

## **Labyrinth Symbols**

### **The Cruciform and Labrys**

The labyrinth is divided equally into four quadrants that make an equal-armed cross or cruciform. The four arms represent in symbol what is thought to be the essential structure of the universe for example, the four spatial directions, the four elements (earth, wind, water and fire), the four seasons and, most important, salvation through the cross. The four arms of the cross emerging from the center seem to give order to the would-be chaos of the meandering path around it.

The Chartres labyrinth cross or cruciform is delineated by the 10 labrys (labyr means to turn and this is the root of the word labyrinth). The labrys are double-ax shaped and visible at the turns and between turns. They are traditionally seen as a symbol of women's power and creativity.

### **The Centre Rosette**

In the Middle Ages, the rose was regarded as a symbol for the Virgin Mary. Because of its association with the myths of Percival and the Holy Grail at that time, it also was seen as a sign of beauty and love. The rose becomes symbolic of both human and divine love, of passionate love, but also love beyond passion. The single rose became a symbol of a simple acceptance of God's love for the world. Unlike a normal rose (which has five petals) the rosette has six petals and is steeped in mysticism. Although associated with the Rose of Sharon, which refers to Mary, it may also represent the Holy Spirit (wisdom and enlightenment). The six petals may have corresponded to the story of the six days of creation. In other mystical traditions, the petals can be viewed as the levels of evolution (mineral, plant, animal, humankind, angelic and divine)

### **The Lunations**

The lunations are the outer ring of partial circles that complete the outside circle of the labyrinth. They are unique to the Chartres design.

### **Celtic Symbols on the St. Hilda's Labyrinth**

The Celtic peoples have given us seven enduring spiritual principles:

- 1) A deep respect of nature, regarding creation as the fifth Gospel.
- 2) Quiet care for all living things.
- 3) The love of learning.
- 4) A wander-lust or migratory nature.
- 5) Love of silence and solitude.
- 6) Understanding of time as a sacred reality and an appreciation of ordinary life, worshipping God through everyday life, and with great joy.
- 7) The value of family and clan affiliation, and especially spiritual ties of soul friends.

To show our respect for such wisdom, two Celtic designs adorn the St. Hilda's labyrinth.

To mark the entrance to the labyrinth is a Celtic zoomorphic design painted in red. Traditionally, Celtic monks used intricate knotwork and zoomorphic designs (odd animals intertwined in uncomfortable ways) as mere filler for their illuminated gospel texts. They had no discernible meaning. However, because of their unique design components, zoomorphs are now associated with transformations.

Transformation, change, action, and passion are also associated with red, the colour of fire. Therefore, this entrance symbol may well be an appropriate sign for the journey ahead.

At the labyrinth's centre is a Celtic triquetra. This interlocked knotwork design of three stylized fish (whales) is often interpreted as the Trinity knot. It is a perfect representation of the concept of "three in one" in Christian trinity beliefs. Having the design enclosed within the centre circle further emphasizes the unity theme.

The triquetra can also be considered to represent the triplicities of mind, body, and soul, as well as the three domains of earth- earth, sea, and sky.