



Rock Walk

In this activity, you will take a walk/hike/roll/ride/drive together with friends or family or friends who are like family, paying special attention to certain parts of nature that are often overlooked (dirt, rocks, and soil), but which play prominent roles in the stories of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.

Sacred Story Background

Read this background information aloud together. The time of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter is full of stories about dirt, rocks, and soil, but we tend to skip right over those details in the same way that we so often skip right over them in our day-to-day lives. We encounter these parts of nature over and over again every single day, but we hardly ever stop to notice!

In Genesis 2, God creates all of humanity out of nothing more than dust and breath. On Ash Wednesday, we hear the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

In Matthew 4, Jesus spends 40 days in a row alone in the wilderness. He's surrounded by all different kinds of dirt and soil and rocks. He must have been so dirty and dusty by the end of it all. He was tempted by all kinds of things, even the possibility of turning rocks into bread because he was so hungry.

Likewise, on his way into Jerusalem in the story of Palm Sunday (Luke 19), some people ask him to stop the crowd from being so noisy. They won't stop shouting, "Hosanna!" But he tells them that if the crowd was silent, then even the stones would cry out.

In the resurrection stories of Easter morning (Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20), the stone has been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb. The simple position of that simple stone told a marvelous story! How easy it can be for us to miss the stories these simple things tell us.

Finally, in the first chapter of Genesis, God creates every bit of the world around us, including dirt, rocks, and soil, and God calls them "good." Knowing and remembering these things can help us to read these sacred stories with fresh eyes and invites us to see God's good world around us with fresh eyes, too.

With all this in mind, it's time to head outside!

Follow These Steps

1. Invite people to join you for your excursion. Once you know who's coming, think about what kind of trip makes the most sense—a hike? A bike ride? A car ride? Consider what accommodations might be needed. If you go for a walk or hike, is steep rocky terrain appropriate? Or is a smoother path needed for someone who uses a wheelchair, walker, or stroller?
2. Once you understand the transportation needs of the people who will join you, think of a place where you can walk, hike, roll, ride, or drive and encounter a lot of nature.
3. Pack any snacks, water, sunscreen, bug spray, etc. that you'll need for your time outside. Consider bringing a phone or camera to take pictures of things you see, especially for comparison purposes.
4. Pack "tools for investigation" that might help you to take a closer look at the rocks and soil in the places where you visit. These might include a magnifying glass, a water bottle or spray bottle, a small shovel or rake, and garden gloves.
5. Once you're on your trip, make stops along the way where you can look at all different kinds of dirt, rocks, and soil.
6. Consider the questions below for conversation.

Questions for Conversation

- In your day-to-day routine, when you notice things in nature, are those things usually dirt, rocks, and soil? If so, what helps you to notice these things? If you're more likely to notice other things in nature, which things are they? And why is this?
- When you stop in certain places, do all the rocks in that place look and feel the same? Or are there many different kinds? Does all the soil look and feel the same? If not, why do you think this is? Is it different when it's wet versus dry? Out in the open versus under a grove of trees?
- What does the soil smell like? Does it smell differently depending on whether it's wet or dry? What about the rocks?
- What do these places sound like? Be very still and notice any sounds. If you're able, get on your hands and knees with your ear right next to the earth. What do you hear?
- You're moving with a sense of purpose today (you have a starting time, a plan, a direction, etc.). Jesus was in the desert for 40 days. Can you imagine being on your Rock Walk for 40 days? What would the first few days be like? How would they be different from the last few?
- In the beginning (in the book of Genesis), God creates every single thing and calls it "good." Find at least 10 different parts of nature in the place where you are. Do you consider them all "good?" Why or why not? How does it feel to notice every single different thing and name it as good?
- Give the dirt and rocks some compliments! List every good thing you can about each of them, as if you're marveling at their very existence.

- Find a bunch of stones all in one place. Are there some that look more likely to cry out than others? What do you think they would sound like if they did?
- Find a bunch of stones in another place. Do any of them look like bread? Think of all different kinds of bread—sandwich bread, tortillas, naan, baguettes, etc. Perhaps you have a whole stone bakery in front of you!
- Decide before one of your stops that everyone will pay attention to the first thing they notice. When you arrive there, take a minute to do this, and then have everyone share what it is they noticed first and why.
- Find a place that has both soil and sand. How are they different? How are they similar? Which would've been more like the type of sand in the desert where Jesus was?
- Have you ever been away from home for 40 days, all in a row? If so, what was it like?
- Have you ever been homesick? If so, where were you? What was it like?
- Keep your eyes out for a place along your excursion that resembles a tomb, or a rock big enough to have covered the opening to Jesus' tomb. Imagine what kinds of things this rock has seen, and what kinds of stories it has to tell.