

# DEVOTION

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## Memento mori

### read

“No one remembers the former generations, and even those yet to come will not be remembered by those who follow them” (Ecclesiastes 1:11).

### reflect

If you visit the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., you'll likely pass through the National Statuary Hall as you walk between the Rotunda and the House of Representatives wing.

The domed chamber houses 35 bronze and marble statues of great Americans such as Charles Brantley Aycock, Lewis Cass, John Gorrie and Zebulon Vance.

Never heard of them?

How about Uriah Milton Rose, Philip Kearny or Hannibal Hamlin?

Still not ringing a bell?

Don't worry, I'd be willing to wager most of us have never heard of these great men—though the name Hannibal Hamlin did seem familiar to me.

His claim to fame? He was Abraham Lincoln's vice president.

Yet for the most part, the names and deeds of these men have been forgotten.

But they're not alone. We all will be dead and forgotten one day.

According to tradition, some monks in Medieval times greeted each other with the Latin phrase “memento mori,” which means “remember that you will die.”

If you're like me, you don't like to think about your mortality, but thinking about death can spur us to live, to love and to use each hour to its fullest.

It drives us to be present in the lives of our friends and family members.

There's another Latin phrase I'm sure you've heard: “carpe diem,” which means “seize the day.” It simply means don't do something tomorrow that you can do today because, quite frankly, our tomorrows aren't

guaranteed.

James writes: “Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes” (James 4:14).

King David asked God to remind him of his mortality: “Show me, Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure” (Psalm 39:4-5).

Yes, we all will be dead and forgotten one day, but we can pour into the lives of the people around us, and hopefully the seeds we plant will bear fruit for generations.

So as macabre as it may seem, I'd like to say to each of you reading this, “Memento mori.”

### respond

- ▶ Is there something you have put off doing that you know needs to be done?
- ▶ Do you have someone in your life you are able to pour into?
- ▶ What scares you most about death?

### pray

- ▶ Take some time to thank God for the life He has given you: the fact that you are alive, the people around you and the influence you have.
- ▶ Ask God to help you see the purpose of your life, and ask the Spirit to empower you to live out that purpose every day.

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