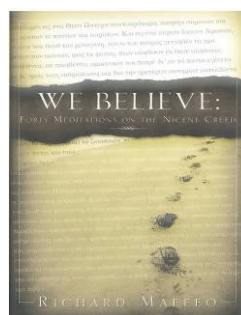


AN INTERVIEW WITH RICH MAFFEO

By:

TANNIA E. ORTIZ-LOPES

(<http://timewithtannia.tripod.com>)



About the Author: For more than three decades, Richard Maffeo worshiped in evangelical Protestant churches. He studied at Assemblies of God schools where he earned his baccalaureate degree in Bible and master's degree in Biblical Languages (Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic).

In 2003, a friend challenged him to study Catholic doctrine and compare it to what he already knew of Scripture and Church history. What he discovered caught him by surprise. Two years later, during the Easter Vigil of 2005, Richard was received into the Catholic Church.

Richard and his wife, Nancy, attend St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, in Tacoma, Washington, where he serves as a catechist for sixth graders and a Lay Eucharistic Minister. He and his wife are married more than thirty-two years and have three grown children.

Richard's website: www.richmaffeobooks.com.

1) How long have you been a freelance writer? How often do you publish?

I've been writing freelance for about 15 years. My inspirational articles and meditations have appeared in a diverse set of Protestant and Catholic magazines and newspapers. Several hundred published pieces, I suppose. Lately, though, I stopped writing individual essays and devoted my energies to writing books.

2) Is all your work based on personal events?

Yes, either personal experience or the experiences of others as they related them to me. I prefer the personal essay to the academic because, well, I prefer to read down-to-earth, this-is-where-I-live kind of stories.

3) You walked many roads to come and meet the Lord; Judaism, Evangelical Christian, and now Roman Catholic. How did your family and friends react to your conversion to Rome Catholic?

I was born into a Jewish home and converted to Christ in 1972 and worshiped, preached, taught and served in evangelical churches for thirty years. After my conversion from Judaism, I studied for the pastorate at Assemblies of God schools. My initial plan was to work among the Jewish people – and I almost did that. But finances, lack of faith, uncertainty, fear, and whatever else kept me from what I believed was my primary objective. Ultimately, I graduated from seminary with a baccalaureate degree in Bible and a master's degree in Biblical Languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic.) However, I never went into full time pastoral/missions work. Instead, I went to nursing school, became a registered nurse, worked as a civilian nurse for a few years, and then joined the US Navy as a nurse corps officer. I retire from active duty on June 1, 2007.

Then, in 2003 I began researching the Roman Catholic faith and was received into the Church during the Easter Vigil, 2005. Virtually all of my friends accepted my conversion to the Catholic Church because (I like to think) they respect my knowledge of Scripture and my walk with the Lord. I told them God brought me into the Catholic Church, that He changed my understanding about doctrine and Scriptures that can be interpreted to support Catholic doctrines (such as about papal primacy, Purgatory and the Blessed Mother), and they accepted my conversion as, well, as something God did with me. Because of my fairly extensive knowledge of both the Old and New Testaments, they trusted that what I experienced was genuinely from God – although they did not understand it. They certainly still see Scripture differently than I . . . but we maintain the same relationships we've always had.

Family, on the other hand, is a different story. My mom refuses to talk with me about the subject. She has completely compartmentalized that part of my life. My sister can't understand why I did what I did, but we have had some good conversations during which I was able to share the reason for my conversion. My wife remains a Protestant, but is a wonderful helpmeet. She attends Mass with me each week, we team-teach 6th grade CCD, and is quick to remind me of the Days of Obligation (which I tend to forget).

4) Your eyes were opened to the Lord and your spirit was uplifted by tough circumstances. Your awakening phase reminded me of two stories of rebirth: the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus and the Amazing Grace's story. Do you agree with my analogy? Please share your insight with us.

Yes, the analogy is appropriate. In 1972, when I discovered God loved me, despite my horrible past (drug abuse, the abortion I talked my girlfriend into having, arrogance and pride . . .) I thought it was too good to be true. I mean, I had a hard time accepting myself, after I saw my past through spiritually opened eyes . . . how could a holy God accept me and forgive me? But He not only accepted me, but He died in my place, paid my penalty so that I could share His righteousness. Talk about amazing grace . . . surely how sweet is that sound, to save a complete wretch like me.

That is why I have spent the last thirty-plus years telling as many others as I can tell, "God loves you. He's not mad at you. He only waits for you to turn your life over to His control, to obey Him and seek Him above all else."

One of the wonderful things I have found in the Catholic Church is the Sacrament of the Eucharist. I mean, think of it . . . at each Mass, the Second Person of the Trinity comes so physically near to us – body, blood, soul and divinity! It’s a wonder we don’t tear off the shoes from our feet and fall to our knees. Truly, we stand on holy ground.

