



# Rediscover<sup>TM</sup>

## Catholic Book Club

### **The Divine Renovation Book Discussion Guide**

#### **Suggestions for your book discussion group time:**

- *Begin each session with a brief time for reflection and then open with a prayer. Pray for an open heart for honest observations of your parish life. Then pray for your parish, priests, leaders, parishioners and new members who have yet to join your parish community. Give praise and thanksgiving for being fed spiritually with the nourishment of the Eucharist and supported by the sacraments of the Church. As the study progresses, encourage each group member to be open to the Holy Spirit in guiding them to think honestly about their parish life.*
- *Each week, give the group members a chance to share experiences from their actual time in prayer and their personal reflection on the life of the parish. What inspirations or insights have they been given?*
- *At the end of each session allow for 5 minutes of silence and invite every member of the group to reflect on one thing they are going to take away from the session. Some examples: a commitment they are making; a truth they want to remember; or an action they want to take. Invite group members to write down or otherwise record this "take away."*

#### **Introductory notes:**

Jesus sent the early Church to proclaim and share the good news with all peoples. We are an essentially missionary Church. This means our very essence is mission through discipleship. However if we take an honest look at our parish life today, it seems we may have lost our way. So much of the blame is being placed on various crises, but the real issue is an identity crisis.

In this book, author Father James Mallon confronts the luke-warmness that exists in many parishes and further, calls out the clericalism that we have become all too comfortable with in our parish life. *Divine Renovation* may make you feel a bit uncomfortable but the many practical points and applications that Fr. Mallon provides will help you in the challenging work of conversion and rebuilding. We are the Church and the Church needs to be busy doing the mission work that Jesus sent us to do.

This book study guide offers questions that are both a work of study, personal reflection, and helpful for group discussion. We hope you enjoy taking a deeper look at parish life and prayerfully reflecting on how we can all work together to bring our parishes from maintenance to mission!



*United in Faith, Hope and Love*

Lesson 1	Objectives:	Questions:	Actions:
<p>Introduction: House of Cards <b>Pages:</b> 9-12</p> <p>Chapter 1: House of Prayer <b>Pages:</b> 13 - 25</p> <p><b>Handout:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and distribute a simple one-sheet that outlines the discussion group schedule and includes any necessary contact information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the purpose and use of the parish buildings</li> <li>Remembering our identity and purpose</li> <li>Understanding that the mission of the Church is to make disciples</li> <li>Realizing that we must work daily toward a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As you reflect on the introduction, do you find similar elements of confusion about the use of parish space in your own parish?</li> <li>On page 12, Father Mallon states confusion is rooted in an identity crisis and calls us to renew our identity as “an essentially missionary Church.” How do you interpret this statement about the Church?</li> <li>Were you enlightened by the truth of the Temple story with Jesus and the money changers? Jesus’ true intent was to restore the Temple as a place where all would be welcome and there would be no walls of separation. On page 17 Father Mallon calls this the “mission of inclusion.” Discuss how this might be playing a role in your parish.</li> <li>When you hear “Church mission work” what do you think of? The church’s mission is one of seeking and saving those who might otherwise perish. Does your parish have a culture of maintenance? How are newcomers treated? Are they possibly overlooked? Why?</li> <li>Jesus sends us forth with the verbs <i>go</i>, <i>make</i>, <i>baptize</i>, and <i>teach</i>. Which verb describes how you understand Jesus’ command? How does your parish respond to the command to “make disciples?”</li> <li>In the section titled “Evangelization” on pages 22-25, Father Mallon presents that in order to make disciples one must know Jesus personally. Do you know Jesus Christ personally? Have you encountered him through your relationships, the sacraments, prayer, retreat or other experience?</li> <li>The Church must continue its mission announcing the Good News to the world. This can only happen if we have a relationship with Jesus and can share him with others. Do you feel prepared to share Christ with others? With this in mind what are the first important steps toward a divine renovation for your parish?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pray for groups or persons that may feel that the church does not love and embrace them?</li> <li>Make a list of how to bring the adults into the learning, growing, and disciple-making ministry of the church referred to on the bottom of page 20.</li> <li>Spend time in prayer and ask for a deeper encounter with Christ and seek how you can continue to walk with him every day.</li> </ul>

