Honors Church

Martin Luther's Reformation Remembered

Campus News | Posted on November 8, 2017

Davide Sciarabba, assistant professor of religion, delivers homily for Honors Church (Photo by Clarissa Carbungco, IMC student photographer)

By: Hannah Gallant, IMC student writer

On Saturday, Oct. 21, the J.N. Andrews Honor Program held their annual Honors Church at the Howard Performing Arts Center on the Andrews University campus. In commemoration of Luther’s reformation and nailing of the 95 Theses in 1517, the whole program was structured around selections of Luther’s early writings from 1517–1520. These selections, along with the praise music, scripture readings and the choral and orchestral performances all served to highlight critical components of Luther’s reaction to Catholicism, call for reformation, and his theology of grace.

“As a movement that began on a university campus and harnessed the newly developed power of the printing press, Luther’s reformation instantiates the fruitful intersection possible between faith and rigorous learning—an inter-connectivity that remains central to our own values at Andrews University as members of the J.N. Andrews Honors Program,” describes L. Monique Pittman, Honors director and professor of English.

Following a beautifully student-led song service, Pittman started the program with an introduction. She called the audience to use this as an opportunity to think about Luther’s writings, teachings and theology. Although admitting some of his faults, she explains how they ought to be a “reminder to be
aware of our own blindness and limitations as imperfect vessels.” The goal of the program is to not be caught up in Luther’s “time-bound perspective” but rather look at his writings as a way of asking ourselves, “Where are we not living up to God’s example of love?” and “How can we, in humility, submit ourselves to our heavenly parents?”

The program continued in three separate parts entitled Part 1: Protest Begins—The Problem of Indulgences, Part 2: Grace Alone and Christian Freedom and Part 3: Ethical Living and the Holy Community. Throughout these sections there were scripture readings first in English and then followed by another language. The other languages presented were Romanian, Russian and Mandarin. There was also a partial reading of the 95 Theses in which various students stood throughout the audience to read, creatively showing how Luther’s theses began a reformation that encompassed multiple voices.

Honors choir and orchestra added an additional element of beauty to the whole program. The choir performed an introit right after the praise service in which they sang from the back balcony in the Howard Performing Arts Center. There were two special music pieces, one from four select members of the honors orchestra, and another with the honors choir, orchestra, piano and cajon. Both musical pieces captured the themes of Luther’s theology and drew the audience to see the beauty of God’s love and surrendering one’s life to Him.

Following the second special music piece, Davide Sciarabba, assistant professor of religion, delivered the homily. He used the writings of Luther and Ellen White to present a compelling description of what faith truly is. Throughout his talk he emphasized that, in order to be holistic, faith is a “living, creative, active, powerful thing.” He also focused on the four different components of faith: cognitive, volitional, trust and active. Furthermore, he shared how for him personally, “faith is a witness to my ethics” and a “committed answer to God’s offer of salvation in my life.” Ultimately, he called the audience to develop a genuine understanding of faith and actively exemplify it throughout their lives.

Overall, the goal of the Honors program is to develop “critical thinking young scholars and professionals, ethically active participants in community and intentional believers in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Pittman explains how Honors Church generally brings over 60 volunteers and “allows us to work together as a learning and faith community in service to the large Andrews and Berrien Springs population and to develop those three target attributes of the Honors Scholar Family.”

Following the program there were drinks and refreshments served in the Howard Center’s lobby. To learn more about the J.N. Honors Program and/or Honors Church call 269-471-3297 or email honors@andrews.edu. To visit the Honor’s website, click here.

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