

## Stone Soup, a Folk Tale

*Point out that a "pilgrim" is a traveler on a special journey to a holy place. After telling this story, talk about why we should help others.*

Once upon a time in a tiny village in a faraway land something very special happened.

The people in this village heard that a large group of pilgrims were going to be passing through their town, and this news frightened them. They wondered if the pilgrims would hurt them or steal from them. So, they hid all their things of value and put away their food and settled back to wait for the pilgrims to come.

Much to the surprise of the village people, when the pilgrims arrived, there were only a few of them, and they looked very friendly. But still the people were afraid, and decided to be very careful. Whenever a pilgrim smiled or said hello, the village people just turned the other way.

One of the pilgrims who was thirsty asked for a drink of water. The mayor of the town, however, refused to give her anything to drink. He was afraid of the pilgrims.

The pilgrims were puzzled by how the people were acting. They had not come to harm anyone. They were just on a long journey to a holy place. They did not understand why the people were being so unfriendly. One of the pilgrims had an idea. He said, "Let's make our special stone soup."

The rest of the pilgrims agreed. Each pilgrim had a job to do. One gathered wood, another built a fire, and another set up a cooking pot over the fire.

The village people gathered around, wondering what the pilgrims were going to do. One woman standing nearby got brave enough to ask, "What are you doing to make in that pot?"

"Oh," replied one pilgrim, "we are going to make stone soup, but we will need some water."

"Well, I guess I can spare some water if that is all you want," the lady replied, and she filled the pot half full of water.

"Now," said another, "we must put in the stones."

"Stones?" gasped one man who was watching.

"Yes, stones," replied the pilgrim. "We will need all kinds of stones." And with that, the pilgrims began picking up stones—large ones and small ones, rough ones and smooth ones—and they dropped them into the pot, one by one. As they dropped them into the pot, they could be heard to say, "This one is for flavor, and this one will make the soup smell good..."

By now the people of the town were crowded around and were murmuring among themselves, fascinated with what the pilgrims were doing. One of the pilgrims said, "Too bad we don't have any carrots. Carrots would really help make the soup nice and tasty."

"I have some carrots," one woman offered, and she hurried off to get them. Soon, she was back and she dropped into the pot a lot of carrots.

"Could you use some potatoes?" asked another woman.

"And, could you use some onions? I have some onions to spare," said an old man.

The pilgrims said, "Oh, yes, thank you. That would be very nice." The pilgrims soon had piles of vegetables to add to the soup.

One of the pilgrims stepped up to the pot, stirred the soup, and said with a sad look on her face, "Too bad we don't have a few spices and a piece of meat. That would really make the soup taste better."

Again, the people hurried to their homes and soon returned with pieces of meat and jars of spices.

As soon as the soup was ready, one of the pilgrims invited all the people of the town to bring their bowls and join in eating the stone soup. When the people returned with their bowls, one of them had brought cheese to share, and others had brought bread. They all sat around and ate, and as they talked to the pilgrims, they became friends. They all laughed and talked and even sang and danced together. They had such a good time together that the people of the village hated to say good-bye to the pilgrims.

The people always remembered the hot, steaming, delicious stone soup.