

# The Three-Fold Mystical Path

**RELEASING** (Purgation): Walking from the entrance of the labyrinth to its center represents the first part of the mystical path. It is the place to empty, release, quiet our beings, and to let go of the things that block our relationship to God.

**RECEIVING** (Illumination): The second stage of the three-fold path may be found at the center of the labyrinth. After we have quieted the mind and body on the labyrinth's path, the center is a place for meditation and prayer. The rose, in medieval times, symbolized the Holy Spirit. This rose has six petals; the petals represent the human, mineral, animal, vegetable, angelic, and Divine, in keeping with the medieval idea of the sacredness of all creation. If we enter the rose with an open heart and mind, we will be able to receive what is there for us.

**INTEGRATING** (Union): This final stage begins at the center rose and takes us back out into the world. In the mystical tradition of the Middle Ages, union meant being completely absorbed in God. This third stage of the walk "empowers the seeker to move back out into the world, replenished and directed."

## In The Light Of The Rain

by Bronwen Abbattista  
*down to the labyrinth*

*maze of the mind  
down steep steps  
my parents helped to build  
long before  
I was born*

*to a clearing  
among the trees  
a rare flat plane  
in this forest  
of pine needle stashes  
and pothole hammocks*

*the symmetrical lines  
drawn by smooth  
white stones  
so stark against  
the ancient evergreens*

*and as we stood  
admiring the sacred pattern  
sprung like a  
subterranean blossom  
petals reaching up to graze  
the soil*

*it began to rain  
a silent shower  
nature's prayer  
droplets fell  
through the dappled sun  
like the tears of angels  
in cathedral windows  
my heart ached with brief  
sharp reference*

*the mind is placated  
by soft small things*

*we walked up the hill  
talking quietly  
of time and change  
I looked over my shoulder  
and saw  
from a height*

*the wide pale labyrinth  
as from one  
huge raindrop  
spreading its delicate ripples  
out and over  
the waiting earth*



For more on La Foret's history and additional  
information please visit our website  
[www.laforet.org](http://www.laforet.org).

# Labyrinth



Spirituality • Pilgrimage • Union  
Releasing • Illumination • Meditation  
Integration • Receiving • Peace

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# Walking a Sacred Path

Medieval Christians walked labyrinths as a form of pilgrimage. Today many people are finding the labyrinth offers a special enhancement to their prayer lives. A labyrinth has been created in the serene forest of La Foret for all who visit there.



## What Is a Labyrinth?

The labyrinth is a feature of many medieval cathedrals, although their use in the Christian church dates to the fourth century or earlier. The labyrinth is a geometrical design portraying a winding path from a starting point to a goal. It is marked out on the floor and, unlike a maze, has only one path (so you cannot become lost!). Many Christian versions, including the Chartres labyrinth, incorporate a cross shape.

“The labyrinth is a spiritual tool meant to awaken us to the deep rhythm that unites us to ourselves and to the Light that calls from within. In surrendering to the winding path, the soul finds healing and wholeness.”

Dr. Lauren Artress in [Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool](#)

The tradition of pilgrimage is a part of the Christian tradition. It was an especially important part of Christian life in the Middle Ages, when a pilgrimage to Jerusalem was the one commitment essential to the spiritual life, surpassing even communion. With the crusades of the twelfth century, travel became dangerous and expensive, so the church designated seven pilgrimage cathedrals to become a symbolic Jerusalem. After spending days, even weeks traveling to one of these cathedrals, the pilgrims ended their physical journey with a walk into the labyrinth. Centuries later, the spiritual pilgrimage is recognized in the journey of faith. In place of a physical journey to Jerusalem, we are on an inner journey to God.

A contemporary individual might walk the labyrinth as an aid to contemplative prayer and reflection. As you wind your way around approaching the center, you gradually let go of the concerns of the day. You can view it as a centering exercise to help you focus on God or nature. You can also view it as an allegory of your life—sometimes appearing to be close to your focus, only to be suddenly out to the edge. Or perhaps to find yourself walking sometimes in sympathy with others and other times far distant, and so on. At the center, you meet God, nature, or another focus, and sit and rest there for as long as you like. Then you walk the labyrinth outwards, carrying the Light with you out into the world.

## La Foret's Labyrinth

It was the dream of long-time La Foret patron Don Seymour to leave something special for the children and adults of La Foret, something that would give them joy in their spiritual time. The Labyrinth was created by the entire Seymour family, who planned and worked for numerous years on location and design. It was also an immense “labor of love” by life-time camper Eileen Abbattista. After seasons of measurement and placement of the markings, forty tons of river rock was donated by the Seymour family and transported to their sacred home below Blue Spruce Lodge. The labyrinth at La Foret measures 85 feet in diameter, twice the size of the labyrinth at Chartres Cathedral in France, one of the most well-known labyrinths in the world.

## A Few Tips

- The path out of the labyrinth is the exact reverse of the path into the labyrinth.
- If you meet someone on the labyrinth, just step to one side and let her/him pass.
- You may stay in the center rose as long as you wish, being respectful of others
- The labyrinth is not a maze; there are no choices to make regarding the path's direction.