



THE ARCHBISHOP
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Writing in today's [Sunday Express](#) newspaper Archbishop Stephen reminds us that life is a journey with a destination and purpose. The article follows in full...

Happy Easter! This is a season that speaks of hope, renewal, and the promise of new life. During the past week I have been spending time at Bridlington Priory, on the East Coast, where just outside the church lies a labyrinth.

A labyrinth, if you've never walked one before, is a quiet invitation to walk and reflect. Unlike a maze, it is not designed to confuse or trap you in dead ends. There is only one path. You simply follow it. You cannot get lost.

However, walking a labyrinth can still be discombobulating. Although it's a single line, and although you can't get lost, just as it appears that you are approaching the centre, the path takes you away to the edge. Progress is steady, but not straightforward. Sometimes the destination seems close at hand. Sometimes it appears that you are getting further away.

Labyrinths vary enormously. Some are ancient patterns set in stone. Some are mown into the lawn, or marked out with a few stones, or even drawn in the sand for a single day before the tide comes in. Some are ancient, like in Chartres Cathedral. Some are new, like the one in the nave of Wakefield Cathedral or the one we have built here in the garden at Bishopthorpe where I live. But whether temporary or permanent, each labyrinth invites the same gentle practice: step by step, moving slowly towards the centre.

At Bridlington Priory, visitors walking the labyrinth are invited to carry a small pebble. It represents whatever we bring with us — worries, hopes, questions, or simply the busyness of life. Reaching the centre of the labyrinth, you place the pebble in a bowl before turning and walking out again.

Our everyday lives, however, can sometimes feel much more like a maze — full of choices, uncertainty, and the worry of taking the wrong turn. Sometimes, we just feel lost. Not only do we lose hope of ever getting to where we would like to be, we even lose any sense that there is a destination or purpose in life. We just keep going until we stop.

Walking a labyrinth offers a very different experience. You don't have to work out the route. You can't take a wrong turn. The path is already there, and even when it seems as if the path is taking you further away from where you want to be, actually with each step you are getting closer. In fact, all you need to do is take that next step.

In our individualistic, materialistic and often frantic culture, in a world where someone once said that we know the cost of everything but the value of nothing, and in a world where many often wonder whether there is any destination, higher purpose or meaning to life at all, it is not

surprising that walking a labyrinth appeals to us. It is the same reason why thousands and thousands of us, whether we think of ourselves as religious or not, go on pilgrimage. Somehow, we instinctively know that we might recover a sense of meaning and purpose to life when we walk a path that others have trod before us. We rediscover our place in the world.

For Christians, the week leading up to Easter — known as Holy Week — is also a journey. It follows the final days of the life of Jesus Christ: from Palm Sunday, through the Last Supper, the sorrow of Good Friday, and the stillness of Holy Saturday. For the first followers of Jesus, sometimes the destination seemed close. Waving palm branches as he entered Jerusalem, triumph seemed at hand. Sometimes they felt far away. Standing at the foot of the cross, it must have seemed as if all their hopes were defeated.

But they persevered. They kept on following Jesus. And on Easter morning, Mary Magdalene went to his tomb early in the morning, grieving and searching. What she finds is not only a destination, but a new beginning. She meets the risen Christ, and her life and the destination of her life is changed.

This is true today for those who follow Jesus. Through him we find meaning and hope. It does not mean life is easy. Like everyone else, we face sorrows and uncertainties. But we walk with hope, knowing that in Jesus, God is with us.

Walking a labyrinth or going on pilgrimage reminds us that life itself is a journey — and that it does have a destination and a purpose.

This Easter I invite everyone, whatever you think you know or believe, to come to church. If you long for meaning, purpose and value in life, then encounter this life-giving story — and perhaps even be inspired to walk a labyrinth. And to walk life differently.

