

Divine Renovation* Chapter 3 Summary (Part 1 of 2)

Weaving in the scriptures of Lamentation, Fr. Mallon addresses the experiences of pain so common in maintenance Churches of our generation. In order to be rebuilt, he comments, the church must first heal and the first step is to acknowledge the pain. "Confessing pain and hurts is not just some fruitless exercise, or worse, a sign of lack of discipline and spiritual backbone. Rather, it has deep biblical roots in the tradition of lamentation." (p/ 44) Among the sources of pain Fr. Mallon includes:

- 1) Parishioners who see their families and friends falling away from the Church. Their children no longer practice the faith, even though they did for their children what their parents did for them. Wondering where they went wrong they fail to see that the rules have changed, the world is different as the signs of the time evidence.
- 2) Institutional decline where hospitals, schools, and universities are often reminders of a robust history of an institutional force for social good that either lay empty or are absorbed into the secular landscape. The pain of parish closures, twinning and amalgamations mark many dioceses.
- 3) The sexual abuse scandals have left their mark. The actions of a small minority of offenders along with the failure of leadership to adequately oversee and respond to a complex dynamic results in the pain of the entire body. Fr. Mallon poignantly shares how the resulting consequence of the loss of credibility and shame became a source of great pain, haunting all priests.
- 4) Being caught between the experience of a call and desire for renewal and the weight and resistance of the status quo.

Acknowledging the necessity for change in parish structures and schedules to meet current realities, Fr. Mallon laments "Too often, rather than restructuring so that the infrastructure serves the mission, we subject the mission of the Church to the infrastructure." (p. 54)