



**Unfinished: Discovering God's Call in the Not Yet**  
**Ash Wednesday**  
*Called to Renewal*

**Warm-up Question**

*When have you felt like you needed to "hit the reset button?"*



Photo by [Jose Antonio Gallego Vázquez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**Discussion Questions**

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

"Near and Now" is a resource provided by the Nourishing Vocation Project through the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College. This edition is written by Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox, Program Director for Congregational Thriving.

## Whenever you ...

Read [Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21](#)

### Bible Story Reflection

In the 1970's 4-H clubs all across the country had a motto for their young participants – *learn by doing*. This motto encouraged children to engage in hands-on activities, learning the “in’s and out’s” of those activities not by reading a book, or by sitting at a desk, but by actually doing them. Through various projects, 4-H’ers learned all sorts of meaningful lessons by actually doing what it was that they needed to learn. They learned to sew by sewing, to be a photographer by taking pictures, to garden by gardening, to raise livestock by doing so. In such a way, those young 4-H’ers put into practice what Aristotle wrote long ago: “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”

This same truth can be applied to practicing our faith through what we call “spiritual practices.” We learn to give to others by giving. We learn to pray by praying. We learn to fast by fasting. We learn to reflect by reflecting. We learn to journal by journaling. We learn to worship by worshiping. We learn to see the presence of God in everyday life by looking for the presence of God in everyday life. We learn to live our baptism by daily remembering our baptism. Through spiritual practices, we learn by doing, even as we deepen our relationship with God and with one another.

Sometimes though, our spiritual practices need a reset. Sometimes our motivation for our practices becomes skewed. We may find ourselves going through the motions, or checking things off a “to-do” list. Or sometimes we may even seek the attention or praise of others for the ways that we practice our faith. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds his hearers that “doing the faith,” engaging in spiritual practices, or practicing righteousness is never to be self-seeking or self-serving. Instead, claimed and named as children of God we are called to practice the faith, to *learn by doing* with a heart focused on the reign of God in the here and now. In such a way, God renews us, over and over again as we live into God’s call in daily life.

### Discussion Questions

1. What are your favorite spiritual practices?
2. What spiritual practices have you tried, but struggle with?
3. What resets is God calling you to in your spiritual life?
4. What gets in the way of you focusing on the reign of God in the here and now?
5. Think about your daily life of faith. What do you learn by doing?
6. Think about your congregation or faith community. What are their primary spiritual practices?

“Near and Now” is a resource provided by the Nourishing Vocation Project through the Lutheran Center for Faith, Values, and Community at St. Olaf College. This edition is written by Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox, Program Director for Congregational Thriving.

7. In what ways is God calling your congregation or faith community to reset its spiritual practices?

### **Activity Suggestions**

Choose a spiritual practice for the season of Lent. Plan your practice. Practice your plan.

Keep a prayer journal.

Begin and end each day, marking yourself with the sign of the cross and saying these words, "I am God's beloved child, cross-marked and Spirit-sealed."

### **Vocare Practice**

Reflect upon how God is **calling you to renewal in** this season

- Who am I called to be – in this "not yet" time?
- What am I called to do – in this "not yet" time?
- Why am I here – in this "not yet" time?
- What do I need for this "not yet" time?

### **Prayer Concerns**

Those whose spiritual lives feel empty, the Church, those preparing for baptism

### **Closing Prayer**

Turn me toward you, O God, to Lenten practices that call me from death to life. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.