

Our Associate Priest writes ...

I'm not going to be running this time, I'm going to be walking. At the beginning of September, a friend and I are joining a group to walk the last 70 miles of The Camino de Santiago (The Way of St James) from Sarria to Compostela, far enough to get an official certificate, after collecting stamps in our 'Credencial del Peregrino' at least twice a day. We are walking up to 18 miles each day though only 7 miles on the fifth day.

The shrine in the Field of the Star (Campus Stellae – Compostela) where the bones of St James were believed to lie has been a pilgrimage destination since the Middle Ages. There is a cathedral on the site famous for its botafumeiro, a huge thurible suspended from the dome on a pulley. Sadly, restoration work is being carried out at the moment, so we won't be able to attend the Pilgrim Mass there or see the botafumeiro in action, but we will be able to visit the cathedral.

A pilgrimage is simply a journey to a sacred destination with a spiritual intent. Walking has an amazing way of freeing up our minds and spirits allowing us time for reflection and on pilgrimage giving God opportunity to speak to us. Each day will begin with prayer offering the walk to God and inviting him to speak to us and each day will end with a prayer of thanksgiving.

You might think to yourself, 'I'd really like to do something like that...' but perhaps you don't have the time or the physical capacity to do it. However, there are ways that anyone can make a pilgrimage. In Medieval times it was appreciated that although it would be good to make a pilgrimage especially to the Holy Land many people couldn't and so at places like the Cathedral in Chartres, they created labyrinths as an alternative to going on a pilgrimage.

A labyrinth is a kind of mini pilgrimage and in the centrefold of this magazine you can find one that is a micro pilgrimage that you can follow with a pencil or finger.

Here's how you can use it:

- Take time to be still and quiet offering this time to God and then begin.
- Pause at each cross to reflect where you are on the journey. Stop at the centre to be still with God. Trace your way out when it seems appropriate.
- At the exit acknowledge the end with thanksgiving and 'Amen'.
- Afterwards, reflect back on your experience.

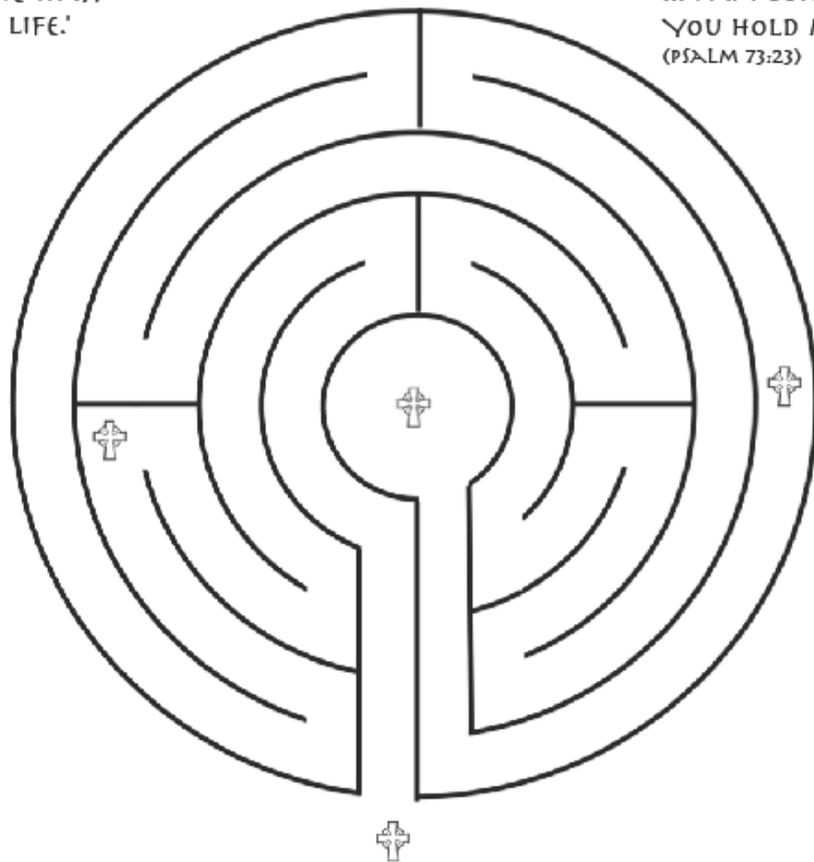
If you'd like to actually walk a short pilgrimage, choose a church which is open, or any destination where you can stop and reflect and pray. Then plan a walk to get there that matches the time you have available and your ability and try it out. It is the intention to offer the journey to God with heart and mind open to him that makes a walk a pilgrimage.

The traditional greeting to walkers on The Way is 'Buen Camino' so I wish you 'Buen Camino' if you 'walk' the labyrinth or make a pilgrimage of your own. You might like to pray for me too as I begin walking on 3 September.

Jennie

JESUS SAID ... 'I AM THE WAY,
THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE.'
(JOHN 14:6)

... I AM CONTINUALLY WITH YOU;
YOU HOLD MY RIGHT HAND
(PSALM 73:23)



LEAD ME IN THE PATH OF YOUR COMMANDMENTS, FOR I DELIGHT IN IT
(PSALM 119:35)