

**Oliver Yocum**  
**Showcase Talk – “Our Faith: Growing Vocation”**  
**April 30, 2023**

As we finally enter Spring and get a glimpse at the sun and some warmer weather, it's hard to deny that we might be feeling a little bit cheerier. The physical reminders of light and warmth (albeit maybe not on this fine Saturday) certainly give us something to look forward to when we step out of the door, and they call us to spend some more time outside after being cooped up with our textbooks or work all winter. So again, thank you for coming out to the LCMNU showcase regardless of the weather, and I hope that what we speak on today will resonate with you and bring that sense of warmth one step further.

This past year has been one of growth for me in many ways. I've gotten a bit better at budgeting my time, blocking out all sorts of events, classes, and meetings onto my Google Calendar, and doing just enough to feel like I've got a hold on things after a rough time last year. But even as I fight to stay on top of the daily stressors inherent in so many Northwestern students' lives, I am beginning to realize that even temporarily “winning” this catchup game doesn't provide me with the sense of calm that I find in my faith and at LCMNU.

This quarter in 21Theo, we've particularly homed in on the concept of vocation, using the words of Martin Luther and other theologians to learn about finding meaning through God and rejecting the criteria that the world uses to judge people. This radical rejection was quite intentionally a shock to my system, yet again using Jesus to flip the earthly narrative on its head. I began to hear and understand that this calling to action can come in many different forms but will always include something that must be sacrificed in order to embrace the opportunity that God provides. Sacrifice not just for sacrifice's sake but as a conscious decision to orient your priorities to actions that are life giving.

This message brought me to examine my own priorities, especially in an engineering career where it might be easy to meld into the background and go through the motions, hunker down in Mudd Library, and close myself off from the rest of the world in pursuit of the best individual “success” I can muster. But the emphasis LCM has put on listening to both God and others has shown me just how much help the world needs, and if I can train my eyes to listen to the world around me, I hope that I can turn away from the constant drive to “move up” and see if I can make a difference where I am.

In anything we do, putting your vocation at the forefront is especially taxing in times where you feel stressed and stretched thin, which is all too common as I rush to get things in on time and not let others down. But as Deanna often mentions, these stress-ridden times where everything calls for priority is when we can learn the most from choosing to listen for God. Undoubtedly, turning away from human pressures and expectations comes at a cost, whether it be money, fame, power, or anything else that humans love to cling to, but the truth of the matter is that I am called, and not just called

to think, but called to do. The spirit of renewal that both spring and baptism provides us is calling us out into the world, out into the warmth in hopes of seeing and doing good.

Through this past year and all the ups and downs that come with Canvas notifications like "Exam 1 has been Graded," LCM has been there for me, bringing me along in a community so focused on making faith more than just a word and Northwestern more than just deadlines and numbers. Through the conversations in 21theo especially, I've been lucky enough to hear how baptism is a constant reminder that we are loved, but also that we have the capacity to share that love. And as baptism teaches us, the constant learning in our faith means that there is no final objective to complete, no way to 'check off' your relationship with God: it is always unfolding just as the present does, with us unfolding right alongside it. And to me, this gives me hope. Hope that as I continue to grow in the next few years and beyond, I can find myself at the cusp of this new learning and understanding, with the courage to act in the path that God presents.