



This Labyrinth Garden Prayer Experience is taken from Don Bosco Youth Educational Services (DBYES) Karen, Nairobi. The script is by Fr. Selvam, sdb and Fr. K. D. Tom, sdb. The Labyrinth Garden Prayer in Nairobi is dedicated to Fr. Philip Valayam, sdb who was brutally killed on Christmas Day, 25th December 2005 by unknown assailants. Over 3000 youth have so far gone through this Labyrinth prayer experience.
Fr. Glenford Lowe, SDB

Labyrinth

A Spiritual Journey - A Pilgrimage



*A Prayer Garden Experience
For Youth who are
On a Spiritual Quest*

Labyrinth *A spiritual journey. A pilgrimage*

A Prayer-Garden Experience for You

You are about to begin a journey. A spiritual journey. A pilgrimage. It is a pilgrimage inward into your own deep self, and a pilgrimage outward to the world - of people. Inasmuch as you are getting in touch with your inner self. It is going to be a journey towards God. Because you are created in the image of God. This experience of God - in yourself, will make your life with people also more meaningful.



You are about to enter a labyrinth. Labyrinth is a maze-like structure that facilitates the spiritual exercise of walking and reflecting about oneself, others, nature and God. It does not involve mental gimmicks as in a maze. Do not worry, you are not going to get lost as there is only one way in and another out. This exercise is about your heart and soul. In fact, it involves your whole self. It is not a puzzle you are about to solve, though it will help you get in touch with the puzzle that you are.

Since this exercise may take at least 90 –120 minutes, We request you to be physically prepared to endure and enjoy this. If you are in a hurry, may be you should do this at another suitable time. For best results be ready to go through all the suggested exercises. You are going to be alone during this journey. We request you to be silent throughout. But you are not alone. Remember, you are journeying together with millions of pilgrims who are seeking. You are seeking too.

You are seeking in the company of thousands of labyrinth walkers in the medieval cathedrals. The hundreds of those who walk the labyrinths in modern parks even today. You are in the company of... Millions of women in India who have for centuries used the “yantra” - a labyrinth like drawing by hand - to decorate the fronts of their homes early morning while meditating and getting in touch with themselves.



You are in the company of millions of pilgrims who have walked thousands of miles throughout centuries going to the Holy Land, to Mecca, to Holy rivers and shrines.

Be aware that you are part of this great spiritual movement.

This could be a moment of your dream come true. A dream to experience God. A dream to get deeper into your self ... of giving ... watching ... listening. Let go what others think of you. Prepare to meet inner self -“the YOU of You”. Dream of becoming genuine with others.

Are you ready to be transformed? Let's go...

If you compare yourself with others,
you may become vain and bitter;
for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.
Enjoy your achievements as well your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble;
it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

Exercise caution in your business affairs;
for the world is full of trickery.

But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;
many persons strive for high ideals;
and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself.

Especially, do not feign affection.

Neither be cynical about love;
for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment
it is perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years,
gracefully surrendering the things of youth.
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune.
But do not distress yourself with imaginings.
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.
Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe,
no less than the trees and the stars;
you have a right to be here.
And whether or not it is clear to you,
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

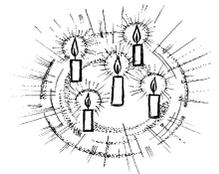
Therefore be at peace with God,
whatever you conceive Him to be,
and whatever your labors and aspirations,
in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your soul.

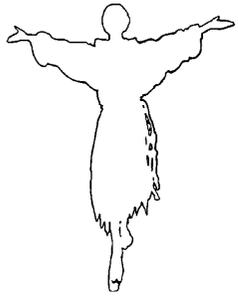
With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams,
it is still a beautiful world.

Be careful.

Strive to be happy.

Found in old Saint Paul's Church, Baltimore, dated 1692.





Foot Prints

One night I had a dream.
I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Across the sky flashed scenes from my life.
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand;
one belonging to me, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of my life flashed before me,
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.
I noticed that many times along the path of my
life

there was only one set of footprints.
I also noticed that it happened
at the very lowest and saddest times in my life.

This really bothered me
and I questioned the Lord about it.
"Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,
you'd walk with me all the way.
But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life,
there is only one set of footprints.
I don't understand why when I needed you most
you would leave me."

The Lord replied,
"My beloved, my precious child,
I love you and would never leave you.
During your times of trial and suffering,
When you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."



Food for the journey: Desiderata

As you go back into the world....
Go placidly amid the noise and haste,
and remember what peace there may be in silence.
As far as possible without surrender
be on good terms with all persons.
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;
and listen to others, even the dull and ignorant;
they too have their story.
Avoid loud and aggressive persons,
they are vexations to the spirit.



