***Suggestions for use in Graduation Liturgy***

***Theme: The Labyrinth of Life***

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 ***Adapted from: www.schoolethos.ie***

***The Labyrinth***

Labyrinths are thousands of years old and believed to be gateways to the divine. They are often located at the entrance of ancient sites around the world. They symbolise our connection with the source of life; the divine at the centre of our being. When we walk the labyrinth it a metaphor for the journey to the centre of your deepest self and back out into the world with a broader understanding of who you are. It is a very ancient expression of thanks and remembrance of the divine in all things.

We are now at the gateway of change and transition as we prepare to leave school and being a new stage in our lives. Life is a sacred journey. It is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation; continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way.

We are all on the path … exactly where we are meant to be right now … And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your own life story and being a person of hope, healing and love in the world.

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**Liturgy of the Word**

***First Reading: A reading from the prophet Isaiah (43:1-3 )***

But now, thus says Yahweh, who created you Jacob, and who formed you Israel. ‘Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine. Should you pass through the sea, I shall be with you, or through the rivers, they shall not swallow you up. Should you walk through fire you will not be scorched and the flames will not burn you. You are precious in my eyes and I love you. Do not be afraid for I am not with you.’

**The world of the Lord**

***Psalm:*** *Will You Let Me Be Your Servant?*

**Second Reading:** ***A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Philippians (1:4-9)***

Every time I pray for you all of you, I pray with joy remembering how you have helped spread the Good news from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the one who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best.

**This is the word of the Lord**

Sing the ***Pilgrim Alleluia***

***Gospel: John 15:9-17***

**A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John**

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other.

**This is the Gospel of the Lord**

**Idea for the Prayers of the Faithful:**

Invite a group of students to work together on writing their own prayers of the faithful, with your direction and suggestions around themes.

A nice idea is to borrow from the Buddhist practice and create **prayer flags** on pieces of coloured cloth and hang them up in the same way we hang bunting. This could be prepared before the Mass and before the prayers of the faithful are read out, the prayer flags could be brought up and hung around or behind the altar.

**Offertory Hymn:** *Come to the Table*

*A labyrinth woven or painted onto a large sheet could be brought in procession to the altar and used as the altar cloth. (Directions on how to design a labyrinth are below).*

*(After the Liturgy the labyrinth could be brought to the prayer room or a quiet room and people could be invited to walk the labyrinth if they wish before they leave. Play reflective music in the background as they do this).*

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**Communion Reflection:**

**Journey Ends …. Journey Begins**

For each of us life is a journey.

Birth is the beginning of this journey,

And death is not the end - but the destination.

It is a journey that takes us from youth to age;

From innocence to awareness; From ignorance to knowledge;

From foolishness to wisdom; From weakness to strength

And often back again

From offence to forgiveness; From loneliness to friendship;

From pain to compassion; From fear to faith;

From defeat to victory; And from victory to defeat;

Until looking backward or ahead

We see that victory does not lie

At some high point along the way

But in having made the journey

Stage by stage.

 (*Adapted from an old Hebrew prayer)*

*Or*

***The Labyrinth***

“Your life is a sacred journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. You are on the path … exactly where you meant to be right now … And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing, of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity and of love.”

We are all on the path … exactly where we need to be. The labyrinth is a model of that path. The labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The labyrinth represents a journey to our own centre and back again out into the world.

At its most basic level the labyrinth is a metaphor for the journey to the centre of your deepest self and back out into the world with a broadened understanding of who you are.

 *Caroline Joy Adams*

**Concluding Prayer:**

As we end one journey and begin another, let us go forth into the world as people of faith, hope and vision. Hold fast to that which is good, and render to no one any harm. Strengthen the faint hearted, support the weak and vulnerable. Help the afflicted, give dignity and respect to all. Love and serve the Lord Jesus rejoicing in the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We ask this through Jesus Christ Our Lord. **Amen.**

***Concluding Hymn: The Labyrinth – Liam Lawton (Album: Song of the Celtic Soul)***

Step into the circle, step onto your path

Find your place of journey, where your life is mapped

Step into the circle, if the way is clear

You can start your journey, encircle all your fears

*Chorus*

Labyrinth, labyrinth

As you make your journey, the centre calls you in

Labyrinth, labyrinth

Where your heart is calling, your destiny begins

Find your stepping stones, reflecting in the light

As you travel on, beware of falling night

As you journey on, you are not alone

You will find the courage, to lead you safely home

*Chorus*

And though you know your future not

And the roads that lead elsewhere

The way of love will guide your heart

Beyond the world’s despair

To find your future there

*Chorus*

**How to Build a Labyrinth**

Labyrinths can be built with many different kinds of materials. Beautiful labyrinth patterns may be colourfully painted on canvas or parachute fabric. Labyrinths can be made from stones placed in circles on the earth. Labyrinths can also be drawn with chalk on a pavement or be cut in a grass lawn with a mower. And labyrinths can be made of simple and humble materials such as rope scotch-taped to the floor, or masking tape staked into a lawn. I have used the following plans with many grassroots groups, using rope or plastic construction tape and scotch tape. Large metal staples may be used if the labyrinth rope is to be anchored to the earth.

**The Eleven-Path Labyrinth**

The eleven path labyrinth is based on the sacred geometry of the great labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral. It can be build using the following plan:

* Measure the diameter of the room or space for the labyrinth in order to have sufficient room for the paths (at least 18 to 30+ feet in diameter, or 6 to 10 metres).
* Prepare 4 pieces of rope or clothesline as a rule for measuring the paths. Connect or tie together the piece of rope in the centre (A). Calculate the diameter of the eleven paths and the diameter of the centre. Measure off the paths by marking with tape the point where each of the paths will fall. You will need 12 marks for the paths. Use sufficient space to form the centre (B) of the labyrinth, so that several people can stand, sit or kneel in the centre at the same time. For example, if you are planning to make a 30 foot labyrinth with a 6 foot diameter centre, the dimensions will be as follows. The four pieces of rope for measurement will each be 15+ feet in length. (16 feet is better so that there is a little extra to form the centre knot and the end of the measure). From the centre knot, measure 3 feet outward to mark the centre, and secure this point with a piece of tape. Then measure off eleven more sections each 12 inches in diameter to represent the paths. Mark off each of the four sections of the rope with the same measure.
* Twelve concentric circles will now be laid down to form the basic pattern of the labyrinth. Place the cross of cord on the floor or ground where the labyrinth will be constructed. Decide where the entrance will be. Some groups orient the direction of the entrance by their own traditions, for example, south or east. Other labyrinth entrances are oriented by what is appropriate for the space and the size of the group.
* Secure the centre of the rope with tape to prevent it from moving. Begin by laying down the inner and outermost circles using rope secured by scotch tape (or use masking tape or construction tape secured by staples or tape). Secure three parts of the rope cross with tape to be stationary; the fourth will be moved around the circle as a compass/measure to form the circles. Remember to lay down the labyrinth tape or rope below the rope cross (which will be removed upon completion of the labyrinth). Lay down all 12 circles in the same way.
* The next stage involves cutting the path. You will work within each quadrant of the cross. Start with one quadrant and use the diagram of the Chartres labyrinth following carefully where paths must be cut and connected. Cut the paths and use extra tape or rope to form the ends and the paths. Secure with tape. Continue to work from one quadrant to the next until all the paths are formed. Be sure to walk the complete labyrinth to check out the path in case there is a problem, before use by the participants.
* The labyrinth may be decorated with flowers and candles in the centre and around the perimeter. You can also mark the entrance with symbols, a carpet or a cloth to designate the entrance to the sacred.