



Paths taken, paths untaken

'To stand enquiring is not to stray' (John Donne)

To tread the landscape of the spirit, we discover, is no simple pilgrim's progress, but is to enter a labyrinth, and it is not unusual for things to go wrong. (Mark Barrett)



Mike Enerio,
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Midway this way of life we're bound upon
I woke to find myself in a dark wood
Where the right road was wholly lost and gone.
The Divine Comedy, Dante

I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. *John 14:6*

Questions for reflection:

- Where is my path taking me?
- How do I view where I am?
- Am I moving? Am I being drawn?
- Beyond a beginning and an end, what?
- What benefits have I found for my soul in simply walking?

Reading material:

Crossing: Reclaiming the landscape of our lives by Mark Barrett. Pages 50-59's 'to learn the hard way', pages 66's 'the action of God in moments of crisis'-70

Waterfall, Mary Oliver poem

Labyrinths, Gernot Candolini

Into the labyrinth

A young Benedictine monk at Worth Abbey, Mark Barrett reflects on religious writings' notion of constantly moving towards a clear and single goal. He offers alternative imagery for our journey, being 'more feminine than masculine, more circular than linear, more organic than mechanistic...experiences repeat, paths interweave, there are interruptions as patterns form and shift.' He draws on words such 'oases', 'stop signs', 'diversions', 'circling', 'reversing' to characterise much of our real experience of life and faith. He notes that the monastic office for the middle of the day asks us to simply 'Stop!'. Before things become so busy we are invited 'to pause, to consider where we are and what we are doing'. Monastic life, is in fact, full of stop signs. Maybe this is something to heed and similar Stop practices adopted?

Maybe we each come to a point where what we had hoped for is 'found empty' or even gained but we are left with a haunting 'watch next?' or 'what else?' question. Benedictine spirituality in particular directs us to go down and deeper into silence and to revisit paths not taken, life choices but also elements of our make up that have eluded our gaze. What do they say to us, about us?

The Coracle Trust - Helping transition in faith through the life stages

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