

Educating for *Laudato Si'*
Experiential Learning Session: Canning and Food Processing

FSE themes: Sacramental Ecology

***Laudato Si'* Action Plan Goals:** Response to the Cry of the Earth, Response to the Cry of the Poor

Group (Grade Levels): Children ages 8 and above, youth and teens, and adults of all ages

Learning Goals:

- Recognize the timing, seasonality and readiness of the fruits of the earth.
- Learn how to preserve foods through the creative process of canning and food processing.
- Become aware of food wastefulness in our throwaway culture and the redemptive aspects of canning and food processing.

Materials needed: Space to prepare and process food, fruits and vegetables, canning ingredients (sugar, vinegar, salt, herbs, spices, pectin, etc.), kitchen tools (knives, vegetable peelers, chopping boards, potato masher, wooden and/or metal spoons, bowls, compost bins/buckets, freezer bags, canning jars and lids, canner, jar holder, clean cloths), aprons, first aid kit.

Estimated Time to Complete Activity: 3-4 hours

Estimated Number of Sessions if Activity Continues: as desired

Pre-planning: Plan what needs to be canned or processed and check for recipes and/or instructions on how to properly can/preserve the produce, taking into account one's geographic location and elevation.

General Outline of Experience

1. Gathering and prayer
 - a. Opening Prayer: Cantic of the Sun
 - b. Scripture passage and suggested introductory questions
 - i. Mark 6: 34-44 (The Feeding of the Five Thousand): "When he disembarked and saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. By now it was already late and his disciples approached him and said, "This is a deserted place and it is already very late. Dismiss them so that they can go to the surrounding farms and villages and buy themselves something to eat." He said to them in reply, "Give them some food yourselves." But they said to him, "Are we to buy two hundred days' wages worth of food and give it to them to eat?" He asked them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out they said, "Five loaves and two fish." So he gave orders to have them sit down in groups on the green grass. The people took their places in rows by hundreds and by fifties. Then, taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to [his] disciples to

set before the people; he also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied. And they picked up twelve wicker baskets full of fragments and what was left of the fish. Those who ate [of the loaves] were five thousand men.

1. Why do you think Jesus asked the apostles to collect the leftover fragments?
2. What do you imagine Jesus and his apostles did with the baskets of leftover food?
3. What do these two Gospel accounts teach us about Jesus?
 - a. How great is his abundant love for us.
 - b. He provides for us, leaving us wanting for nothing.
 - c. He does not waste anything, and neither should we concerning the gifts of creation (e.g., food), and the gifts of ourselves to others.
- ii. *Laudato Si'* quote and suggested introductory question, n. 50: "Besides we know that approximately a third of all food produced is discarded, and 'whenever food is thrown out it is as if it were stolen from the table of the poor.'"
 1. Hearing the words of Pope Francis, what do you think about the distribution of food in our world?

2. Opening Activity

- a. Distribute a small sample of a processed fruit or vegetable to each participant to eat (i.e., peaches that have been canned, apples that have been sauced, jams or jellies, etc.).
- b. Show a bushel or basket of the produce sampled by the participants that is bruised or imperfect, and explain that what they are eating used to look like this. Ask why these delicious and edible products are considered unacceptable. What does that say about our culture?
- c. Pose the question: How do these imperfect fruits and vegetables become beautiful jars of produce or jam that we can eat throughout the year? What does this teach us about ourselves and our lives?
- d. Lead up to key point:
 - i. Introduction to the redemptive aspects of canning and food processing through the creative process.
 - ii. Many producers discard produce because it has been bruised or looks imperfect.
 - iii. By canning and processing damaged fruits and vegetables, we are participating in a redemptive process, saving and transforming food that could have been thrown away into food that feeds and nourishes us and others.
 - iv. Analogous to what Jesus does for us: He redeems and transforms our sinfulness (our bruised and damaged hearts) by his suffering and death on the cross as one of us, thereby giving us new life.

3. Orientation to Activity

- a. Orientation to tools/elemental techniques
 - i. Name and explain the tools and ingredients used in canning and food processing.
 - ii. Explain how to properly can and preserve fruits and vegetables.

- iii. Show how to use the tools properly and safely.
 - iv. Show how to save as much of the fruits and vegetables as possible when peeling and chopping and to save the food scraps in a separate bin for composting.
- 4. Performance of the Activity
 - a. Set up work stations for the participants with the tools and ingredients needed (e.g., washing station, peeling station, chopping station, cooking station, etc.)
 - b. Depending upon the amount of produce to be canned or processed and the number of participants, the facilitator can rotate the participants through the different stations, especially with cutting fruits and vegetables and working on and around the stove.
- 5. Integration of the Experience: Discuss the experience while tasting the fruits of the process.
 - a. Proposed discussion questions:
 - i. What did you think of the activity? Favorite part? Least favorite part?
 - ii. How did your experience today change the way you look at food?
 - b. How does food processing parallel with other processes in our environment?
 - i. Reflecting on the Gospel passages about Jesus feeding the crowds and Pope Francis' quote in *Laudato Si*, how did your experience today change the way you look at yourselves and others with regards to God's love for us?
 - c. Potential analogies:
 - i. Ask the participants to think about what parts of themselves may be "bruised or damaged" like the fruits and vegetables they worked with today.
 - 1. What parts of ourselves can be saved and transformed into something that gives life to us and others?
- 6. Auxiliary Activities/Discussion
 - a. Before beginning the canning, consider introducing the process as a four-step creative process:
 - i. Explain that as we participate in redemption we do so in a *creative process*, one that brings new life.
 - 1. Describe the four stages in relation to the life cycle of a seed:
 - a. Preparation (preparing the soil, planting the seed)
 - b. Incubation (watering the seed, waiting for it to sprout)
 - c. Illumination (watching the sprout emerging from the soil)
 - d. Verification (harvesting the fruits of your labor)
 - ii. Describe creative process in terms of canning and food processing
 - 1. Preparation:
 - a. Boiling water in the canner
 - b. Washing and chopping the produce (cutting off bruised and rotten parts for composting)
 - c. Washing and sterilizing jars and lids
 - d. (If freezing, getting the bags and containers ready)
 - 2. Incubation:
 - a. Cooking the produce (if necessary)

- b. Cooking the pickling liquid or sugar syrup (if necessary)
 - c. Putting the jars in the canner and boiling for the prescribed time
 - 3. Illumination:
 - a. Waiting and listening for the clicking of the lids (a sign of a proper seal)
 - 4. Verification:
 - a. Tasting the fruits of our labor
 - b. Integrate the following questions after the canning experience:
 - i. Can you identify the four stages of the creative process in what we did today?
 - ii. What experiences in our lives are like preparation? Like incubation? Like illumination? Like verification? How does God speak to us in each step?
- 7. Cross-references to related experiential activities:
 - a. Use canned/preserved foods in the Experiential Learning Session: Cooking Together.
 - b. Use the peels, cores and bruised/damaged parts of the fruits and vegetables in the Experiential Learning Session: Composting.