<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Questions:</b>	<b>Actions:</b>
<p>Chapter 2 - Rebuild My House: From Vatican II to Pope Francis <b>Pages:</b> 27- 41</p> <p>Chapter 3 – House of Pain: The Experience of a Maintenance Church <b>Pages:</b> 43 - 58</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew our understanding of Christ’s mandate for the Church</li> <li>• Address the wounds created by the sexual abuse crisis</li> <li>• Recognize the need to work toward healing</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Second Vatican Council reawakened the mandate of Christ that the Church is to go out to the world with the message of the gospel. How has your parish embraced this mandate of Christ? Does it “go out to the world” or does it “take care of its own”?</li> <li>2. On the bottom of page 41, Father Mallon makes the point that each pope since the Council has recalled the Church’s deepest identity ending with Pope Francis’ command, “Now go do it.” What is your response to Father Mallon’s key point?</li> <li>3. Chapter 3 discusses the abuse crisis. How has the sexual abuse crisis affected you in your commitment to the church? Has it had an impact on your family? Many have walked away from their faith. How has this affected you?</li> <li>4. A result of the crisis could lead to a loss of trust in the very place and person that one should feel safe and find refuse. How have you seen people lose trust in the priesthood? How do you see faithful priests overcoming this loss of credibility and continue to lead their parish?</li> <li>5. Father Mallon shares his own personal story regarding the state of the priesthood. How does this make you feel? What counsel would you give to Father Mallon if he were your pastor?</li> <li>6. Healing can be a difficult process as this chapter points out. There can be many painful realities within our church. How do you see healing taking shape in the church? What pain have you experienced because of the church? In your view, would sharing our pain and disappointment promote healing?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make a list of where you see your parish living Christ’s mandate to “go out to the world.”</li> <li>• Spend time in prayer for victims of abuse, for all priests and for healing in our Church.</li> <li>• Reflect on the final paragraph on page 58 and journal how this brings you hope. In your parish, what groups or persons may feel that the church does not love and embrace them? Make a short list.</li> </ul>

Lesson 3	Objectives:	Questions:	Actions:
<p>Chapter 4 – Clearing out the Junk: What we Need to Jettison if We Are Going to Rebuild <b>Pages:</b> 59-86</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizing how the heresy of Pelagianism and Jansenism can affect our ability to be authentic Catholics and proclaim the Good News</li> <li>• Understand the destruction in parish life due to clericalism</li> <li>• The first task of the shepherd is to lead the sheep to food and drink so they can grow and mature</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read the definition of Pelagianism on page 62 and discuss how it differs from Catholic teaching.</li> <li>2. How is the understanding of grace different in Pelagianism than authentic Catholic teaching? Refer to page 64.</li> <li>3. Read the definition of Jansenism on page 66 and discuss how it differs from Catholic teaching.</li> <li>4. While Pelagianism places emphasis on human free will and downgrades the need for God’s grace, Jansenists place strong emphasis on God’s grace and deny the need for human free will. Refer to the paragraph at the top of page 67 and discuss how Jansenism and authentic Catholic teaching differ on grace.</li> <li>5. On page 67 Father Mallon begins to discuss the “Good News.” Talk about the “Three Things” that can get in the way of the good news and how we can begin to take out the junk of Pelagianism.</li> <li>6. Pope Francis called clericalism a “sinful complicity.” Refer to pages 72-74 and discuss how clericalism can “result in the isolation of clergy and inhuman expectations of them by laity.” What is your experience of relationships in the church?</li> <li>7. Do you agree with Father Mallon’s approach on page 80-81 for a redefining of pastoral care for both clergy and laity? Explain.</li> <li>8. Discuss Father Mallon’s solutions described at the end of this chapter. What does he see as the pastor’s three fundamental tasks and how does he see the laity’s role? How do complacency, passivity, and inactivity affect ministry in your parish? (refer to pages 77-80) What difficulties do you see for you and your parish in making positive change in this area?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on where Pelagianism and Jansenism may have crept into your spiritual life.</li> <li>• Make a list of the “junk” in your own life, pray they be removed and then throw the list away as a symbolic gesture.</li> <li>• Pray about difficulties you see for you and your parish in making positive change in this area?</li> </ul>

Lesson 4	Objectives:	Questions:	Actions:
<p>Chapter 5 Laying the Foundation: How to Transform the Culture of the Parish Community <b>Pages:</b> 87-196</p> <p>This Lesson is lengthy. Please prioritize the questions for discussion that are meaningful to the group and manage your time accordingly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examination of the many areas of parish life is key to taking steps toward change</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The culture of a parish is reflected in what it truly values. Check the areas Father Mallon lays out on page 89 and 90 and briefly describe the culture of your parish.</li> <li>On page 95 a checklist begins with giving <b>priority to the weekend</b>. How is the weekend liturgy a priority in your parish? How does this carry into the rest of the parish life? Where could improvements be made?</li> <li>What grade would you give your parish in <b>hospitality</b>? Refer to the section on page 101. How are new members recognized and welcomed? Is there an appointed group to help guide them into parish life?</li> <li>How do you feel about your present <b>music ministry</b>? What is the level of participation in singing the hymns? Is there diversity of music? How is this decided?</li> <li>Preaching the gospel is key to parish ministry. Refer to page 123 and discuss how the laity in your parish receives <b>homilies</b>? Does the message address parish life as a whole? Are the homilists open to feedback and suggestions? How might the suggestions by Pope Francis and the other tips at the end of this section help improve homilies in your parish?</li> <li><b>Meaningful community</b> is evaluated on page 136. With this in mind, how would you characterize your parish? What is attracting people to your parish community? Do they feel a sense of belonging?</li> <li><b>Clear expectations</b> on page 153, presents important expectation for organizational health. Do your parishioners know what is expected of them for the reception of the sacraments or other activities? How is this defined and communicated in your parish?</li> <li><b>Strength-based ministry</b> on page 164 addresses the involvement of</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pray for wisdom to discern how to influence the culture in your parish.</li> <li>Using Father Mallon's list journal what you feel are priorities for your parish.</li> </ul>

parishioners in ministry. Are people offered ministry work that fits their strengths? How does the parish organize for this?

