” one or one that you might be able to walk. However, for many walking an “official” labyrinth may not be possible. Which is why I offer you these ideas for walking a labyrinth at home:

1. **Walking through your home** (Begin at your front door, walking slowly to your living room- encircling furniture in your living room, walking to your dining room- walking around the table, walking to and around your kitchen, walking to your bathroom, to then ending at your bedroom- the bedroom can be the center in which you “receive.” Once you are finished, return in the reverse of what you walked starting with walking to the bathroom, then to the kitchen, and so on.)
2. **Rearranging your furniture** (If you have the time and the ability, you can rearrange the furniture in your living room, with a designated center. If this is how you would like to walk a labyrinth, make sure you have enough space to walk around, and to then even sit or lay down at the center.)
3. **Walking in your neighborhood** (If you are feeling like you might want to walk outside and there's good weather, this might be a good option for you. Neighborhoods can look different, and some may have more “distractions” than others, however you might go through a labyrinth by slowly walking to a stop sign and back, walking around a cul-de-sac, walking towards an open space/park, or walking in a circular manner towards a center you have designated outside. If you have the space, you might “trace” your labyrinth by placing objects along your way, so you can remember how you got to the “center.”)

Take your time. Really walk slowly and allow yourself to take as long as you need in the three parts (Release, Receive, Return). There's no need to rush through this. For some it may be a ten minute endeavor, and for others it might be over an hour- there is no time limit in this practice.

An important piece of walking a prayer labyrinth is that you feel comfortable and safe- walk the labyrinth of your choice with ease and peace, trusting that God is with you.

## **Holy Week Labyrinth Prompts**

### **Monday of Holy Week**

**Scripture: John 12:1-11**

#### **Prayer Labyrinth Prompt**

As you walk the labyrinth today, become attentive to your feet as you walk and pray. Maybe at the beginning, even before you begin walking the labyrinth, notice where you have been today, yesterday, last year, five years ago. Where have your feet taken you? Maybe even thank God for all the places, people, and paths that your feet have brought you to. Consider also all the people who can't walk on their own or who walk in the path of suffering and despair.

Ask yourself these questions: How shall I walk in the path of love and justice? Where will my feet take me? What gifts-ordinary or extraordinary- do I have to offer? To what am I called for this Holy Week?

#### **Prayer**

*Precious Lord, help me to remain grounded in the present moment and move towards you with overflowing gratitude and humility. Guide me in your path, and remain steadfast with me this Holy Week. Amen.*

### **Tuesday of Holy Week**

**Scripture: John 12: 20-36**

#### **Prayer Labyrinth Prompt**

Consider today mysteries of your faith and life that yet have answers. The labyrinth looks as if there many tricky twists and turns, however the reality is that there is only one way in and one way out. As you walk today, think and feel mystery...the wonder of birth...the immanency of death...the twists and turns that are in your life.

Ask yourself these questions: Who do I serve? When has my soul felt troubled? Where is the light of Christ in my life? Where has there been darkness? Do I still have childlike faith? Am I ok with mystery?

#### **Prayer**

*Mysterious God, I trust in you, yet it's hard for me to understand all of your ways. I want to praise you, yet it's difficult. I want to love you, yet I don't know how to. Help me grapple with mystery and to hold fast to your presence. Amen.*

**Wednesday of Holy Week**

**Scripture: John 13:21-32**

**Prayer Labyrinth Prompt**

With the story of Judas on our mind and in our hearts, maybe for today, walk the labyrinth as a way of confession. Walk into the labyrinth acknowledging your deep need for forgiveness and grace. Confess your shortcomings, betrayals, and hurts as you walk- releasing them as you go towards the center.

As you start away from the center, ask yourself these questions: How am I changed by God's grace? How will I show God's love to another? What does it look like to forgive the people who have hurt me? How can I relish in this joy of grace each day?

**Prayer**

*Gracious God, from whom all blessings flow, you never exclude us from forgiveness and grace when we humbly come to you. We are thankful that you receive us as we are, and bring us into everlasting life. Help me never lose sight of this awesome gift. Amen.*

**Maundy Thursday**

**Scripture: John 13:1-17, 31b-35**

**Prayer Labyrinth Prompt**

Remember today, as you walking the labyrinth that you are beloved by God. God is with you in your isolation, in your gatherings, in your sorrow, and in your rejoicing. You don't need to be any certain way coming into the labyrinth, God loves you are. As you take time to slowly walk the labyrinth- notice your own feet going on this path. Maybe even thank God for those who have been Christ to you and have washed your feet (literally or metaphorically). Be reminded of the love that Jesus extends to you and asks you to join in on.

You might consider asking these questions: Have I noticed Jesus' presence lately? Where is Jesus in my life? Who needs to be served? Who is serving me? Are there people who I believe to be greater than me? Are there people who I believe are less than? How can I love like Jesus?

**Prayer**

*Jesus the Christ, even as you were so close to your imminent death, you took time to wash the disciples feet- an act only done by servants. How is it that you serve us with such love, when we often see ourselves and others with such judgement? Help me to love as you do, and welcome your love without pride. Amen.*

## **Good Friday**

**Scripture: John 18:1-19:42**

### **Prayer Labyrinth Prompt**

These can be some of the most gruesome and difficult texts to read in Scripture. This man who was a rabbi, leader, miracle worker, peace maker, healer, table flipper, and lover of all those with whom he came in contact, especially those on the margins, and was swept into this grand plan that ended his life in the most horrific way. What wrong could he have done? The “Good Friday” question may not be- “What would Jesus do” because we have that on record- the question may be- “What will we do in response?”

As you walk the labyrinth you may consider asking yourself the questions: What would I have done had I been there in Jesus' trial and crucifixion? Where would I have gone? What would I have said? What do I do in the face of trials? How do I show up in anxiety? Try to answer these questions with honesty and integrity, while leaning into God's abundant grace.

### **Prayer**

*O God, on this weighty day where we remember your death, I am reminded of the great sacrifice you offered to us. I feel like I haven't sacrificed much, yet you gave everything. On this holy day, help me sit in the darkness. Amen.*

## **Holy Saturday**

**Scripture: John 19: 38-42**

### **Prayer Labyrinth Prompt**

Because there is no word about Saturday, and even then people couldn't visit the tomb, we relive this day each year left with silence. We face these gaps in our own lives, and often have little to say on how painful and difficult the in-between time is.

As you walk the labyrinth today, try to do so in silence. As the thoughts and questions arise, try to let them go as you walk toward the center. Hear the sounds of silence and stillness in your mind. Really sink into the quiet of the end of Holy Week.

### **Prayer**

*I so often want to jump to Easter, but you remind me that I must slow down first and become still. Lord, fill me with deep silence, and deep wonder as I meditate on your life and death. As I remain in the mystery, offer me glimpses of hope and the assurance of Easter. Amen.*