



Reflection for November 30, 2014  
First Sunday of Advent  
By Claudia Ward, CDP

Once again, we come to the season of Advent. The opening prayer for this Sunday's liturgy finds us asking God to "Grant us the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ." Depending on our energy level, this petition may be stronger or less enthusiastic. It brought to my mind that a steady walking pace would, hopefully, get me to the same place. Initially, I thought of a straightforward route, but then I considered how a more

measured walk, as around and around a labyrinth, might be even better. Unlike a maze, which is designed for you to lose your way, a labyrinth is designed for you to find your way. It is a path of prayer, a walking meditation that can become a mirror of the soul." (Jill K.H. Geoffrion, *Praying the Labyrinth*). Perhaps you have had the opportunity of walking and praying the labyrinth at Kearns Spirituality Center. Labyrinths are as varied as the people who create them. Some are made of bricks, others are pathways bordered by stones; still, others are mown into grassy fields. How they are made is of little significance. It is the journey through the labyrinth that makes the difference.

As we pray with the scriptures of this First Sunday of Advent, let us imagine ourselves slowly walking around, in and out, and back and forth toward the ultimate center of the labyrinth. Since our Advent goal is to meet our God, who comes in Jesus at Christmas and finally at the end of time, the important thing for us is to *keep on keeping on*. We hear the Prophet Isaiah asking God, "Why do you let us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?" Isaiah hopes further that God "might meet us doing right." And don't we all hope for that? We know with the prophet that "we are the clay and God is the potter; we are the work of God's hands." Reflecting on these realities as we walk the labyrinth, literally or figuratively, can help us keep the goal of our life's journey before our eyes.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, encourages us this day, telling us, "You are not lacking any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ." Despite the fact that we often feel inadequate or unfaithful, we have been given all that we need. Being strengthened through this belief, we can more readily take to heart the words of Jesus in Mark's Gospel to "Be watchful! Be alert!" We should take these words to heart, not just in fear that we must be ready when our time to die is at hand but, more importantly, that we watch and keep alert to all the comings of God into our lives. We know these can occur at any moment as we walk the labyrinth of our lives, from circle to circle, at times moving onto another path, but always headed for the center, where we will meet our God in the deepest center—that of our own heart. It is then that we can echo the psalmist's words, "Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved." With this hope, let us walk on during this Advent season attentive to all the stirrings of our Provident God.