1. Reflect in SILENCE as You Walk...

The inward Journey

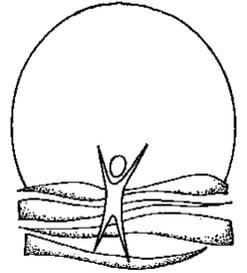
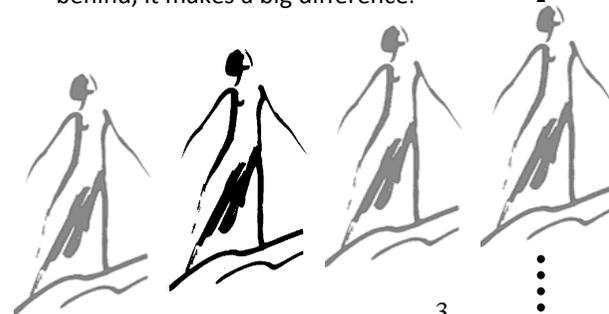
Walk in awareness.

Become aware of the fact that you are walking.
Become aware of your innermost feelings and thoughts.
Become aware of the lights and sounds around you.
Look around and enjoy the world...
Look at things as if you are looking at them for the first time...
But be aware that you are looking.
Don't name them. Just look.
Don't name your feelings.
Just look.

Move in a slow pace. At your pace...You own the time!!!
You can't rush into yourself. Nor to God. Take time...
Sit anywhere as long as you desire.
Feel free to go beyond the directions that are offered here. Listen to your heart.
The heart has its reasons...Listen to the Spirit.
Be aware of the 'Intuitions... the whisper of the inner Spirit.

Walk with respect for the world around...
Disturb no one.
Hurt no life - Not even a plant life.

Help the climbers back into the fence...
Be gentle with every creature crawling by.
Flowers and fruits are to be admired...
Not to be plucked ..
Leave the labyrinth suitable for fellow travellers.
Leave you good vibrations
behind, it makes a big difference.



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2. Just Let it Be

Sit down... relax ... Enjoy this moment...The NOW.

We live in a world of hustle and bustle. ...We invent machines to save time. ...

Yet we have no time! But you have this moment. ...The Now.

Modern city is like a dictionary...As you drive into Mumbai, Pune, Lonavala, You drive into words - billboards, neon lights, signs...

They compete with each other to get your attention.

You need to live above them if you want to be sane.

So just be here. Just now.

Sit and become aware of the noise and sounds around you. ...

Tell them - 'Let it be'!

Become aware of the peace coming over you...You may close your eyes... Breath consciously, in and out. Enjoy the moment. The NOW

Now, to all the discomfort of body you may experience.

Say, let it be. To all those thoughts arising in your mind.

Say, let it be. To all those feelings arising in your heart.

Say, let it be. To the world, Say, let it be!



Be in the presence of God. Be at peace. Just BE!

BE STILL AND KNOW!

"God is close to the silent..." Mother Theresa of Calcutta

"If you do not speak Lord, I will fill my heart with Your silence". - R. Tagore

3. Why do I worry ?

Just sit...

Look at the water in front of you.

Water bodies can bring inner healing.

Are you stressed?

Is there anything that is disturbing you at this moment?

What are you worried about?

From the pile of stones pick up one small stone.

It seems light. It doesn't hurt.

Hold the stone with your fingers. Hold it.

Hold it as long as you can.

Just keep looking at the stone.

Can you feel the stone gaining weight?

Does it begin to hurt your hand? Hold it, don't drop it yet.

It is not the same with worry and anxiety?

In the beginning you don't even notice.

When you keeping holding it for long it causes stress. You hurt yourself.

What is the worry that you have been carrying within yourself in the recent past? Identify one worry. Now look at the stone.

Think that the stone is that worry. Concentrate on it.

Feel the weight of the stone... the weight of you worry.

Hold the stone over the water. Now gently and effortlessly, let go of the stone.

Feel your worry disappear into the water.

Feel cleansed. Feel free.

Enjoy the moment...

Jesus said, do not worry about tomorrow.

God is there. Be at peace.

Let nothing perturb you. 4

Persons are Gifts

Persons are gifts! Some are wrapped very beautifully. They are attractive when I first see them. Some come in very ordinary wrapping paper. Others have been mishandled in the mail. Once in a while there is special delivery. Some persons are gifts which come very loosely wrapped. Other very tightly, but the wrapping is not the gift. It is so easy to make the mistake I am a person; therefore I am a gift too!



