

Divine Renovation – Chapter 4 Summary (Part 1 of 3)

Chapter 4, “Clearing Out the Junk,” is a description by Fr. Mallon of what we need to ‘jettison if we are going to rebuild’. Structures and practices that no longer serve the mission or get in the way of the mission need to be identified and cleared in order to move forward.

Fr. Mallon again returns to Pope Francis’ reflection on the *Aparecida Document* and his identification of specific “temptations against missionary discipleship,” choosing in particular to focus on some “junk” carried over from past historical heresies and the results of clericalism, which ultimately suppresses the baptismal identity. The chapter is a call to lifelong growth as mature Christians.

Laying out the historical background of Pelagiansim and Jansenism, Fr. Mallon sets the stage for how misunderstanding the relationship of grace and free will have created ‘junk’ that needs to be cleared. Anytime we dismiss our fallen human condition that “leads us to commit sin and leaves unable to do the good we desire to do,” we begin to assemble the ‘junk’, believing instead that our own efforts at moral rigorism or some ascetic practices can draw us closer to God.

Without an understanding and acknowledgment of the ‘bad news’ of our fallen condition Fr. Mallon argues that the ‘Good News’ can never really be understood as just that, Good News. What the heresies have in common is that each falls to the temptation of self-justification. Our own moral rigorism and asceticism replace grace and mercy. These heresies, and whatever remnants remain, keep us from truly knowing the radical, scandalous mercy of God, which is indeed Good News.

Fr. Felix

P/S We are reading Divine Renovation throughout this year at our Community Life, Faith Formation, and Finance Council meetings. I hope it challenges us as a parish, makes us question where we are at, and makes us ask where we want to be. In this space in the Parish Bulletin I am sharing with you my notes from reading the book. I hope they give you a sense of what the book is about and encourage you to pick up a book and read it for yourself. My previous notes may be found on our new website.

* Fr. James Mallon, “*Divine Renovation: Bringing Your Parish From Maintenance to Mission*,” Twenty-Third Publications, 2014.