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## Glory

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contemporary *ars moriendi* practice. The components include the following: commending life, reflecting on one's mortality, examining one's conscience, praying and contemplating the Scriptures, participating in liturgies and the sacraments and embodying the virtues in the community.<sup>15</sup> For this paper I will explore how two of the components—remembering our mortality and practicing the virtues in community—might be updated, using recommendations from contemporary authors as well as a few of my own.

*“Teach Us to Count Our Days”:* Remembering Our Mortality

Regular reflection on our mortality is an important component of a contemporary *ars moriendi* practice. We live in a society that resists facing aging and death. Although we are bombarded by the news of peoples' deaths brought on by natural disasters and human violence, we seldom think about the fragility of our own life and of the inevitability of our own death. Within the church, the invitation to reflect on our mortality has been reduced to one day out of the year: Ash Wednesday. Therefore any form of contemporary *ars moriendi* practice must recover the discipline of *momento mori*, the remembering of our own death. Vogt writes that “remembering one's mortality was seen as a fundamental prerequisite for a conscious, lifelong preparation for death” by the *ars moriendi* authors.<sup>16</sup> Reflecting on our death often motivates us to cultivate a life of virtue and self-reflection and to take practical actions steps to plan for our death. Though the other practices

<sup>15</sup> Verhey recommends that a contemporary *ars moriendi* includes commending life because Christians acknowledge God as the source of all life; see Verhey, 93-109 and 176-215.

<sup>16</sup> Vogt, 41.

of *ars moriendi* are fundamental practices of Christian spirituality, when we exercise them in conjunction with remembering our own death, they become practices that prepare us for dying as well as practices that draw us close to God and neighbor. Moreover, remembering our mortality encourages us to be fully present to each day of our life and to prioritize what is most important. One example of a contemporary *momento mori* is a fifteen- or twenty-minute meditation of visualizing our own dying process, starting with becoming sick to ending with taking our last breath. Another practice is asking ourselves two or three times a day, “What if this is my last day?” Lent would be an appropriate time of the year for doing a daily or weekly meditation of our dying.

*Virtue practice, community and accompanying the dying*

Virtue ethics is an approach to ethical living that is concerned more about how we live our life on the whole and less about specific acts for specific situations. It first describes what a good human life is and then goes on to describe the ways of living, attitudes and practices that both constitute and nurture the good life. The virtues are used to describe 1) the good life, 2) the character of a person who lives a good life, and 3) the means to developing that life.<sup>17</sup> The virtues—the means to nurturing a good life—are habits that are formed by practices of repeated actions, as mentioned above. The learning and practice of the virtues are done in community. We are born in communities that have moral traditions. These traditions are based on the communities' historical experiences and have language, narratives and practices about a life of virtue. We learn what the virtues are and how to embody the virtues

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.