

FEATURE

Author uses the beatitudes to teach forgiveness

By Gerald Schwartz
Contributing writer

One of our most profound problems as humans is that we have the power to remember the past, yet we're left with no power to undo it. Many of us have at times been willing to trade almost anything for the chance to go back in our pasts and wipe away a few moments from all time. Unfortunately, there's no delete key for all that we've been through. And it comforts us little to know that not even God can undo what has been done.

It would give us some comfort if we could only forget a past that we cannot change. The ability to remember becomes an inability to forget when our memory is fogged with pain inflicted by people who did us wrong. If we could only choose to forget the cruelest moments, we could, as time goes on, free ourselves from that pain. But the wrong sticks like a burr in our memory.

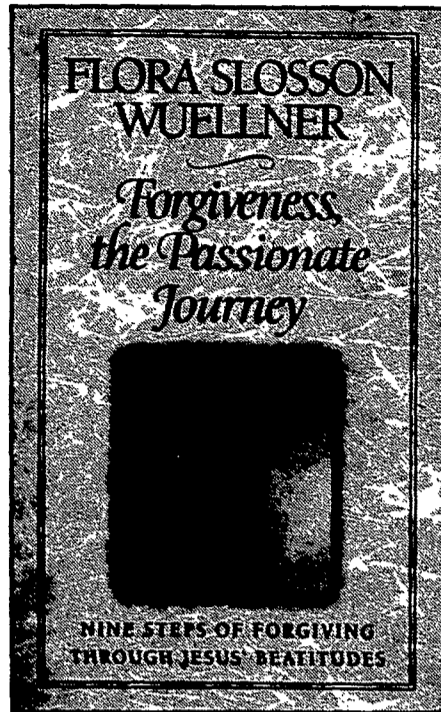
In a new book, *Forgiveness, the Passionate Journey: Nine Steps of Forgiving through Jesus' Beatitudes*, teacher, retreat leader and spiritual director Flora Slosson Wuellner shows us a way of removing that burr with forgiveness. She tells us forgiveness is not one of many ways to escape the pain of the past — it is the only way.

Wuellner concedes that "forgiveness is a perilous and volatile subject because it

is so deeply intertwined with our communal and individual wounds, some of which extend back in time for decades." She understands there is so much simplistic interpretation of forgiveness that completely overlooks the complexity of our pain and our personality. She further discerns that so many questions and perplexities are barely looked at, let alone explored, perhaps even in our own Christian communities. Forgiveness is rarely defined in a clear way. We use the word so much, but, Wuellner cautions, we do not really explain its meaning. And there are questions. Is forgiveness the same as acquiescence? Does forgiveness always imply reconciliation and restoration of former relationships? What do we do with our feelings of anger, hurt, sorrow and fear when trying to forgive?

Using the beatitudes, which introduce Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount in both Matthew 5:3-12 and Luke 6:20-23, Wuellner frames the multidimensional nature of forgiveness, since there are many ways by which to read, hear and understand these words.

For example, Wuellner says these Scriptures are pulsing with life and can be read from a communal body receiving blessing from God and responding to God. We can also read them from the moral justice and compassion position as the ways God reaches through us to the poor, the vulnerable, the hungry and the exploited.



Throughout *Forgiveness, the Passionate Journey*, Wuellner guides us through the deep, individual ways of spiritual growth, as well as ways of healing and release from the many prisons of the spirit.

Alongside all these ways of hearing the beatitudes, we are shown a path of healthy, empowered forgiveness of others — and forgiveness of ourselves. We learn

that throughout his whole sermon, Jesus is "talking about release from that which imprisons and corrupts our central heart: our heavy loads of resentment, self-deception, cover-ups, and from the vicious cycles of revenge which continue to destroy both individuals and faith communities and nations."

Forgiveness, the Passionate Journey is a book that demonstrates to us what it means to be released from the chains of resentment and guilt which hold us back from entering into God's freedom. It is a book that speaks to how we can obtain deliverance from the expectations and obligations of the past so we and others involved in our injury may start anew. Given that forgiveness is one of the most singular measurements of our faith, it is imperative that we constantly explore and reassess this crucial subject. Wuellner has meticulously and beautifully written a soul-stretching overview of this blessed experience that — now more than ever — can bring Jesus' words into our own lives.

At the end of each of the nine chapters, Wuellner includes a healing meditation so our hearts, not just our minds, will be touched. The structure of each meditation includes helpful, probing questions at the end to turn the meditation toward one's own situation in life. These meditations are equally suitable for adaptation to a group setting or private prayer.