A gift of myself to me.

The father gave myself to me.

Have I ever looked inside the wrapping

Or Am I afraid to?

Perhaps I have never accepted the gift that I am.



Could it be, there is something inside the wrapping than what I think there is?

May be I've never seen the wonderful gift that I am.

Could the father's gift be anything but beautiful?



10.

Leaving a Legacy

We have an inner desire to leave a legacy behind.

We want to immortalize ourselves in this world.

What do you want to leave behind in this world?

Now feel free to remove your shoes.

Gently and consciously walk around.... On the sand. Then stop and look back at your own footprints.



As you look back, are you proud of your footprints?

Are you proud of the footprints that you are actually leaving behind in this world, through your daily choices?

Footprints on the sands of time!

What type of history are you writing?

With the diary of your life. 9

What are your major contributions?

To the world so far? Give more than receive
How can you enhance your contributions to the world?

In what specific areas can you direct your energy towards?

Make your world (the world at the reach of your hands) a better place.

Make..... (your name) DIFFERENCE by a deed of kindness in the coming days without expecting a return or favour. If they want to return the favour ask them to pay it forward to another person in need.

Are your footprints the kind

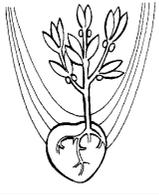
"...that perhaps another,

Sailing o'er life's solemn main, a forlorn and shipwrecked brother/sister Seeing, shall take heart again?"

(H.W. Longfellow)

Remember, you are not walking alone. Jesus walks with you too.





8. Enhancing Life

What is the meaning of life?

What is the purpose of your life?

Human life is to enhance life.

Are you ready to enhance life of people you live with?

Are you ready to enhance your life?

Glory of God is man fully alive. Are you ready to be fully alive?

Are you ready to be the glory of God?

Take a seed from the container.

Hold it in your hands.

Have a good look at it.

The seed you hold is as old as the universe. The elements that make up the seed were there right from the beginning of the universe. You too are as old as the universe.

The seed is a microchip.

It has sufficient information to reproduce itself given the right circumstances.

There is 'treeness' in the seed. You are much more than the seed. You carry within yourself untold information, potentialities, wealth.

The seed is alive. You are alive too.

Are you ready to enhance life?

Your own and that of others? Miracle of greatness is for you to unfold.



Now gently bury this seed in the bed.

Carry some water and pour on it.

The goal of human life is to enhance life.

Are you ready to enhance life?

Thus are you ready to share in the life of God?

For, God is LIFE.



9. Tree of Rosaries

Others in My Life

Rosary (or Chaplet) is a tool used in many religions for prayer.

In Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.

Pick up one rosary from the tree.

And as you roll the beads,

For each bead remember one person Who you like to pray for?.

Do this slowly and consciously.

The feeling of bliss

that you enjoy at this moment

Pray that even that person may enjoy.

Or just say, "Bless him/her Lord." 8

When you think you have prayed enough Return back the Rosary and proceed on.

Wait.

Stop to pray for one person you find difficult

To live with, to work with!

"Bless him/her Lord."

"Learn to look at others without judging ...

Judge Not."

"Choose to be KIND

rather than being RIGHT ...

you are going to add quality to your Life and others."

"Be a Blessing to persons you meet, as every meeting with another is a holy encounter, God in you meets the God in the other."

4. In the Garden of Reconciliation

You are in this special garden... The garden of reconciliation... Notice the special plants in this garden? You are in the garden of reconciliation. Where there is reconciliation, there is God. God is here...

Is there someone you find difficult to forgive? Does your stomach roll when you think of that person? Would you like to deal with that hurt? Now?

*Be seated...*We pile up hurt feelings in our selves. As if putting them into a pot.

We keep boiling the pot every day and we keep hurting ourselves. Let us deal with at least one of your hurt feelings.

From the pot ... Pick up a smiley ball ...

Become aware of the presence of God.

As you play with the smiley ball

Remember that person who has hurt you.

As you keep kneading the putty,

Enumerate to yourself a litany of hurts caused by the person.

After every "invocation" just say, "For this, I forgive you."

Do you feel weak or hesitant? Make space for the Lord to sit by you.

Try that 'forgiveness' once again!!!



Keep doing this until you feel you are at peace.

Finally as you throw the putty back into the pot.

Tell yourself, "I forgive you for hurting yourself."

(For keeping the hurt within you and you are hurting yourself).

Now the memory of the hurt may remain. You have forgiven.

You may not forget. But it doesn't hurt you anymore.

So let it be! Feel the freedom. Feel the peace.

