

To walk silently  
in and out at a  
prayerful pace is  
a centering prayer  
that will quiet the  
mind and heart.

# Ignatian Spirituality

Ignatian spirituality originates with St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order. A former courtier and soldier, St. Ignatius gave himself to Christ during recuperation from a war wound. His book, *The Spiritual Exercises*, epitomizes his spirituality and serves as the basis for the work of spiritual companions and directors.

Central to Ignatius' spirituality is the belief that God speaks to us through the events experienced in our everyday lives. Other characteristics of his spirituality include:

**Relating to people as individuals**  
God calls each individual in a particular way, and so, rather than impose their own way on anyone, spiritual or retreat directors listen to what God may be saying in the experience of each person's life.

**Motivated by a sense of service or mission**  
Ignatian spirituality encourages a relationship that produces commitment to a common cause.

**Positive attitude toward all things**  
St. Ignatius affirmed that all things in creation are made by God and given as gifts of love for our good, a revelation of Himself that we might respond to God appropriately.

**Need for constant discernment**  
Where is God present in the world today and where is God calling us? While God's gifts are for everyone, we must discern which are meant for us, at each moment and to what extent, and which are not.



1390 Quarton Road, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304  
248.644.4933 Ext. 0 | manresa-sj.org  
Jan. 2024

# The Labyrinth at Manresa



A walking  
meditation

## What is a labyrinth?

A labyrinth is an intricately designed pattern composed of a single circuitous path that leads to the center and back out again. Unlike a maze, a labyrinth offers no choices, no dead ends, no chance of becoming lost.

## Is the labyrinth Christian?

The labyrinth is a natural idea that dates from 2,000 years before Christ. It was used by different cultures and religious traditions. Once the Edict of Milan in 313 AD ended religious persecution, the Church, as it has done with many other pre-Christian customs, adopted and baptized the labyrinth for its own use, but keeping its labyrinths almost exclusively on holy ground, and transforming what was once a symbol of fear into a sign of hope.

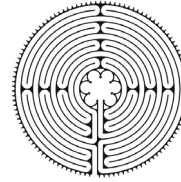
The first Christian floor labyrinth we know of was in a basilica in Algeria, built in 324 AD, its center inscribed *Sancta Ecclesia* (Holy Church). The first wall labyrinth, meant to be traced with the finger to quiet the minds of those who entered, is in the 9th century Cathedral of San Martino, Italy. In the 12th to 14th centuries especially, labyrinths became fixtures in churches such as the cathedrals of Chartres, Reims and Amiens, and the abbey church of St. Bertin in Saint-Omer, France. One use of them seems to have been as a substitute Holy Land pilgrimage for those who were unable to travel.

For the last several centuries the labyrinth as a prayer form had fallen pretty much out of use. The modern Christian revival of the labyrinth tradition began in

1991 at Grace Episcopal Cathedral in San Francisco, and since then it has grown in popularity at Christian institutions and retreat houses throughout the world.

## The labyrinth at Manressa

The Labyrinth at Manresa was installed in the summer of 2015 so that retreatants could experience another way of praying. It is based on the 11-circuit design at Chartres Cathedral (above right), but with a diameter of 62 feet it is almost 50% wider. The path from start to center is 1,200 feet long. Much symbolism is connected with this design, but there is no need to know any of it in order to experience the labyrinth.



## Why walk the labyrinth?

To walk silently in and out at a prayerful pace is a centering prayer that will quiet the mind and heart.

As a metaphor for entering within on the journey of life or on our pilgrim path to God, it may teach us we can walk with faith in a God Who guides our steps on the one true way amid all the apparent confusion of life.

The actual experience of modern people walking this circuitous path has produced a wide variety of positive results. They say they have found release from stress, solace amid sorrow, calming of fears, resolution of problems, inner healing, deeper self-knowledge, clarity of mind, empowering of greater creativity, and the list goes on. You will bring your own material to your walk each time you come and you may find that you will at different times experience different blessings.

## How to pray the labyrinth?

Walk at your own pace; if others are also walking you may quietly pass them or be passed in either direction. **There is no right or wrong way to pray the labyrinth.** Because of its simplicity you can approach its path on your own terms. But here are some ways you might find fruitful:

- Simply recall that you are always in God's presence, and walk in and out in quiet and silence, noticing what God may bring to your mind.
- Allow yourself to have a quiet conversation with God as you walk along with Him.
- Ask God a question upon entering, and as you walk, keep your mind open for a response.
- Pray for yourself on the way in, experience God's love in the center, and pray for others on the way out.
- Recite the Our Father as you walk. Or recite some other prayer or prayer word or familiar Scripture verse, repeating it as you go along.
- As you move toward the center, focus on letting go of distractions or worries that keep you from God. In the center, reflect on your relationship with God and be aware of God's presence. As you return give thanks and praise for all that God has done.
- Finally, if a way of praying works for you, use it; if it does not work for you, then try something else.