

The Assumptionist Center in Brighton began its sixth year of “Conversations...” recently as a “place where we learn together what it means to be Church.” The theme of the first gathering for this year focused on the “Christian Responses to Illness and Dying.” Our presenter, Michael Finocchiaro (Finni), is a second year MTS student at BC’s School of Theology and Ministry. In 2012, Finni went through treatment for a type of cancer with strong evidence for environmental causation. At the same time, he lost his uncle to lung cancer. He found that writing, especially in the poetry he shared with us, was an effective way to interpret and convey his experience of sickness and his road to recovery.

Finni began with the Sunday reading of Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4 which spoke to him of violence, misery, sadness and then faith. He spoke of the intermingling of Good Friday, the day on which he was diagnosed, the Resurrection, the eventual suffering, both physical and psychological, and the later call to action. He demonstrated how confusion and fear are at the heart of such a traumatic illness and that the creative response for him through the expression of writing and art were cathartic. It is about transforming tragedy into the arts which may help someone see that there is truly light at the end of a very dark tunnel

After Finni answered several very poignant questions, the community, residence and guests celebrated the gift of Finni’s presence among us with further discussion and a delicious brunch.