Jesus said, if you forgive others, you are forgiven.

Enjoy the forgiveness.

"Forgiveness is the best gift you give yourself... it brings peace."



New Leaf... New Leaf ... New Leaf

He came to my desk with quivering

lip - The lesson was done.

"Dear teacher, I want a new leaf," he said,

"I have spoiled this one."

I took the old leaf, stained and blotted,

And gave him a new one, all unspotted,

And into his sad eyes smiled:

"Do better now, my child."

"Dear Father, has thou a new leaf for me?"⁵

I went to the Throne with a quivering soul -

The old year was done.

I have spoiled this one."

He took the old leaf, stained and blotted,

And gave me a new one, all unspotted,

And into my sad heart smiled:

"Do better now, my child."

He took the old leaf, stained and blotted,

And gave me a new one, all unspotted,

And into my sad heart smiled:

"Do better now, my child."

5. Distractions

(after you read the boxed instruction)
Close your eyes...

**Turn around.
Stop.
Stretch your hand and
point to the North.**

Then open your eyes.

Did you get it right?
Doesn't matter if you got it wrong.

Whether you got it right or not
North Pole remains where it is.

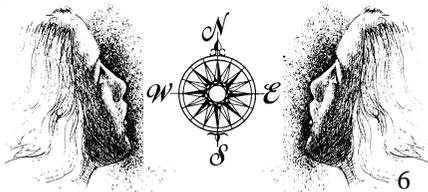
What is the North Pole in your life?
What is it that gives meaning to your
life?

Is it your education, studies, degrees?
Is it your wealth, things, possessions?
Is it your family? Is it your friends?

But remember, the true North Pole is
God.
He is unchangeable. Are you focussed?
On Him?

"Give up the 'blame game' ...
Circumstances do not make a person,
they reveal the person ..."

"Lord, you are my God, for you my heart
is thirsting."
What are the other 'gods' in your life?
Get focussed now.



6 Holy Place



Now you are at the centre of the labyrinth.
You are at the centre of yourself.
God dwells here.
You are welcome. You are with God.
This is a sacred space.

Here you can become one with creation.
You are the crowning act of
the God of creation.
You are given the given task of
being the preserver,
Of all God's creation...

You are not your name, your religion,
your country, your label ...
You are an eternal being.
The Divine Energy that moves the cosmos,
creates the sky and stars,
preserves the plants and planets,
cares for birds and fish,
Lives in you. You are a divine being ...
"little less than a god."
Enjoy the moment.
Enjoy the presence of God.

Be available to Him.
Let him touch you. Let him heal you.
Let him love you. Let him be with you.

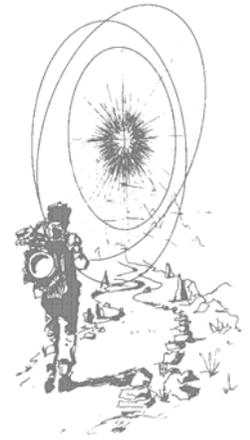
Take a deep breath,
Close your eyes.
Enjoy the present... Enjoy your self...
Enjoy God! God loves you.

"In the eye of the Divine Presence, every
person is a favourite ..."
"I have carved you on the palm of my hand."

Outward Journey

Now you are beginning your outward journey.
Outward into the world - to others.
How do you feel right now?

When Peter saw Jesus transfigured
On the mountain.
He said, Lord it is good for us to be here.
Jesus took them down the mountain.
True spirituality is tested in the marketplace.
Are you ready to go back to the marketplace?



You are going back to the same world from where you came.
Nothing has changed out there.
But may be you are changed.
And because of you the world is going to be
A better a place.



7. Myself

How do you appear to the world?
Who are you?
Look at yourself in the mirror.
Would you like to say anything to that
person in the mirror?
Do you love that person?

Look at your eyes in the mirror.
What would you like to say to those eyes?
Are they hiding something?
Look at them. Look at yourself.
Remember, You are loved.
God loves you.

There are some people out there who love
you.
You mean something special to somebody.
Look at you ... The beautiful person.
You are worth love.

You have the great privilege of
being yourself, a lifetime!!!!

You can love too
If you can love ... Believe you can be loved
too.

You are beautiful... As you are.
"Love your neighbour as Yourself."

You are not the 'face' in the mirror ...
You are the one who is observing!!!
No physical measuring devise
can find your value!!!!

Dare to be Who you are.
You have a right to be yourself,
provided you do not hurt anyone else.
You have a 'calling'.
"I have called you by name."
Being yourself is the gift,
you are going to share.

