

LABYRINTH: *Emmaus -New Life!*

With quantum discoveries increasingly providing a basis for understanding meditation and its potential effects on environment, the time is now ripe for all to work together to help evolve the world towards greater consciousness, healing and peace. (CEN Website)



These words are an inspiration to me. Quantum discoveries happening everyday do sometimes shock us. Recently, in the desert of Western Australia signals were picked up from the birth of the stars 180 million years after the big bang. I was also shocked the first time I really let in that Jesus is not separate from the first flaring forth 13.8 billion years ago.

As we begin this Easter season I imagine Jesus present with all of us, with all who have been, and with all who are still to come. I warm up to Jan Novotka's beautiful words in her song "Dust Alive" *The dust of the stars is this bread. The dust of the stars is this wine - Oh, this bread and wine, our communion in all things; Flesh of God; Dust Alive.*

Over billions of years new life forms evolved and created in God's image, all of nature incarnates God's generous caress; dying to live and living to die is nothing new.

And today this new life is breaking fresh ground lavishly. To walk in fresh air and smell through the nostrils the scents of a new day dawning is something we can do in this free country and not so in many countries where there is war, pollution and dangerous situations. One of the purposes of CEN is to create a greater consciousness of all of this and of the power and intention of meditation to bring healing and peace across the world.



Walking is a natural gift for those who can walk and it is a wonderful way to contemplate and satiate the senses, dwelling on all that is non-human in our midst as we do so. During this Easter period we can link where we can, the walkers in the Emmaus story with our own walking, whether it be on a beach, in a forest, or in a labyrinth.

What if we reframe the Emmaus story as a walk in nature where the disciples are talking animatedly about all that has been happening? The disciples are not conscious at first of Presence when Presence appears! *In every walk with Nature one receives more than one seeks. Take a walk to feed the soul.* (John Muir)

There is so much more to experience in nature as we walk. As we grow in consciousness, walking becomes a tapestry of graced moments. Sometimes, like the disciples, we do not see what is immediately in front of us. How often do we contemplate our evolving selves? David Toolan SJ says that... *Like the sun and moon, we are disturbances in the field, vortices in turbulent nature. We are probably the most recycled beings in the universe even while we live, dissolving and re-enfleshing. We regrow our entire physical body as we do our hair and nails. Nothing in our genes was present a year ago. The tissue of our stomach renews itself weekly, the skin is shed monthly and the liver regenerated every six weeks. At every moment a portion of the body's 10(28) atoms is returning to the world outside and ninety percent of them are replaced annually. Each time we breathe we take in a quadrillion atoms breathed by the rest of humanity within the last two weeks and more than a million atoms breathed personally by each person on earth."*

"At Home in the Cosmos: the Poetics of Matter=Energy." (2001) David S. Toolan, S.J

In my life experience I have been blessed with opportunities for study and reflection that have assisted me to wake up to this amazing truth that we are continually changing and interconnected. I can still remember Jean Houston in her Mystery Schools reminding us to sniff the air and imagine it is the breath of Joan of Arc or Teilhard De Chardin!



I first became aware of the power of the labyrinth in the 1980's when Jean produced a large one on the floor for us to walk. Jean always started with creating an intention and then, as we all walked the labyrinth we mindfully 'held' our intention for the path into the centre and then the path out. The silent deep walking creates a new level of attentiveness to the body and spirit together. I know that this can be a nesting place for contemplative prayer and world peace.

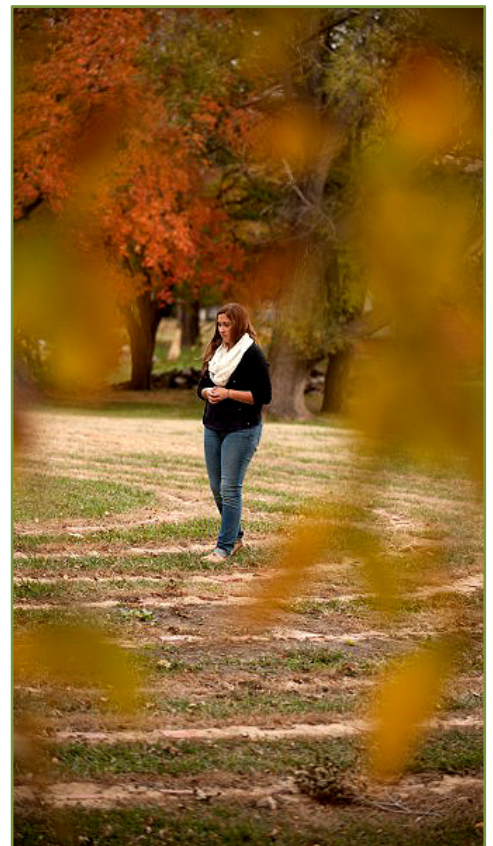
I have walked labyrinths in many parts of Australia and overseas. In one large secondary school I was an artist in residence assisting students to create earth centred ceramic mandalas for the labyrinth. The labyrinth pictured here is a favourite in SA, first created in 2010. It is at the Waite Institute and is made of logs.

Waking up to Presence in the Labyrinth

When my Mum died my nephew asked me earnestly who is now going to pray for all of us. Will you? I remember saying I could pray the *Loving Kindness* prayer everyday as it is already part of my practice and I could bring you to mind as I do it. Ben was satisfied and so began my 30 minute daily mindfulness walk. When I am not working at 4pm I do this walk as part of CEN. Sometimes I find a labyrinth on which to do this walk and very slowly tread consciously with the *Loving Kindness* prayer on my lips.

The labyrinth attracts me into contemplation. I walk through the turns and corners sometimes in complete silence and with no mind and other times I use mantras, which keeps me mindful and centred. Outside, walking in nature and all around me is the canopy of sky, clouds, sunlight, breeze, trees, shrubs, and flowers. Here I am dwelling in the womb of Earth and as Pope Francis says in *Laudato Si*, 2015, n.84: *The entire material Universe speaks of God's love, God's boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains; everything is, as it were, a caress of God.*

My relationship with mantras started in earnest when I studied Ira Progoff's "The Practice of Process Meditation" (Dialogue House 1980) - the year was 1987. To deepen experience of inner exploration Progoff designed a term called 'mantra-crystal' and it is made up of a seven syllable phrase. Mantra-crystals are repeated silently to create mindfulness. They rise up from one's interior self and arise spontaneously. There is no harm in sharing them with others as long as people know that they have risen in another person's world. They are often associated with metaphors and images.



Over the years many mantra-crystals have risen from within me and I use them regularly in my daily walks or in a labyrinth.

Here are three mantra-crystals linked together to create one mantra to repeat silently in the mindfulness walk: *Blessings are in this new day and the sparks of your beauty glisten in all things living.*

I conclude with a prayer I wrote many years ago about walking the labyrinth:

Divine Love you know deeply the experience of inner and outer journeys and you inspire us daily to walk in beauty, knowing that you are guiding, upholding and teaching us how to bring to life the gifts that are already dwelling within us. Resting in you my Beloved I walk with strength, truth and power. Amen. (Sparks of the Cosmos 2001)

Margie Abbott rsm