

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

## *Pilgrimage—The Sacred Art: Journey to the Center of the Heart*

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### **Chapter 1: Pilgrimage—The Sacred Art**

Reflect on your own experience of pilgrimage. When have you experienced being a pilgrim? What motivated you to go on the journey? What did you discover? If you are getting ready to go on pilgrimage now, what are you seeking?

What images or words come to mind when you hear the word *pilgrimage*? What pilgrimage traditions most resonate with or challenge your own heritage or experience?

Reflect on the phrase *pilgrimage of life*. Some pilgrimages do not require physical travel. Have you ever taken such a journey? How does the phrase relate to your own experience?

### **Chapter 2: Journey to the Center of the Heart**

Search the Internet for as many images of the heart as you can find until you find one (or more) which truly resonate with your own heart. In your own words, how would you describe your own journey to the center of the heart? Refer to your chosen image if it helps you articulate how you envision your own heart.

Listen to your heartbeat. Where does the experience lead you in the present moment?

What is your heart's desire? Your deepest yearning? Your most profound aspiration? As the poet Mary Oliver asks, "What are you doing with your one wild and precious life?"

### **Chapter 3: Holy Places, Sacred Spaces**

Set aside a table, mantelpiece, or windowsill in your home, office, or some other significant place and begin to assemble a personal "altar." Bring together your "sacred objects" to display in this holy place. For some people, these sacred objects may be intentionally religious or spiritual in nature. For others, the sacred objects may be from the natural world—stones, water, earth. Still others might want to include photographs or other visual images. What makes these objects and this space holy or sacred for you?

Reflect on your own sacred geography. What are the holy places and sacred spaces in your own spiritual landscape? What do they look like? Why are they holy or sacred?

How do you honor your body? If the body is a sacred space, what practices shape this understanding for you?

### **Chapter 4: Walking the Labyrinth**

Take a walk and try to identify the spiral "circuit" pattern found in a labyrinth in your surroundings. Where are the patterns visible in your natural world?

Draw an image of your own spiritual journey, marking significant people, places, and events along the way, and projecting into the future. Where are spirals and other significant patterns in

this experience? If reflecting within a group, share your images with one another. Sometimes others are more adept at discerning patterns in our experience than we are at noticing them.

Locate and walk a labyrinth in your own community. How did you experience it? What is the relationship for you between walking a labyrinth and pilgrimage?

### **Chapter 5: The Journey Home**

Where is “home” for you? What or where is that place where you feel you truly belong?

Sharon Daloz Parks writes about the need for all who contribute to the common good to have *threshold people* and *hospitable places*. Who are the threshold people in your own life? Where and what are the hospitable places?

How do you practice home-making? How do you contribute to shaping the common good in the environments you inhabit (household, workplace, communities, planet)?

### **Chapter 6: Preparing to Practice**

What is your spiritual practice? What are the joys and challenges of the practice for you?

Reflect on the list of spiritual practice in Chapter 6. Are there any practices there, or elsewhere in your experience, which you feel might contribute to your spiritual growth?

As you reflect on the pilgrimage of life, where do you see yourself now? How might you live more joyfully in the present moment?