

Bless Each Step



"Bless each step I take this year ..." The mantra forms of its own accord as my best friend and I begin to walk the winding circular path this bright cold December 31st.

"Bless each step I take this year ..." Overnight ice crystals sparkle and dance in the Chartres-style labyrinth, gems adorning rocks and grass and the beautifully maintained surroundings. Where the sun's early rays linger, ice transforms to dew.

"Bless each step I take this year ..." My thoughts fill with family, all dead now, and flowing tears splash the ground. There they mix with the ice and dew, becoming one. I grieve bitterly for my husband – so young! – and mom, both taken in the same month last year. I yearn for my beloved dad, departed exactly three years before them. Stepdad, cousin, aunts, and in-laws: all transitioned in such a very short time, almost too much to bear. Precious pets rise into the memories, loved a long lifetime ago. One foot follows the other as I silently pour out my loneliness and pain.

"Bless each step ..." A shadow crosses my path, drawing attention outward again. It's the dear Seeker who brought me here today. She has problems of her own, responsibilities and duties, family and job. I bless her with my whole heart, for she is an Angel on Earth to me.

"Bless each step ..." Into my darkness, gratitude begins to glimmer, hints of frosty light. Thanks for the man who built this private labyrinth and offers it freely for anyone's use. Thanks for sunshine softening the cold, for this fortuitous break in the rain. Thanks for the opportunity and encouragement to travel here today, at an hour when I'm usually still in bed.

"Bless ..." Enormous thanks for dear Earth-Angel, heart-friend who has held me together in this unwanted widow/orphan life all these difficult months. Thanks for her gently cradling my broken heart a million times. Thanks for the healthy food she provides, for including me as part of her family, for letting me love her animals as my own. Thanks for her sturdy support as I slowly begin the challenging process to let go of the past, for her sure knowledge and certainty that I will survive all these many deaths, that eventually I will heal and grow.

"Bless ..." As I leave the circle's center, I am a little bit glad to be alive today, feeling grateful for all the time my loved ones and I shared. I deeply value the beautiful home my husband so proudly built in our little woods by the sea. I appreciate the small village it lays near, where people care about each other. I realize that I have received uncounted blessings and am loved still.

The walk ends, and we return to the world. I am exhausted and drained, yet a tiny bit lighter. I walk forward towards the new year.

Postscript: Looking back a year later, I am convinced that each step was guided. I am blessed that *Source* continues to guide my steps today.



The author, Paulianne Balch-Rancourt, lives on the southern Oregon coast. In 2005 a friend invited her to walk the private labyrinth above. The following year she heard a Chautauqua talk about labyrinths given by Nancy Appling at Langlois Public Library. The information table held a flyer for the Northwest Regional Labyrinth Gathering to be held in Medford. Paulianne attended that event in May 2007 and enjoyed the experience of walking many different kinds of labyrinths. Later that year she joined LNN and in April 2008 took Robert Ferre's training. Her involvement in the labyrinth community continues to evolve as she explores both historical and spiritual dimensions of the ancient design.