

## Walk to Jerusalem by Easter Program

The Walk to Jerusalem is an imaginary walk that encourages walkers to increase physical activity, spiritual growth, and cultural awareness through a virtual tour to Jerusalem. The Walk to Jerusalem was initially launched in January 2002. The Walk to Bethlehem followed in September 2002. Since those first walks, churches and organizations throughout the US and Canada have embraced this program. It has crossed the lifespan and crossed all of earth's oceans. All of this has been done with the intent of increasing the health of body, mind and spirit. Many walkers have commented about how they have successfully increased their physical activity through this program because it is goal oriented and encourages team spirit and accountability. Others have commented about their increased knowledge and understanding of countries and cultures. Finally, the walkers have enjoyed the focus on prayer and spiritual growth through the devotions. Many walkers have found that their prayer time has increased and become more meaningful while walking.

Walking was first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 3:8, "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day." It was while walking in the garden that God typically spoke to Adam and Eve. How meaningful for us to walk through our neighborhoods, through our parks and through our communities while talking to our Creator, the One who knows us best!

Walking is mentioned 247 times in the Bible. Our bodies were made for walking. We were built to stand erect. Our organs function best when given room to work. Our joints need movement to maintain good range of motion. None of this can be accomplished by sitting in a chair or lying on a couch. The benefits of walking are numerous. In a report from the US Surgeon General, "significant benefits can be obtained by including a moderate amount of physical activity (30 minutes of brisk walking or raking leaves, 15 minutes of running or 45 minutes of playing volleyball) on most days of the week. "The benefits of walking are compelling. Regular walking can prevent depression, lengthen lifespan, lower stress levels, relieve arthritis and back pain, strengthen muscles, bones and joints, improve sleep." ([aarp.org/health/fitness/walking](http://aarp.org/health/fitness/walking))

With all of these benefits, why wouldn't we want to walk? The 21st century time crunch and the multitask generation is the problem. By using the popular idea of multitasking, these walks provide an opportunity for walkers to exercise the physical body by walking, exercise the spiritual body by praying and exercise the mind by learning about countries and cultures.

We will be doing this virtual tour with the Catholic parishes of Stillwater beginning February 7 and arriving in Jerusalem on Easter—all 7509 miles! Participant commitment forms are available after Masses. Each committed participant, both youth and adults, will receive a walking log. Miles are kept on the "honor system" and submitted weekly at the Masses or online at the church website by email. There will be a drawing for weekly prizes for those who participate. Participants who complete the walk will receive a lapel pin and be eligible for grand prize drawings.

The quickest, most direct route extends through the Northern coastal areas of Africa (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt) and will be the route that we are taking. This can be a learning opportunity in itself and it will increase awareness of trouble spots in the world and offer opportunities to pray for missionaries and oppressed people of these areas.

We will have posted in each parish a world map tracking our progress to Jerusalem. Walkers take responsibility for logging in your own miles each week in the walking log, “Passport to Good Health,” given to participants at commitment sign up. It is the goal that most participants will average 10 or more miles a week. Participants may use the Meditation and Reflection questions during their walking time distributed during commitment. Families may want to walk together to share this commitment to health and holiness.

For more information contact Marily Seiler, [mjsjuly@yahoo.com](mailto:mjsjuly@yahoo.com).

