

Chapter Three

House of Pain: The Experience of a Maintenance Church

Key Theme

We have forgotten who we are, and we are in pain. We must pray that the Lord restores us, so that culture within our churches might be free of abuse and full of missionary zeal.

Corresponding Videos

There is no corresponding video for this chapter.

Takeaways

- Yet, despite the conversation on evangelization since the Council, “our Church is sick. The root of this sickness is our deep forgetfulness of our deepest identity: that we are missionary, that we are a Church ‘called to come out from itself.’” (p. 43)
- To heal, we must first acknowledge the pain, understand it, learn from it, and finally offer it to God. (p. 44)
- “Our pain within the Church is present as a result of the loss of so many of our institutions that framed our identity and were a source of pride...” These institutions, many of which remain Catholic today in name only “decorate our city like the ruins of some ancient civilization. As we walk or drive past them, they are a constant reminder of the decline of the Church as an international force for social good...” (p. 46)
- “Victims [of sexual abuse] and their families who still bear the imprint of such a dreadful breach of trust are still members of the household of God. They continue to carry a deep pain within themselves and experience it anew every time a new crime from the past is brought to light... the loss of credibility of the Church and the shame that rests upon the head of every priest because of the misdeeds of a few translates into a dull, chronic ache.” (p. 48)
- The question “is it true?” is not the primary question of the post-modern culture. (p. 52)

Chapter Three (continued)

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Takeaways (continued)

- “A preferred option is to stay and fight, to hold on to the vision, zeal and passion that enticed you to get into it to begin with.” (p. 56)
- Often our churches today exist as though their sole purpose, like a club, is to serve the needs of those who claim membership. This was not the kind of ministry that inspired [men] to seek to be priests.” (p. 53)
- There is much pain in the Church but “our pain can become suffering...and suffering can be redeemed.” (p. 57)
- We must not stop at the acknowledgment of pain — “Redemption from our suffering... [calls us] to action, to make changes and reforms.” (p. 58)

Discussion Questions

- 1 What pain and suffering have you experienced in recent years? What has caused this pain and suffering? How has it impacted your commitment to the Church?
- 2 How has the clergy sexual abuse scandal affected your commitment to the Church?
- 3 How has your trust in priests, religious, and the Church changed over time?
- 4 How have you seen healing take shape in your personal life, in your parish, or the broader Church to address pain and suffering? What can be done to continue the healing process? What gets in the way of healing?
- 5 Are you proud to be Catholic? Why or why not?

Chapter Three (continued)

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Notes:

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