5) Tell us about your first Catholic book, “*We Believe:*” *Meditations on the Nicene Creed.*

“**We Believe**” is a compilation of forty meditations rooted in the Nicene Creed. I based each meditation around a personal experience, or the experiences of others I’ve known. I designed the meditations to encourage quiet reflection about how the Creed applies to our lives.

6) What motivated you to write it?

We say the Creed so very quickly . . . less than 30 seconds (I timed it once). There is no way I can meditate on what is the foundation of our faith in 30 seconds. So one day I went home and began thinking about the Creed. What does it mean? How does it apply to my life in the 21st century? DOES it apply to my life?

And so I began to parse the creed into words and phrases, mulling over in my mind the concepts we say at each Mass. And then I thought, if “I” have difficulty understanding the import and value of the Creed during the recitation, others probably do as well. So I wrote the book to help the Catholic (and non-Catholic) in the pew to slow down and think more deeply about our faith.

7) Why did you choose this Catholic prayer?

I had thought about writing on the Apostle’s Creed, or the Lord’s Prayer, but decided on the Nicene Creed because I was not familiar with it. Though liturgical Protestant churches, such as Lutherans, Anglicans and Episcopalians, say the Nicene Creed during their worship services, non-liturgical Protestants rarely say it. In fact, I can count on one hand – maybe two – how often I recited the Nicene Creed in the thirty years we attended non-liturgical churches, such as Nazarene, Baptist and Pentecostal.

8) How can Catholics and non-Catholics benefit from reading your book?

I think all of us have an inexhaustible ability to take the sacred and make it rote. Catholics and non-Catholics will benefit from my book if what they read helps them slow down in their faith journey. We can see a lot more along the roadway if we walk, than if we drive our car at 50 miles per hour. Likewise with our faith, we will see more, sense His presence more, if we amble along, our hand in His, and not rush about like so many of us seem to do.

9) Where can our readers purchase your book?

The book is available on my website: www.richmaffeobooks.com. It is also available through Amazon.com. I will autograph books purchased through my website upon request. I also offer a free bi-monthly meditation via e-letter. Sign up for it via my website, or at richmaffeobooks@gmail.com.

10) How can our readers contact you?

I can be contacted by email at richmaffeobooks@gmail.com

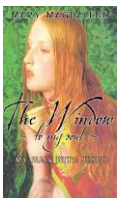
11) Are you working on any new material? If yes, when will it be available for purchase?

Yes, I am working on two new books. The first, Journey of Reflection, will be published early in 2008. My third book – tentative title is: A Season with St. Paul in Prison – will be based around St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians (I anticipate publication in early 2009).

Both books are stand-alone works. Each uses personal experiences and anecdotes to illustrate specific points to help the reader along his or her journey of faith. Some people I've met act as though our Christian faith is a one-time event, such as baptism or confirmation. Some act as though it's a sprint. I believe it is a marathon, a long trot toward the upward call of God, during which we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses urging us on and praying for our success.

12) A word of advice to those looking for an intimate relationship with Jesus.

How badly do we want to know Him? How intimate do we wish to become with Him? It has been my experience that I know Him and sense Him commensurate with my willingness to spend time with Him in prayer, study of Scripture and participation (and meditation on their importance) of the Sacraments, especially (for me) of Reconciliation and the Eucharist.

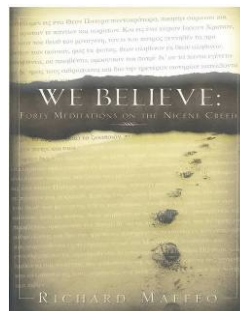


Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopés is a writer by profession, a mother by choice, and a wife by the covenant of marriage. She was born in Guayama, Puerto Rico and currently live in Germany with her husband and two sons. On 2004, she published her first free-style inspirational poetry book, *The Window to my soul, My Walk with Jesus* (Tate Publishing) under the pen name of Mary Magdalene. In March 2006, the book was voted "Best Poetry Book" by www.christianstoryteller.com The book could be purchased directly from the publisher at www.tatepublishing.com and at all major online stores.

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BOOK REVIEW

We Believe - Forty Meditations on the Nicene Creed



In his book, *We Believe*, Rich Maffeo guides us on a journey to the core of our Catholic faith, The Nicene Creed. This prayer defines our church family and shows us with fresh eyes the cornerstone, Jesus the Christ. Every time we recite this prayer, we proclaim in union with the angels, the prophets, and the Saints, the divinity and humanity of Jesus. It summarizes God's unconditional love for us, and the path of salvation.

Each meditation is simple, profound, and thought provoking. It exposes us to a better understanding of our need for a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus!

This is a must read for all Catholics and non-Catholics curious about our traditions and our ways of worship.

I strongly recommend this book to be added to all churches resource libraries. It is an excellent tool to help the youth prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation. The book provides daily living examples and show the youth ways to find Jesus in the midst of their busy lives.

Tannia E. Ortiz-Lopes author of *The Window to my Soul; My Walk with Jesus*.
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