

“Lord, would you please give us directions.” Jesus responds, “I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.” This reminds me of a piece of Medieval Catholic spirituality called the labyrinth. A labyrinth isn’t a maze made out of hedges, but rather a twisty path that eventually leads you to the center of the labyrinth representing our journey to Christ. Although modern culture will tell you that the quickest path from point A to point B is a straight line, the soul knows better. The quickest route to Christ isn’t a straight line. As people make their pilgrimage into the labyrinth, it happens sometimes that a person can find themselves at a bend or a curve and then begin to weep recognizing that the labyrinth represents their life’s story. A journey to know Jesus or ourselves is not a straight line. We know that life is a labyrinth with twists and turns. Like the Hebrews in the desert, it took them 40 years with lots of detours, so too the spiritual life. How can we know our way to the Father’s house? The answer: a relationship with Jesus. Can you imagine life without Jesus? If we don’t believe in Jesus, we can only conclude that our lives come from nothing and will go back to nothing. And if that’s the case, it doesn’t matter which path you choose in life because all you have to look forward to is six feet under and the pains and losses that lead up to that end.

We’re blessed with the knowledge that our lives don’t end in emptiness but rather, through Jesus, we can live eternally with God. As we journey through the labyrinth of life, the knowledge that Jesus has an eternal home in mind for us can have a real impact on our choices here and now, how we conduct ourselves, and how we treat the people in our lives. A fundamental feature of a maze is that we ultimately have to decide, do I go right or do I go left? Life is like that, isn’t it? Every day we make our list of choices of what we’re going to do. There’s also a number of gigantic moments in life when choices are made that dramatically affect the rest of our lives. It’s amazing the choices young people are faced with as they approach graduation- which College should I attend or which job should I train for? It’s amazing to reflect on the power of the choices we make during life. However, the medieval labyrinth is different than a maze in that, although there are twists and turns that reflect life’s choices, in a labyrinth there are only two directions- forward to Christ or backwards away from Christ. What this means is that the questions we find ourselves asking, like what am I going to do today, this year, for the rest of my life aren’t always the best questions. The better questions are, where is Jesus sending me, leading me? These are better questions because Jesus is the way, not me. Jesus has the power to save. I don’t. My life choices should lead me to Jesus and not away from Him. When I encounter a twist or turn in the labyrinth of my life, the best question is not “what do I want to do”. The better question, “which choice leads me closer to Jesus”?

What’s our relationship with Jesus like right now? St. Augustine argued that Jesus is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Jesus is never distant! If we’re feeling distant in our relationship with Jesus, it’s because we’ve wandered backwards instead of forwards, distracted by worldly pursuits that in time turn to dust. The invitation is to set our compass on Jesus because with Jesus our lives don’t end in emptiness. Our life journey has a destination and our Father’s house has many dwelling places and we will get there if we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.