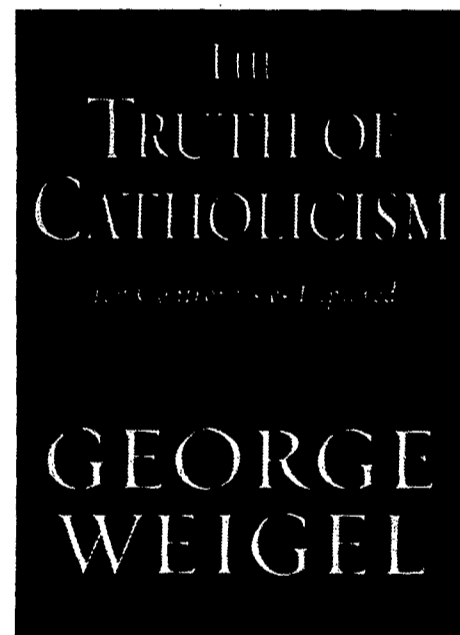
'Truth of Catholicism' born of misconceptions about church

By Father James Massa
Catholic News Service

The new evangelization of the new millennium, Pope John Paul II tells us, is a twofold task. Catholics must bring the Gospel to those who have not yet heard of Jesus Christ and reach out to those estranged from the church. It is for this latter group that papal biographer George Weigel has written *The Truth of Catholicism: Ten Controversies Explored*.

As he did in *Witness to Hope*, his highly acclaimed biography of Pope John Paul II, Weigel seeks to demonstrate that the truth of Catholicism is ultimately the truth about human existence.

This assertion is a tough sell. Weigel himself knows firsthand how the church today frequently evokes hatred and scorn, especially among those who think her teachings dehumanize and marginalize them. As one of the leading commentators on Catholic life and belief in the United States, he has frequently faced off with secular and more liberal Christian critics. This book originates from Weigel's encounter with many miscon-



ceptions about Catholic teaching and practice during his 16-month book tour for the papal biography.

Weigel brings considerable theological expertise to the 10 controversies — such

difficult issues as the uniqueness of Christ among the religions, the all-male priesthood within the symbolic structure of worship, the invincible bond between sex and monogamous marriage, the co-existence of suffering and faith in a loving God, and the compatibility of Catholicism with American democracy. This last topic, which Weigel has written about before, has a new urgency today when anti-democratic forces threaten terror at home.

Weigel draws most heavily on the theology of Pope John Paul, in addition to authors who helped shape the Second Vatican Council. The current pope, like his church, resists the facile categories of liberal and conservative. He is best understood as an evangelizer who views dialogue with those of other beliefs as a core aspect of his ministry.

This concise book leads the reader to a penetrating engagement with the core convictions of Catholicism. It is a useful guide to candidates for full initiation into the Catholic Church, as well as to other adult believers who simply want a better grounding in the essentials of their

faith. Younger undergraduates enrolled in introductory courses in theology can benefit from Weigel's ability to show the practical import of church doctrine for their own lives. Far from being the "excess baggage weighing Catholics down on the journey of faith," the author contends, doctrine is the "vehicle that enables the journey to take place."

Catholic apologetics has perennially taken its cue from the First Letter of Peter, in which the apostle exhorts his readers to be prepared always to explain the reason for the hope that is in them (3:15). Peter then insists that this be done "with gentleness and respect."

The *Truth of Catholicism* represents perhaps the best in Catholic apologetics today, not only for demonstrating so compellingly the hope that continues to inhere in the Catholic vision of life, but also for treating with particular gentleness and respect the concerns of those who do not yet embrace this vision.

Father Massa is an associate professor of theology at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, N.Y.

COURIER CLASSIFIED

GENERAL

Announcements

ADOPTIONS The Catholic Courier does not publish adoption advertising. To obtain a list of agencies that serve birth mothers and adoptive parents, call 585-529-9530. Agencies wishing to be included on this list may send information to the Catholic Courier.

EMPLOYMENT

Help Wanted

GROWING BUSINESS NEEDS HELP! Work from home. Mail-order. E-Commerce. \$522+/wk PT. \$1000-4000/week FT. changeyourfuture4ever.com 888-207-9771.

MERCHANDISE

Wanted to Buy

Marilyn's Antiques
We buy all antiques & household goods for highest cash prices. One item or entire estate. Complete estate services. Appraisals, sales conducted.
585-647-2480
Home # 585-872-2239

SERVICES

Ceiling Repair

TEXTURED/SWIRLED CEILINGS: 9' x 12' ceiling only \$59! Water damaged, stained, poorly textured/swirled ceilings repaired, re-textured, re-painted, or made flat again. Any size drywall/plaster wall repairs. No job too small. 585/392-5076.

Masonry

MASONRY REPAIRS ALL TYPES, brick & cement step repairs, basement walls & garage foundation repairs. 40 years experience. Al Meyvis Sr. 323-1007

Moving & Hauling

K-D Moving & Storage, Inc.
Experience in office, household moving and deliveries.
Big or Small, We do them All!
473-6610/473-4357
23 Arlington St. Rochester, NY 14607
NYDOT#9657

Painting & Wallcovering

AL MEYVIS, JR.: Painting exterior/interior. Basement walls repaired/painted/wet basement problems/all type home repairs. Power washing for decks/homes. Small jobs welcome. NYS certified. 392-4435 or 323-2876.

Plaster Restoration
Wallpapering Painting

Free Estimates
585-482-3243
Terry & Nina McCullough
A Couple That Care



Classified
get the job done!

Place a Courier Classified Ad Call 585.529.9530

www.catholiccourier.com