

## A Meditation on Human Connection and Flourishing

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This meditation is inspired by those working to ease the transition of individuals who have recently arrived in this country, usually from places where they are escaping violence, unrest or unjust conditions. The Catholic health care ministry includes community health workers — like those described in this issue’s Mission column at Avera Health in Sioux Falls, South Dakota (see pages 61-63) — who are already serving as leaders in their communities. They work tirelessly to draw from their expertise and experiences — some as immigrants and refugees themselves — to build trust between their communities and health care systems. Through the power of their relationships and community building, they help to create an environment where human flourishing is possible.

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FLOURISH?

As this community program illustrates, Catholic health care elevates human flourishing through whole-person caring, recognizing that each of us is revered as a harmonious unity of body, mind and spirit. Every individual needs and deserves the opportunity to reach their full potential, as well as a chance to empower others to do the same.

While we often recognize it when we see it, identifying what is necessary to create flourishing in our communities can feel like a monumental task. Thus, as you prepare to pray, spend some time in silence. Take time to peel back the layers that can sometimes cloud our view. Consider how you have worked with the Spirit to create flourishing in your life.

### BRING YOURSELF TO STILLNESS

Use your breath to drown out any noise. Consider counting to five as you inhale through your nose, fill your lungs to capacity and draw it down into your abdomen. Hold it a second before you exhale through your mouth to another count of five. Repeat this slow breathing at least three times.

Using your senses, consider how you have experienced human flourishing in your own life. Does this experience invoke a taste or smell? Is there a sound you equate with a season in your life when you experienced human flourishing? What does human flourishing look like for you? Rest in the memory of these moments.

Perhaps it feels like a hug from a loved one or looks like the joy of a family member whom you have not seen in a long time. The opportunity to try a new recipe or make a dish that smells like a childhood memory may be an indicator of flourishing for you. Or perhaps it’s the sound of a loved one’s voice. Beyond these pleasurable experiences, each of these examples is also a touchstone for the opportunity to engage in whole-person caring for yourself and those around you. Not only this, but you may have also noticed instances of connection rose to the surface.

As you examine what it means to flourish in your own life, relationships, trust and a willingness to engage with the “other” are just a few of the core values necessary for human flourishing to emerge. It is connections to our inner self, our loved ones and our communities that contribute to what it is to live a flourishing life.

Just as you experience connection personally, so are these connections necessary for building healthy communities in our ministries. As Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy describes, “Being connected to others gives us a stake in more than our own interests. It expands those interests to include our whole community and thus increases our motivation to work together.”<sup>1</sup>

Our context in Catholic health care might rephrase Murthy’s sentiment as articulated in the Gospel of John. Jesus describes to his disciples that he will soon depart from them and that they will be responsible for the building of God’s Kingdom. It will be the disciples’ responsibility to invite others to do the same. He says, “I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

### CALL TO BUILD THE KINGDOM

Our call to build the Kingdom of God, to be Jesus’ healing hands in a suffering world, is not all that different. We are to love one another. We are to invite connection. Just as you used the five senses to bring attention to moments of connection and flourishing in your life, consider how you might invite others to do the same. In what ways does human connection lead to human flourishing? How does your behavior change when you are in a state of flourishing?

### NOTE

1. Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, *Together: The Healing Power of Human Connection in a Sometimes Lonely World* (New York: Harper, 2020).

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