

Divine Renovation – Summary of Chapter 5: Part 1 of 4

Chapter 5, “Laying the Foundation’, is a bit long and so is being divided into three parts for our discussion. Part 1 covers pages 87-122 and includes an introductory discussion of parish culture and values followed by the first three of ten values Fr. Mallon considers common among healthy, growing churches.

“A building, no matter how grand and beautiful, is only as good as its foundation”. Fr. Mallon goes on to say, “The foundation of any human organization is the culture of that organization. The church is no exception.” (88)

The Church, both human and divine, can benefit from those things that create health in any human organization. What Fr. Mallon sees as the necessary change to establish a strong foundation is nothing short of the transformation of the culture of the parish community.

We see the culture of any organization reflected in what is truly valued. These values are communicated by what is done (or left undone), by what is celebrated, what is tolerated and what is presumed. These values are communicated in how we allot resources; time, money, facilities, labor.

“An honest evaluation of parish budget will remove any doubts about the true values of any parish, regardless of what statement may be framed on the wall. The sum of what a parish values will constitute its culture.” (90).

An example of the importance of parish culture can be seen in efforts to implement the ‘new evangelization’ in parishes. Looking for a ‘quick fix’, a new program or course to do the trick, we find that in the end our efforts fizzle out and die. “Any course run in a parish will only be as good as the culture of that parish”. If evangelization is to take root there must be a parish culture that values it.

Healthy, growing churches have in common particular values that provide strong foundations:

1. Giving Priority to the Weekend
2. Hospitality
3. Uplifting Music