

Divine Renovation: Summary of Introduction and Chapter 1 (Part 2 of 4)

The identity crisis we are experiencing as Church according to Fr. Mallon is not the first. His exegesis of the Evangelist Mark's version of the cleansing of the Temple presents a reading of the event as a people who had forgotten their call to the radical inclusion of all nations (Isaiah 49:6) and continued to practice a theology of exclusion communicated by the very architecture of the Temple's increasingly restricted courts (Gentiles, women, Israelite men, Priests, Holy of Holies). The call to a mission of inclusion is one we have forgotten more than once.

Fr. Mallon goes on to employ the story of the *Titanic* as a metaphor for the crisis of the Church today. While more than 1,500 people were left in the waters to drown there remained 472 empty seats in the lifeboats launched from the ship. Out of 18 lifeboats only 2 attempted to rescue those in the water, the rest remained at a safe distance watching. By the time the majority of the lifeboats remember their purpose there remained few survivors in the icy waters.

As a Church we have been sent in mission to "seek and save" those who are perishing yet we remain at a safe distance, more concerned with our needs and comforts. The church, like the lifeboat, exists to rescue people but "we maintain our lifeboats, we paint them, we serve the people in them and keep them in good order and hold card socials, but we do not use them for the purpose for which they were created."

Father Mallon continues the metaphor with an even more challenging observation; "Any crew member who would dare to disrupt life on the lifeboat will quickly hear a chorus of complaints from the passengers who are adverse to being inconvenienced in any way. We lament the tragedy of the loss of faith, secularization, church closures and so on, but it does not occur to us to pick up the oars and row" (p.18).