

# WALKING THE LABYRINTH

The Labyrinth is a divine imprint found in all religious traditions in various forms around the world. Our labyrinth at Sierra Christian is no different. By walking it, a design first found in the floor of the Catholic Cathedral at Chartres France around 1220, we are rediscovering a long-forgotten mystical tradition that is being reborn. The temples in Jerusalem and Chartres open to the east, so as to receive the light of the rising sun. Our Sierra Labyrinth opens to the southwest, so that we may return to the world, enlightened.



A labyrinth is a pilgrimage. When it became dangerous to travel to Jerusalem, seven European cathedrals were designated as alternative destinations for pilgrims. Entering the cathedral's labyrinths marked the end of a difficult life journey and a promise of entry into the Celestial City.

Not a maze in the true sense of the word, the labyrinth has only one path, no tricks, no dead ends or wrong turns. It is not a place where one gets lost, but rather found. It is more accurate to look at it as a universal path winding throughout life's mysteries—a metaphor (or mirror) for life's journey. It can touch our sorrows and release our joys. The labyrinth is an invitation. Walk it with an open mind and heart. Walk it with a desire to step closer to God.

While it is walked alone and in silence, it is not a solipsistic journey. Life is not that way. Other people share our paths. We are all at different places in our journey toward God, not better or worse, not right or wrong, just different. And when you really look at it, we are all on the same path moving toward the great Source of Life.

## The Three-Fold Mystical Tradition

### The Path In:

The first part of the mystical path is Purgation, from the Latin word "to purge", meaning to cleanse, to let go, to shed. It is a releasing or letting go of the details and preoccupations of your life. The first part of the labyrinth was sometimes made by the medieval pilgrims on their knees. The Miserere Psalms (51, 56, 57) were etched into the original stones of some labyrinths so that the monks could recite them as they moved through the path.

### The Center:

The second stage of the three-fold path, Illumination, is found in the center of the labyrinth. Usually it is a surprise to reach the center because the long, winding path seems "illogical" and cannot be figured out by the linear mind. After quieting the mind in the first part of the walk, the center presents a place for meditation and prayer. Stay in the center as long as you like. Often people at this stage in the journey find insight into their situation in life, clarity about a certain problem, hope, or simply the joy at being present with God. As one enters the center, the instruction is simple: enter with an open heart and mind; receive what is there for you; rest in the divine presence.



### **The Path Out:**

The third state, Union, begins when you leave the center of the labyrinth and continues as you retrace the path that brought you in. At this stage the meditation takes on a grounded, energized feeling. Those who have had an important experience in the center sometimes feel that this third stage gives them a way of integrating the insights they received. Others feel that this stage stokes the creative fire of the Spirit within. It empowers, invites, or even pushes us to be more authentic and confident and to take risks with our gifts in the world. Union means finding our unity and purpose within all God's creation.

