



TASTE Reflection Questions
20 November 2025

Human Flourishing and the Journey of Becoming

Jennifer Brinker



Pray, Hope, and Don't Worry ~ Padre Pio

1. What did you find most interesting about this talk?

What did you think about how much time she invested in getting to know us through our earlier talks?

2. Jennifer began and ended her talk with discussing the [PAPAL BULL OF INDICTION](#) proclaiming the Jubilee Year of Hope. Pope Francis said, "Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring.

Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often, we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness. For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope."

- How did you feel about this definition and description?
- Do you relate to the feelings associated with hope?
(trust/apprehensiveness, serenity/anxiety, conviction/hesitation/doubt, discouragement/pessimism/cynicism)
- How has your feeling associated with hope evolved in your own life?

3. Jennifer said that in order to get to know us better, she reviewed the talks that we have had so far this semester. As she reflected on them, not only was it a stroll down memory lane, but she highlighted how these talks were threaded together and how they relate to our mental health. (See next page)

- Was this stroll down memory lane useful to see the broad brush of the entire semester?
- Did you pick up additional nuggets from earlier talks?
- What did you learn about how they related to our emotional health?

4. Jennifer concluded her talk with a number of overarching concepts related to mental health leading to our flourishing on the journey of becoming.

- How do you feel about your journey being unique or the "body-soul unity"?
- How do you feel about the 4 woundings of relationships that happened as a result of sin in the Garden of Eden?
1) with God, 2) within oneself, 3) with one another, and 4) even with creation itself?
- Do you believe our sins cause the same kind of wounding? Discuss.

Information from Past Talks	Jennifer's Amplification as it Relates to our Mental Health
FR. LARRY SWINK • He spoke about Padre Pio & the Beatitudes. He suggested we compare ourselves to what Jesus says in the beatitudes and to use that as a road map for spiritual progress.	• Living the Beatitudes is a potential remedy for depression because "The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness" — CCC 1718. • When we experience pleasure, we sometimes mistake it for happiness and keep searching to repeat that experience. Conversely, when we experience pain, we are tempted to think we might never be happy. The Beatitudes are the bridge between happiness in this life and eternal happiness in the next.
KEVIN WELLS • In speaking about St. John Vianney, he reminded us that mom & dad provide the formation of their children. • When difficult emotions arise, we have a choice in our response.	• The human formation of a person first begins in the home. The same people who taught us how to speak, also taught us about your emotions. We all learned the place and role of our emotions through explicit messages given to us or modeled behavior. • We often blame others and fail to recognize that in our free will we have the power to shape our own lives. We cannot often change our circumstances, but we can choose to change how we respond. Although helplessness & powerlessness are often learned responses, we can then learn new, healthier habits to more positively shape our lives.
SR. DONATA FARBANIEC • The Lord knows that in our human freedom, we will fall short & choose wrong. His remedy is His gracious & abundant mercy. • Living life provides a "training field for heaven."	• The way we ask questions in difficult circumstances is critical. People of hope ask: What do I do? How should I act? What does this mean about me or for me? • People who lack hope or lose hope often take on a victim perspective. Their question is "why me?" They make attempts to justify why this suffering is undeserved. They focus on knowing why, rather than accepting the circumstances as necessary training exercises picked just for us to get us in shape for holy living. Focusing on getting an answer to "why" restricts our perspective, makes us rebel against our experience, and ultimately negatively affects our relationship with God, and potentially others as well.
FR. VIRGINUS OSUAGWU • He spoke about anxiety — a common mental health challenge. • He said anxiety is not a sign of weak faith, it is an invitation to deeper trust. • It is an opportunity to change our focus, not on what is going wrong, but on who God is."	• Brokenness in the physical realm is easy to see – birth defects, illness, injury & death. • When it comes to mental health, it's important to note that there are sometimes physical reasons why people experience certain mental health issues or illnesses. In these cases, people can be harmed by the advice "pray it away." They need actual remedies to alleviate their issues. • Hope is a real antidote for depression and a remedy for anxiety. Fr. Erik Arnold says "The one who has hope lives differently. We all yearn for hope. We were created for it. Hope is attractive. Hope is powerful."
FR. JUDE WINKLER • While looking to the saints is important in our spiritual lives, we often don't realize that the Saints were broken before they were sanctified. • Fr. Jude reminded us that we all have brokenness and that the reality is that some of us hide our brokenness better than others.	• Saints were born with original sin like the rest of us and their level of sanctity is also achievable for us. Every saint is simply a perfected human being living in the eternal presence of God. • If we are to be saints, then we need to be perfected in the fullness of who we are, not transformed into someone else. The journey towards eternal happiness is about becoming more of who we are created to be. • Every human being reflects something of God's character, goodness, truth and beauty. Our challenge is to find and treasure that reflection, no matter how small. Misperceiving too much darkness prevents us from noticing the presence of light.
SR. DEDE BYRNE • We can be a light in the world due to Christ's presence in us. • We must prepare our soul for heaven and help guide our loved ones to heaven as well. • We are to be present in a way that lovingly forms and shapes them, while valuing their free will. This requires humility.	• Humility is necessary for the deepest transformation of our soul. It comes from a knowledge of self in relationship to the Lord. Knowing who we are, our identity, and what we have been given is as important as knowing who we are not. We are not God and we cannot save ourselves. • False humility is when we focus too much on what we are not, or we create an imitation of humility by debasing ourselves unnecessarily or out of proportion to our actual weaknesses. • Self-knowledge is key to becoming more of who we are meant to be and it's a key ingredient in maintaining and achieving mental health. • Truly mature persons move from self-knowledge → self-possession → self-gift. • Growth in humility becomes a natural outgrowth of self-knowledge.
SR. MARY MICHAEL FOX • Hope is God's presence within our soul. What we most need is already present within us! • God continues to draw us near like a magnet as opposed to unhealthy attachments, which repel us from God.	• We will always battle releasing our earthly attachments. They are mistakenly held as resources we somehow think we need to help on our pilgrimage. • What we love might not be material things, they might be unhealthy patterns in relationships or unintentionally cultivating unhealthy thoughts and emotions. • Shedding our attachments does make us healthier, happier & freer, even in this world. • We are given the gift of time in this life to learn how to love the people and the things that God has given us in the right way. Loving the wrong things or loving the right things in the wrong way leads not just to ungodly attachments, but disordered love contributes greatly to poor mental health.
TIM DEVENY & LISA PEACOCK • How we love and what we love absolutely affects how we feel.	• Loving well is the virtue of charity. • The UNBOUND organization offers us a practical opportunity to extend charity to some of the world's needy.