

Educating for *Laudato Si'*
Experiential Learning Session: Cooking Together

FSE themes: Relationship

***Laudato Si'* Action Plan Goals:** Ecological Spirituality and Community Engagement

Group: older children (8-12) to adults

Learning Goals:

- Experience and discuss reverence for matter and people through food preparation, and how cooking together can become a way of building relationships.
- Work together to practice reverence and nourish one another in relationship.

Materials needed: space to prepare food and cook, cooking tools, ingredients depending on menu, aprons; space to eat and materials to set the table; first aid kit in case of cuts

General Outline of Experience

1. Gathering and prayer
 - a. John 21: 1-14: Jesus cooks breakfast for his disciples after the Resurrection
 - i. Discuss the story with the children, elicit their thoughts and experiences about food, being fed, feeding others. Guide students to reflect on love and care being shown to others through cooking and the call to handle food with love too.
 - ii. Possible questions: Why do you think Jesus cooked breakfast for his disciples? Why does Jesus ask them to bring their fish when he has already cooked fish for them?
 - iii. End discussion with prayer asking God to guide our time of cooking together.
2. Opening Activity
 - a. Distribute a fruit or vegetable to each child and let them observe them. Discuss what they know about these items. Lead students to reflect on the people who were involved in bringing this item to its present state, ready to nourish us. Farmers depend on the money they make by selling their goods to nourish themselves and their families. Where do you think your item might have been grown?
 - b. *Lead up to key point:* Food is something we all have in common. We all need it and we all have ways of making it not just useful, but special. It becomes a way of communicating love to others in all countries and cultures.
 - c. Food is a gift from God. We do not create the conditions that make things grow. God gives us soil, sun, water, and we add our labor and love to nourish one another. Discuss the practice of praying grace before eating.
 - d. Leader can consider telling a story about the importance of food or meals in his/her life.
 - e. *Transition:* As we cook together today let us do it to build the friendships we have. We cook to nourish one another.

3. Orientation to Cooking

- a. Show students tools and food. When we cook, we care for the food like we care for the people we are cooking for. Discuss with them cooking practices and consider bringing up the following:
 - i. We use as much of the piece of food as we can. Demonstrate peeling an apple without taking too much of the flesh.
 - ii. We wash food well, to remove any harmful elements.
 - iii. We observe the food, so we do not handle it in the wrong way. We do not want to squash delicate things like berries. On the other hand, hold onto vegetables tightly when you are cutting them!
 - iv. Demonstrate how to use tools. Discuss how tools are modelled on the human body and extend the abilities, precision, and endurance of our bodies.

4. Performance of the Activity: Introduction of Menu and Tasks

- a. If possible, plan the menu beforehand with students. Discuss with students what makes a good meal. We take care to put foods together in a way that will give our friends and family nourishment.
- b. Possible menus:

Oven-baked chicken strips Mashed potatoes Stir-fried vegetables	Spaghetti and meatballs (Make pasta with them!) Carrot and cucumber sticks	Sandwich bar Fruit salad
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- c. Put students in groups to work on different parts of the meal. Several adults would be helpful here. Prepare stations beforehand. Provide compost containers.
- d. If time, consider these possibilities:
 - i. A discussion about tastes. How do our individual preferences fit into our community meal?
 - 1. Introduce the practice of taking a small portion even of things you do not care for.
 - ii. How do we present the food beautifully? Discuss how this is another way of caring for the food and the people partaking of it. Try, for example, incorporating different colors of foods in the meal.
 - iii. How do we begin a meal?
 - iv. Consider setting the table with one group. Or have the table set beforehand. Even a table set with paper plates can be set neatly and made beautiful with a centerpiece, etc.

5. Enjoyment of the fruits of the activity: Partaking of the Meal

- a. Pray grace. Enjoy!

6. Integration of the Experience

- a. Ask students how this meal was different for them.
- b. What was the most fun about the experience? The most difficult? What are you grateful for?
- c. Do you usually eat meals together? Does it make you feel closer to others when you cook and eat with them?
- d. When is a time you could cook for others? How could you show gratitude for those who nourish you by cooking?
- e. Consider these words from Pope Francis (*Laudato Si'*, n. 11): “If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously.”
 - i. How does cooking, as we have done today, foster a sense of connection with creation? Did the process inspire a sense of awe and wonder in you, and a deeper respect for the food and where it comes from?
 - ii. Can cooking together help us develop this attitude of sobriety and care?