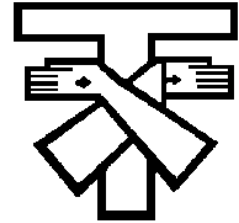




9th Summer Seminar for Secular Franciscans: From the Chivalry of Knighthood to God's Servant

by
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One wouldn't think the first song at a gathering of secular Franciscans would be "Camelot," the theme song from the 1960's musical play and movie about the legend of King Arthur, based on the book, "The Once and Future King." But that is how the three presenters of the [2018 Secular Franciscan Summer Seminar](#), held July 12-15 at [Saint Francis University](#) in Loretto, PA, opened their first session.

The song fit with the title and theme of the seminar – "Francis the Troubadour – How Can I Keep from Singing." It also provided some historical context for St. Francis' conversion journey, from worldly troubadour and wannabe knight to a sacred singer, minister to the poor and outcast, and founder of the Franciscan order. (You can read more about St. Francis and his music in this National Catholic Register article. Link to: <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/revealing-the-real-music-of-st-francis-of-assisi>)

The musical opening also was fitting, as two of the three presenters – Jerry Aull and Brother Bob Herrick, OFM Cap. – are highly regarded musicians. The third presenter, Cricket Aull, OFS – Jerry's wife – is known for her spiritual writing.

St. Francis and Music

Brother Bob and the other presenters tapped into St. Francis's love of music to provide a platform for conveying the story of his conversion during an age of chivalry and knighthood, with ongoing wars among the city states and elsewhere. "Life (then) was brutal and short," Brother Bob said, and the music of the troubadours – of which Francis was one – reflected and responded to that.

While Francis aspired to knighthood and to join the battles of his time, he responded to God's call to a different life. In doing so, Brother Bob said, he "reinvented chivalry" – borrowing from the troubadour's traditional style to create new songs of praise for God's creation and turning the militaristic fervor of the time into a passion for serving "the least, the powerless." All the while, St. Francis retained the joyful attitude of the troubadour.

Brother Bob said he and other friars in his community follow Francis' example when they bring contemporary music and prayer in coffeehouse-style programs to different churches in their communities, something that has proven popular, especially among families with young children.

"Francis filtered down to the reality of life, what was happening; that joy can be part of bringing people back to the church," Brother Bob said, adding that it's "all about attitude. A joyful attitude can help bring people back to the church. Francis would not appreciate the grumpy ones... nor would he like a fretful friar."

Freedom to Choose

In her talk, "What Does Francis Know that We Need to Know?" Cricket Aull started with the phrase, "Love is completely other-oriented, and this is how God is calling us to be. And He gives us the grace to do that. We need to stop and ask for God's help," she said.

"We [also] have every reason to not give up," she said, "but need also to keep our eyes on the Lord and to surrender to what God is calling us to do. He is always working for the good in every situation."

Surrendering to God, she said, is an invitation to imitate Christ in everything. "We are called and able to choose. I can choose what God wants or what the world wants."

She cited three D's: "Desire, Discipline and Determination to grow in holiness. Each of us has a special calling and the more we call, the more we'll hear His response." She suggested setting aside 40 minutes a day to give complete attention to God. Also, "Gatherings of Franciscan communities are times that encourage us," she said.

Being open to hearing from the Holy Spirit, replacing negative thinking with the Word of God, stopping to pray throughout the day, and thanking God in all circumstances are among the suggestions she offered for those seeking a closer relationship with God.

