

*Come Holy Spirit
Use me to Your glory*

Precious Pilgrim,

"May I live out of the Center, Your Center, Lord, where You dwell!" This has been my heart's prayer ever since yesterday's unexpected activity.

I went to St. Philip's Cathedral in Atlanta. This outing choice was debated internally for hours. It was a nasty, rainy day and I was greatly tempted to just visit the Mall adjacent to my hotel and not fool with driving in such inclement weather. I did, however, want to see if the Cathedral gift shop had any religious postcards, which I am collecting for a gift.

But thank goodness I made the effort. There were no cards, but they did have a labyrinth. As I turned to go into the parking lot, I noticed a banner, which read, "Walk the Labyrinth Friday 3-8 p.m." Yes! It just happened, I don't think so, to be Friday and 2:30 p.m. I had a leisurely browse in the bookstore and then was told where to find the Labyrinth. I had had two previous labyrinth experiences, one at an Alabama church women's annual conference and the other at a church camp. One had been chalked out on a grass field adjacent to a church and the other had been hidden in the woods and the path marked by rocks. Yesterday's was again different for it was laid out in their fellowship hall. It was made of white canvas on which the design had been painted in purple. Before we go any further, Pilgrim, may I fill you in a little on what actually a Labyrinth is? I'd heard the term over the years. I had surmised

maybe it was like a maze. I didn't give it much thought except, "why?" I mean, we know as Christians, we are to walk "the straight and narrow way." We are to keep our eyes on our Lord Jesus. We are to "read, mark and inwardly digest" our Father God's Holy Word. We are to ask for help and guidance from His Holy Spirit. We are to pray and worship and give thanksgiving. Anyway, there seemed to be plenty of guidelines. Who needed a convoluted, man-made design to help remind us of how challenging the pilgrim's way is?

Well, little did I know and still know. It's just another tool, helpful to some, but not for everyone. The Labyrinth came about in The Middle Ages when everyone was dying to go to the Holy Land, but few besides the Crusaders could make the arduous journey. So some of the great cathedrals, like Chartre and Notre Dame in France, made Labyrinths so you could go on an imaginary pilgrimage within the safe confines of your very own cathedral.

They aren't mazes, for there is no trickery involved. It is a continuous path with no dead ends. The entrance and the exit are the same. You weave back and forth, back and forth, north, south, east and west until you eventually come to the Center. Once there, you turn around and retrace your steps. There are different designs. The ones I've experienced seemed to be four-leaf clover, cross-like, with a rose-shaped round center.

It's recommended that you walk slowly, deliberately, looking down and only aware of the next step. You're living surrenderedly in the moment. If you pass another pilgrim coming or going, you calmly walk around, giving no eye contact, again just continuing

your own individual walk. It's not a game, but rather a profound prayer in motion.

Each time the Lord through the walk has given me gifts. Yesterday was no exception. Yesterday there was strong overhead lighting, which created a shadow that followed me the whole way. Sometimes it was more visible than at others. It was a strong reminder of God's ever-present closeness whether I perceive Him or not. The blowing of the air conditioner reminded me of the Holy Spirit, His ruach, and His breath. There was room on the path comfortably for only one. As a wife, mother, grandmother, I'd love to take the whole clan along with me mentally or physically wherever I go. This was a good "letting go" observation. Each was to walk his or her journey individually and not to be carried or coaxed by me. The Lord God's Presence was the only perfect Companion for the path.

A few times I wanted to stop and get off and go "home," or at least walk a little faster. I think that was about control, my wanting to control. You just have to totally give in to the process and go with the flow and let the pathway unfold. Ah, that seems to be about trust. I want to be in control of my life. "Excuse me, whose life? To whom do you and I belong, Pilgrim?"

Finally, you come to the center and boy, are you ever ready for it, or at least I was. I was tired of the narrow, bounded space. The circle felt so good. It felt so expansive. There was room enough to move or twirl or even lie down (I didn't.). I could breathe better. For me, I'd have to say this center dwelling moment was an

epiphany experience, another conversion, a deeper understanding of our Lord's indwelling, His centeredness from which all does flow. Goodness, this is so hard to express. All I know is when I left the center on my journey out, rather home, I had a more profound understanding of our Lord's being at the heart of all. That's all. And that heart of His is full of love for each one of us, Pilgrim, it's ever flowing.

Once we know it, experience it, swim in it, we're never the same. There can be no fear or hatred when dwelling in His spring full of love. You become lighter and more buoyant and can just float and go with the flow.

The road out was a piece of cake. I could have skipped, twirled, danced, and sung like King David. I knew all was well, all was well as long as I lived out of the Center, the Lord God's Center. When I came to the "entrance-exit," I stepped out with a greater confidence and a total assurance of God's love.

The Labyrinth acted as a great paradigm for life. The entering and exiting were like my birth and death. The pathway represents the finite numbers of days I'm given on this earth. And then, all at once, unexpectedly, you come to the Center, where our loving God dwells. And from that Epiphany, conversion experience you know whose you are and to Whom you belong. You know that you know that you know you are floating in the arms of LOVE, our Father God's Love.

Ah, and I think, once you've got it, or rather He's got you, it's for all eternity. It's an ever-ongoing relationship in which you are

continually turning to Him. "Metanoia" is an ancient word, which refers to this transformation gaze. Ah and then, then when we're dwelling in our eternal home with our Lord, there'll be no more turning; we'll be infinitely gazing upon His throne. Won't that be glorious, Pilgrim?

Just listen to how John describes God's throne in Revelation 4:2:

"At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with Someone sitting on it. And the One who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow resembling an emerald encircled the throne."

Wow! Well, my Precious Pilgrim, yesterday's Labyrinth experience wasn't quite like John's, but it was expansive and I thank the Lord for that. As I said, each time I've walked one, there have been gifts. So, if you ever see a sign that says:

"Labyrinth Walk"

Friday, 3-8 p.m.

You might want to break, Pilgrim, and stop and take a stroll into this ancient pedestrian's prayer.

I am your sister in Christ with love,

Lucy

God bless.