

No.27 March 2024

Editorial: Ann McNelley

During a session at Quadratos recently we were meditating on the rhythm of our own bodies and that of the Universe. The words of a song came into my mind; “the rhythm of life has a powerful beat...” It does have a powerful beat and the cycle of life from birth to death to resurrection is very powerful indeed.

In His physical presence on earth Jesus taught us to love and give freely of ourselves in order that we might become whole and empower those around us to do the same. As Easter approaches may we embrace the rhythms of life that bring us to new life. May He *Easter* in us.



Blessing:

Birthing God
Mother us to wholeness
Nurture us in our daily life
Grace us with wisdom
Bring us to freedom
Fill us with hope
And empower us to be
Bearers of new life. Amen.

Christian Meditation: Hilary Fogerty

The Desert Fathers and Mothers settled in North Egypt and Syria in the third, fourth and fifth centuries. They were ordinary Christian men and women; very few were priests. It was a renewal movement, using Jesus as a model for deepening their relationship to Reality, the Source, God and for living the Christian values of simplicity, compassion, mercy, generosity and humility.

The teachings of these men and women were written and collected from as early as the late fourth century – a collection known as the Sayings of the Desert Fathers. Other early writings were the Conferences of John Cassian (c.360 – 435) and The Life of Anthony by Athanasius.

It is only in recent decades that this tradition and its spiritual writings have been made accessible to us, having remained hidden in libraries and monasteries for centuries. Thomas Merton and John Main were two of the first contemplatives to provide widespread access to this desert tradition. And to this day, spiritual writers and teachers continue to interpret and illuminate the writings of these Desert Fathers and Mothers.



Quadratos, The Four Gospel Journey: Hilary Fogerty

The Quadratos group has been reading “Heart and Mind: The Four Gospel Journey for Radical Transformation” by Alexander John Shaia. We are into the second year of this four-gospel study.

At each meeting, we read a gospel text, reflect on the author’s interpretation of the particular text, consider the context, the writer and the audience to which the gospel is addressed and its relevance to our own spiritual lives. Shaia also discusses the rich images and metaphorical language, the simple narratives or the philosophical

discourses used by the gospel writers, which can often illuminate and expand the meanings of the gospel texts. In addition, we explore philosophical or theological sayings by other writers both within and outside our tradition.

During the afternoon, participants spend half an hour in reflection and meditation; afterwards, we are invited to share our thoughts, feelings and reflections, making links between the writings and our own lives. The sessions begin and end with music and prayer.

This programme gives us the gifts of time and space to explore our sacred texts, to discover the deeper meanings contained within, and to begin ‘see with the heart’. As stated in the book title, it is a “journey for radical transformation”.

Our “Forever” Labyrinth: Elaine Morzone and Moyalia Tokmak

You may remember that our Christmas Celebration included a walk on the simple labyrinth which had emerged with the guidance of Randal and Susan Dennings. Our excitement about having our labyrinth turned to anxiety when the rain started to fall and all our efforts to retain the initial imprint with the use of non-toxic weedkiller seemed to be never-ending. We realized that while we appreciated the simplicity of our grass-roots pattern, we needed to look towards something sustainable. We were led to the wisdom and

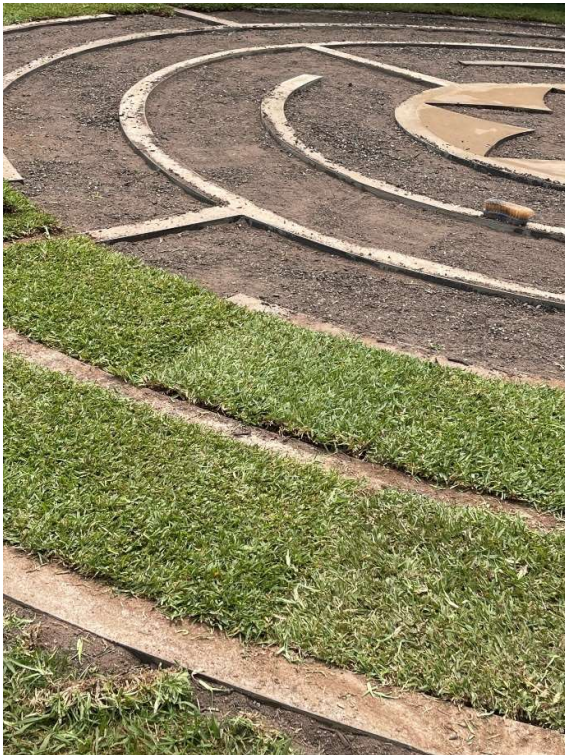


artistry of Richard Jones who connected us with landscape designer Jamie Ross who together with his son Harry created a labyrinth which exceeded all our expectations. There is a right time for everything under the sun – by this time, we had received a generous donation from the Toowoomba Theological Society which had a humorous, elusive and circuitous journey to reach us. Just as the labyrinth itself is a metaphor for life, the whole process of establishing our “forever” labyrinth was itself a metaphor. It involved an invitation to wait, to move with the ebbs and flow, to embrace connection with others, to be open to surprise, and to recognize the value of collective wisdom.



The First Step

Difficult Beginnings



Outlines Secured

Walking a Sacred Path of Being: Ann McNelley.

“This is not walking.

This is touching the ground with reverence.

This is stepping inwards. This is slowing down....”

Catherine Anderson – Journeying the Labyrinth Path: A Creative Pilgrimage Journal.

And so began our day of labyrinth walking, wonderfully facilitated by Sue Thomas on the 23rd February. Participants came from various parts of the diocese and beyond. After our initial gathering and Acknowledgement of Country we were invited to enter into silence, walk, create, journal, meander, be.

Sue provided helpful resources for our use throughout the day: paper labyrinths to colour and illustrate, books, reflections, and hand labyrinths for those who could not walk the labyrinth.

At the beginning of the day, we were asked to share a word that described our first walk of the day. Some responses were: *calm, thoughtful, challenging, community.*

The whole experience was pervaded by a sense of peace and belonging. At the end of our time together we were asked again to share a word that described our experience of the labyrinth. Here some responses were: *illuminating, connection, gentle surprise, affirming, sharing, creative.* For myself it was a sense of *seeking and getting lost* on the journey; I could not find my way out, even though I had walked it many times before without a problem. After praying and calming myself down I finally found my way and my word at the end of the day was *joy!*



*Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark,
Mary Magdalene came to the tomb. —John 20:1*

While it was still dark.
While it was still night.
While she could not see.
While she thought death held sway.
While she grieved.
While she wept.
While it was still dark, resurrection began.

Image: *While It Was Still Dark* © Jan Richardson



The Magdalene's Blessing: Jan Richardson

You hardly imagined
standing here,
everything you ever loved
suddenly returned to you,
looking you in the eye
and calling your name.

And now
you do not know
how to abide this hole
in the center
of your chest,
where a door
slams shut
and swings open
at the same time,
turning on the hinge
of your aching
and hopeful heart.

I tell you,
this is not a banishment
from the garden.
This is an invitation,
a choice,
a threshold,
a gate.
This is your life
calling to you

from a place
you could never
have dreamed,
but now that you
have glimpsed its edge,
you cannot imagine
choosing any other way.
So let the tears come
as anointing,
as consecration,
and then
let them go.
Let this blessing
gather itself around you.
Let it give you
what you will need
for this journey.
You will not remember
the words-
they do not matter.
All you need to remember
is how it sounded
when you stood
in the place of death
and heard the living
call your name.