



## Education Monthly

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### The labyrinth.

Last week I saw a wonderful movie, "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel". In it one of the characters says "It will be all right in the end, and if it isn't, it's not the end!" This rather pithy saying reminded me of a talk I gave last year when I was District Deputy Grand Master. It was about the thoughts I had after seeing the labyrinth that we have at my church. I've shortened the talk for the purposes of this paper.

A labyrinth is a convoluted pathway leading to its centre.



There are an infinite number of designs but all have an entry point and there is only one path that will lead eventually to the centre. All you have to do is follow the path. Professor Gailand MacQueen writes: "From ancient times, the labyrinth has been used in rituals at the most important moments in life. Although we don't always know exactly how, its structure, as well as its placement at gravesides, seacoasts, and healing sites, suggest that it was used in rituals associated with birth, coming of age, marriage, sickness and death, as well as initiation into secret societies or elders' groups. Like all rites of passage and initiation ceremonies, walking the labyrinth is structured as a pilgrimage with three parts. First comes the journey inward, toward the sacred space where change happens. Next, time is spent at the centre, where the new life begins. Finally, there is the journey outward, the return of the transformed person to the world, often with a new identity."

Our operative brethren felt them important enough to add to their architectural splendours and to put their marks on them.

Like our rituals in Freemasonry, walking the labyrinth is a symbolic journey. It is a metaphor for life.

In a labyrinth there is only one path. The only decision you make is whether or not to start. The path has many twists and turns but it steadily and surely takes you to the centre. However it takes you many places before you get there. Most labyrinths make you walk in a general clockwise direction, just as we do in our perambulations. The winding path of the labyrinth is much like the journey of Freemasonry.

You can trust the path to take you to the centre eventually, no matter where you happen to be at the moment.

Thus, the labyrinth is a powerful symbol of the unity of our life path and of the centre that awaits, wherever we are on the path. Alternatively, we might say that the labyrinth is a symbol of God, who is both the centre we seek and the path that gets us there.

Like being in the tiled recesses of a Masonic lodge, walking the labyrinth is a peaceful reflective pursuit. During your journey you think on your life, where you have been and where you want to go. By the end of the walk, you know yourself better, something Masons are admonished to do.

It represents a good journey through life: it enables us to have a virtuous clean and wonderful life.

For some further reading go to : <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Labyrinth>

## **The Ottawa Conference on Masonic Education**

The conference was well attended and seems to have been greatly enjoyed. Eight papers were presented and we had excellent speakers. In addition three speakers were invited, R.W.Bro. Winston Kinnaird of Kemptville spoke on the Masonic connections to the war of 1812. Professor Renee Lafferty of Brock University spoke on a similar theme expanding it to demonstrate how Masonry affected that war and its subsequent effect on the history of our country. Finally R.W.Bro Roland Morrow, District Deputy Grand Master of Frontenac District gave an eloquent account of the heroism of Bro Ernest Shackleton reminding us of the portrayal of the ideal mason in our general charge at the end of installations ceremonies, “.. the man who never proclaims what he has done, can do, will do , but where need is will lay hold with dispassionate courage, circumspect resolution, indefatigable exertion and a rare power of mind...”

I hope to be able to use extracts from some of these excellent papers in future editions of Education Monthly

Fraternally

John Forster

Chairman , Committee on Masonic Education

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