9. Does your parish offer access to **small community groups**? If not, do you see a need for them? Discuss the benefits of small groups for your parish. Refer to section on page 168.

10. How do people in your parish experience the **Holy Spirit**? Do people have enough opportunities to share their faith? Refer to the section starting on page 176 for Father Mallon's advice.

11. Refer to page 190 and discuss how your parish could create opportunities to **become an inviting church**? Would you invite the unchurched differently from those who have been absent and invited to return? Explain.

Lesson 5	Objectives:	Questions:	Actions:
<p>Chapter 6 The Front Door: The Sacraments as Our Greatest Pastoral Gift <b>Pages:</b> 197-232</p> <p>This Lesson is lengthy. Please decide with your group questions to discuss that are meaningful to the group and manage your time accordingly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the importance of the sacraments for evangelization</li> <li>• Understand how to make disciples</li> <li>• Realizing the key to evangelizing and making disciples is first having a personal relationship with Jesus</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Discuss some of the struggles you see in being faithful to the Church teaching while reaching those who may be seeking the sacraments with other motivations. How does your parish use the sacraments to reach people where they are at in order to make disciples?</li> <li>2. If the sacraments in your parish are not providing an opportunity to reach people, why not? What is blocking this from happening? Refer to Father Mallon's list of "junk" on pages 200-204 to discuss further renovations needed in your parish. What stands out to you most?</li> <li>3. Discuss the "Cost of Inaction" on page 206 and how it strikes at the very integrity of our Church. Do you agree with the challenge that we tell lies while professing sacraments? (page 207)</li> <li>4. How do you answer the questions Father Mallon asks on page 208? Are you ready to do whatever it takes to make disciples? If so, what is the plan, who will lead, and what are the first steps?</li> <li>5. Most importantly, are you prepared to enter into a personal relationship with Christ that is at the heart of this? What steps will you take?</li> <li>6. How do you feel about the section regarding "Working with children," which begins on page 210? Do you see a need for this vision at your parish? What points do you strongly agree with and what points concern you? Why? What response do you see from parents, children and catechist for a deeper encounter with Jesus?</li> <li>7. Discuss the principles for renewed programming for children (page 213-216) and see how they fit into your parish.</li> <li>8. Discuss the section on baptismal preparation on page 221 and how your parish's baptismal preparation compares. Where would you make changes?</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to Father Mallon's list of "junk" on pages 200-204 and make a short list of further renovations needed in your parish. What stands out to you most?</li> <li>• Spend time in prayer for the strength and courage to help make disciples.</li> </ul>

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|  |  | <p>9. The segment on marriage preparation begins on page 226. What points strike you as true? What causes you concern? How would you like to make changes for a more sacramental experience? How do you think marriage prep couples would respond to these changes?</p> <p>10. How can we help couples become part of parish life without badgering and judging them? Refer to page 226.</p> <p>11. Read about the vision for RCIA on page 229. Do you think your parish would benefit from this vision? Explain. What about RCIA leaders?</p> |  |
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<b>Lesson 6</b>	<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Questions:</b>	<b>Actions:</b>
<p>Chapter 7 Leader of the House: The Essential Role of Leadership <b>Pages:</b> 233-282</p> <p>Conclusion <b>Pages:</b> 283-286</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the essential role of leadership</li> <li>• Importance of expanding parish vision</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you feel about the thoughts and ideas shared in Chapter 7? Share what seems most important in your view.</li> <li>2. What areas would you like to see your parish grow and develop? What do you desire for your parish to become in the mission work of the Church?</li> <li>3. If you are a parish leader, how do you feel you can influence your parish toward renovation?</li> <li>4. In the Conclusion on pages 283 - 286, Father Mallon invites us to ask if our own parish vision is too small and challenges us to work together on expanding our vision. Work to brainstorm on a list of insights from your group, then prioritize the list and sort it to get a key set of ideas. Rank the top five or six ideas and discuss how you might implement these ideas.</li> <li>5. Consider the challenges to implementation of these key ideas and what first steps are needed to work toward a plan. Discuss how you will share these outcomes with the wider parish.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During Mass, pray for your parish and ask the Holy Spirit to open hearts and minds to see the areas where change is needed.</li> <li>• Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to use your gifts to serve your parish to move from maintenance to mission.</li> </ul>

**Tune in to the Rediscover: Hour on 10-2-15 to hear Jeff Cavins talk with author, Fr. James Mallon, about Discipleship! The show will be archived on [Rediscover-faith.org](http://Rediscover-faith.org) the week of 10-5-15.**

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