

Divine Renovation: Summary of Introduction and Chapter 1 (Part 1 of 4)

(As I wrote in last week's column, we will be reading Divine Renovation throughout this year at our Parish Staff, Community Life, Faith Formation, and Finance Council meetings. I hope it challenges us, makes us question where we are at, and makes us ask where we want to be. Beginning this week, I would like to share 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. I would love to talk to you about your thoughts on the book.)

What does a “maintenance” church look like? What does a “mission” church look like? How do we move from maintenance to mission? These questions are ripe for exploration in Fr. James Mallon's book, *Divine Renovation*.

In the introduction to his book the pastor from Nova Scotia shares his experiences rescuing parish space from all sorts of uses in order to initiate programs for evangelization and adult faith formation. When parishioners protested that they “didn't need to know more about Jesus,” they just needed their space for card playing socials, it became apparent to Fr. Mallon that the church was experiencing nothing less than an identity crisis.

We have forgotten that we are essentially a missionary Church. Fr. Mallon closes his introduction with “I pray that church leaders and anyone who cares about the future of our Church will find here a blueprint for a process of Divine Renovation of this Church we love so well” (p.12).

The process begins in Chapter One calling us to remember our very identity and purpose as Church. Fr. Mallon traces the various crises we have experienced in recent times (vocations crisis, marriage crisis, sexual abuse crisis etc.) to nothing less than an identity crisis, “we have forgotten who we are and what we are called to do as a Church” (p. 13).