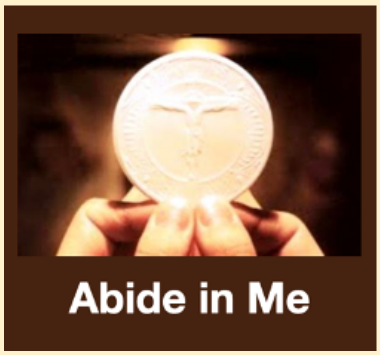

TASTE Reflection Questions #22
April 20, 2023

Caregiving: A Journey of Love

Michelle Laque Johnson

Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him." ~ John 6:56

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1. If you knew Michelle's sister Marian, what similarities did you see between them? How did you feel about Michelle and Stu's conversion stories?

2. When trials or trouble come, often the first thing we pray is for the Lord to take the problem away. When Michelle learned Stu had cancer, she was anxious, fearful, and exhausted. She simply prayed, "Father… If that's you, come!" Then an explosion of joy and peace came over her. Michelle's **situation** had not changed, but **she** had changed.

- Have you ever just asked the Lord to come into your situation without telling Him what you want Him to do?
- How did God respond?
- Did He change your situation? Did He change you?

3. Michelle shared a variety of stories and tips to help care-givers especially from the point of view of Faith, Hope, and Love. (See summary on page 2)

- Which story had the greatest impact on you?
- What tip did you find most helpful?

4. Throughout her caregiving journey, Michelle trusted God, said Yes to His will, and observed countless blessings. We can do this too!

- When have you had to really trust God?
- What are some of your biggest or most recent blessings?
- How can we make a better habit of looking for God's blessings?

REMINDER OF TIPS AND STORIES

	TIPS	STORIES
FAITH	Ask the Divine Physician for His help. (and have fun & celebrate)	Michele had to wrap Stu's leg with strong smelling open sores. Upon asking the Lord for His help, graces poured down upon her. When done, they would go out for lunch or ice cream
	Keep a prayer journal. Seek the Lord's input. Capture His response.	Michele originally pleaded with God to save her husband Stu's life. A friend gave her this tip and upon seeking the Lord's input, she recorded wisdom from the Holy Spirit.
	Look for the Blessings — especially in the trying times.	– Michelle had a chance to say goodbye, thank you, and I'm sorry to her mom – She had a chance to spend more time with her siblings and work together. – Although Marian endured tremendous pain, she said "I am never sad". Also, she suffered for her family and likely lived her purgatory on earth
	Have faith all will be ok if you agree to do something on the patient's bucket list	Michelle and Stu went to Dude Ranch when Stu had only a year to live. That trip was filled with joy and provided incredible memories.
	Put your faith in God. Go to the source for facts / input.	Her mother was bleeding internally and the choice the doctor offered was to either let her bleed out or have surgery for which she would probably die. Michelle checked with the anesthesiologist directly who had key information.
HOPE	Don't allow doctors to take your hope away. Doctors are not God.	Doctors are taught not to give their patients false hope and some take that too far. Stu's doctors only expected him to live 6 months and he lived for 8 years.
	Talk about your fears with people who love you or have been through it. They can restore your hope.	Michelle called her mom when Stu's leg had to be amputated at the hip. Johnnette Williams listened without judgment & had a heart to understand. Both calmed her fears.
	In contrast, avoid soliciting or receiving input from insensitive people. They make it appear more hopeless.	A woman once said to her "I knew someone with melanoma and they died!" A doctor said Stu was going to die and Michelle just had to face up to it. Neither was helpful.
	Remember you are not a victim. Seek God's help & He will keep your mind the way it needs to be during a crisis.	Michelle discussed Victor Frankl's book "Man's Search for Meaning": The Nazi's could take away everything from us except how we think about our circumstances.
LOVE	Maintain a community to share and pray for one another in love.	The Carmelites share what's going on in each other's lives so that the sisters can pray for each other out of love and compassion.
	Support patients out of love, not duty — even if they are not acting lovingly. See them as our Lord sees them.	The daughter of a demanding mom heard a voice say "Are you doing this in love?" She realized she was care-giving out of duty.
	Love others by supporting the letting go process & respecting the patient's wishes (If you think you may have regrets, speak it out loud.)	Michelle found a great program at Johns Hopkins for her mom. When she tried to sell it to her mom, her mom (in her 90's) said that she was tired. Thinking there may come a day where she would regret not signing up her mother for this program, she spoke her mother's decision out loud.
	Remember the relationship. A spouse with dementia is still a spouse	The husband of Michelle's friend had dementia. His wife was acting like his mother. Michelle suggested her friend snuggle with him to remind herself that she is still married to him.
	View humanity as priceless.	A reporter watched Mother Teresa of Calcutta as she cleaned the maggot-infested wound of a man on the street, only to say, "I wouldn't do what you do for a million dollars." Mother is supposed to have replied, immediately, with a bit of a wry smile, "I wouldn't either."