

THE STONE SOUP
(By Anthony de Mello)

Once upon a time a stranger rode his tired horse down a country road on his way home from a long journey. It was late afternoon and the man was tired and hungry. Ahead he saw a small village and he thought to himself, "I'll get something to eat there and find a place for the night."

Suddenly the horse tripped, throwing the stranger to the ground. As he brushed himself off, he saw that the horse had stumbled over a rock sticking out of the ground in the middle of the road. He walked over to it and dug it out of the earth so that it wouldn't trip anyone else.

It was a splendid rock, almost perfectly round and smooth. The stranger liked the rock, so, rather than throw it away, he put it in his saddle bag, climbed back on his horse, and continued into the village.

As he rode past the first houses in the village people stopped to stare. He waved to several of them, but no one waved back. He got off his horse and approached a woman standing in front of a small house. "Good evening", he said cheerfully, "could you spare a bit of food for a hungry man?" The woman began shaking her head almost before he finished the sentence. "We have had a poor harvest here and are very worried that there is barely enough food for our family. I am sorry". And she walked into her house and shut the door.

The man continued to the next house where a man was working on his wagon. "Do you have a place at your table for a hungry traveller?" he asked.

"It didn't rain during the last month before harvest," the farmer said. "What little we have is needed for our children."

At every home the stranger heard the same story; the harvest had been poor, there was not enough food to make it through the winter. Everyone was very worried about themselves and their immediate family.

Completely discouraged and very hungry the man sat down under a tree in the village square. "Poor people" he thought, "in a few weeks time they will be as hungry as I am."

Suddenly an idea hit him. He reached into his saddle bag, took out the stone and addressed the villagers. "Gentle folk of the village" he shouted, "your worries are over. I have in my hand a special stone that will help take you through the long winter. This is a magic stone. With it you can make stone soup."

"Stone soup?" an old man repeated, "I have never heard of stone soup."

"The wonder of stone soup," the stranger continued, "is that it not only feeds hungry people, it also brings people together. Now who has a large empty pot?"

Quickly a huge iron pot was found, and delivered to the stranger in a wheelbarrow.

"Now we must fill the pot with water and start a fire," the stranger said.

Eager hands carried buckets of water and firewood and soon the pot was placed over a roaring fire. As the water began to boil the stranger dramatically raised the magic stone above his head, and then gently placed it in the pot.

"Stone soup needs salt and pepper," he announced.

Two children ran to find salt and pepper. After the water had boiled for a few minutes the stranger sipped the brew. "This stone makes excellent soup, but it would be even better if we had a few carrots."

"We have a few carrots that we're willing to share," a farmer replied. Immediately his daughter ran home and returned with an apron full of carrots.

"It is too bad that the harvest was so bad," said the stranger. "Stone soup is always much more tasty when we add a cabbage or two."

"I think I know where to find a cabbage," a young mother shouted as she dashed towards her home. When she returned she was carrying three large cabbages.

The stranger was busy slicing carrots and cabbages with his hunting knife. "The last time I made stone soup was at the castle of a rich man. He added a few potatoes and a bit of beef."

Several people talked quietly, "A bit of beef and we can eat like rich people," they whispered. They went home and returned not only with beef and potatoes, but some brought onions and barley too.

By the time the soup was ready it was almost dark. It was the most delicious soup that they had ever smelled and to think, it all came from a magic stone. The stranger finally declared that it was ready and invited everyone to have as much as they could eat.

After everyone had eaten their fill, some folk brought out their fiddles. Everyone began to sing and dance - and they continued till the wee hours of the morning. Never had the people of the village had such a wonderful party.

The next morning the whole village gathered to say goodbye to the stranger. As he mounted his horse a small child called out, "You forgot to take your magic stone!"

The stranger smiled. "I am going to leave the stone with you as a gift of gratitude for your hospitality," he said. "Remember, as long as you make stone soup, you will never have to worry about being hungry."

Inspired in this story we would like to offer a bowl of hot soup to those in need, every Friday from November 2011 to April 2012.

For this project we will need your help by:

- Donations, please give your donation to the Centre explaining it is for the food for the poor
- Helping us to buy the ingredients.
- Making your Church or group responsible for one week or more.
- By helping us in the cooking , serving etc

We are looking for

2 people for Cooking;

4 people for Serving;

4 people for the washing up and tidying the room (may be the same people who help to serve) and

2 Men to help us to keep the order

These are the days we are planning to serve the soup

		Name and telephone number
4 th November	Buying Ingredients	
	Group/Church responsible	
	Cooking	1.
		2.
	Serving	1.
		2.
		3.
		4.
	Washing up	1.
		2.
	Tidying the room	1.
		2.
	Men to keep the order	1
		2.

November 11th

November 18th

November 25th

December 2nd

December 9th

December 16th

December 23rd

December 30th

January 6th

January 13th

January 20th

January 27th

February 3rd

February 10th

February 17th

February 24th

March 2nd

March 9th

March 16th

March 23rd

March 30th

April 6th Good Friday so the food will be distributed on April 7th

April 13th

April 20th

April 27th

We will appreciate if you can contact us by email misionerasescumenicas@lux-mundi.org to know how would you like to contribute and what date or dates are you, your church, or your group able to help us in this project