



Catholic Book Spotlight – Sheep and Goat Go to the Ice Cream Parlor

Posted by [Lisa Hendey](#) on September 5th, 2011 in [Book Club](#), [Columnists](#)



Today, I'm happy to share my recent interview conversation with Tim Maurer of the Global Institute for Transformation. Tim is doing fantastic work to encourage and support families in their faith formation. I hope you'll enjoy his comments below and that you will pay a visit to both the [Sheep and Goat](#) and [GIFT](#) websites for more information.

Q: Thank you for taking the time to share your work with our readers Tim. Please begin by introducing yourself and your family.

I'm a father of four and married to Roberta a wonderful Godly woman and mom. Our children are Rachel, age 21; Stephen, age 18; Paul, age 15 and Naomi, age 13. We attend St. Matthew parish, in Tolland, CT.

Q: Please tell us about [Sheep and Goat Go to the Ice Cream Parlor](#). What prompted you to write the book and what message does the story convey?

Catholic moms may be familiar with the song, "Whatsoever you do," by Father Willard Jabusch. Both the song and [Sheep & Goat Go To The Ice Cream Parlor](#) are based on the same, core social justice teaching Parable in Matthew 25: 31-46. "When I was hungry you gave me to eat..." It says whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters, that we do for Jesus. And it concludes, "Now enter the home of my father." This beautiful song was one of my favorites when I was growing up. And it's essential Catholic teaching about the Final Judgment.

When I first read the entire Parable, I saw how the Lord will come back and separate the people “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” Those who cared for their brothers and sisters during their time in this world will be placed with the sheep, among those who are invited into God’s kingdom. Conversely, those with the goats will be told to depart from Jesus and will be condemned, because they failed to care for their brothers and sisters.

And I felt it was essential to get this message to my children, but in a digestible, memorable, and child-like manner. At first, I would place each of my children on my right knee, read the Parable and say, “Yeah, we’re with the sheep — now enter God’s kingdom, enter Heaven. Because you showed someone love.” After that, I’d move them to my left knee and say, “Oh, no! We’re with the Goats! Because we didn’t show love.” And we’d go back and forth to emphasize the need to show love to our fellow man.

After observing this recurring over time, my wonderful, Godly wife, Roberta, encouraged me to make a story out of the Parable to share the experience with all children. The story literally just came to me not long after that.

Q: I know that “Sheep and Goat” is an initiative of the Global Institute for Transformation. Please explain “GIFT” to our readers and tell us how this book for children supports GIFT’s overall mission in the Church.

At its inception, Global Institute For Transformation (GIFT) was endorsed by Archbishop Elden Curtis (since retired, Omaha Archdiocese), as GIFT focuses on both Spiritual and Corporal Works Of Mercy, Archbishop Curtiss explains GIFT nicely, “The Global Institute For Transformation (GIFT) is a cross-denominational ministry that’s helping transform lives so we’ll live, and love, more like Jesus — and transform our world. Given all the challenges in today’s world, GIFT is sorely needed. Through several ministries ranging from production of posters and note-cards to the placing of water filtration systems in third world countries, GIFT is helping people be transformed by using their time, talents and treasures with the power of the Holy Spirit in their own families, communities and nations. I enthusiastically support the mission of GIFT...”

GIFT is purposefully a cross-denominational ministry that helps Catholics fulfill on key USCCB teachings in the “Document on the Laity — Co-Workers In The Vineyard Of The Lord” which explains, ***“All of the baptized (Catholics and Protestants) are called to work toward the transformation of the world...All of the faithful are called in various ways to share in the Church’s mission of announcing the reign of God and transforming the world in the light of Christ.”***

Importantly, this focus on working toward the transformation of the world is recurring teaching across many Church programs and messages. Key Catholic social justice teaching wonderfully explains we should **Act, Reflect, Transform. Act** (to address situations of need), **Reflect** (on root causes of situations through prayer, contemplation and innovation) and **Transform** (the situation addressing the root cause and other issues through working in advocacy, leadership, program design and management, etc.)

In fact, Catholic moms may appreciate that during the last World Youth Day, the Holy Father emphasized our need to work toward the transformation of the world, *“In the end, life is not about accumulation. It is much more than success. To be truly alive is to be transformed from within, open to the energy of God’s love. In accepting the power of the Holy Spirit, you too can transform your families, communities and nations.”*

GIFT seeks to help the Church and our fellow Parishioners work across all denominations to fulfill on that USCCB calling and recurring Church teaching — and in the process convey key Catholic tenets through both Spiritual and Corporal Works Of Mercy. GIFT’s mission is “Transforming hearts, lives and communities by helping people receive, fan into flame and share the gift(s) of God.”

We’ve worked along side Parishes using our [*Sheep & Goat Go To The Ice Cream Parlor*](#) and “Celebrate Our Creator” curriculum in Vacation Bible Schools, providing Scripture Posters to reinforce mass readings and for display on bulletin boards, and placing water filtration in Guatemala. We’ve used our Scripture Posters in conjunction with Renew International to invite people to “Why Catholic?”

One a side note, we once surveyed Catholics and asked what we’re called to do, with aided response promptings such as 1.) love like Jesus, 2.) perform social justice, 3.) work toward the transformation of the world, along with a few other prompts, and nobody chose the prompting “work toward the transformation of the world.”

So we believe focusing on and encouraging people to work toward the transformation of the world is very important.

Q: The book’s charm is its ability to take a timeless biblical parable and retell it in modern terms young children can understand and identify with in their own lives. What reaction have children, families and teachers had to the book?

Kids have responded to the message with such enthusiasm during group readings. And parents have conveyed the children love the books. We have received multiple letters to that affect. Here are a few quotes:

“My daughter has hundreds of books she can choose from, but there are two that are her favorites. One is a pocket sized Bible, and the other is the Sheep & Goat book. Every time I read her the Sheep & Goat book I get chills as the story is moving, and I know God is working through this book,” writes Will Turner, a young father from Omaha.

“We love the book!!!! We read it at supper, and the kids had us read it over. The kids loved Sheep and Sheep’s friend PIG, and we asked them if they had any PIG friends and if they are a PIG to their friends. (PIG, Sheep’s friend, is also an acronym for Partner In Godliness). They also talked about how they can help people daily. What a great book!!!!!! We hope there are more books like this in the works. We want to send some to

our nieces and nephews. What a great message, and it was done in a way the kids loved,” writes the Neeley family from Lincoln.

One Catholic school teacher has invited us to her school to read as well.

Q: Do you have plans for any additional picture books for children?

I’d love to make *Sheep & Goat* into a series touching on each of the messages of love in Matthew 25, and develop the next one around welcoming the stranger. Roberta and I have worked in Refugee Resettlement and have seen the needs, and also how Catholic Charities helps out. And I’d love to encourage more of this loving support.

Q: How can our readers order the book or learn more about GIFT?

Your readers can learn more about GIFT via www.institutefortransformation.org.

They can learn more about *Sheep & Goat Go To The Ice Cream Parlor* and order the book through www.sheepandgoat.org We’re even launching a Sheep & Goat club to encourage people to share Christ’s love.

A link to purchase the book is: <http://www.sheepandgoat.org/Order-The-Book.html>.

Q: Are there any additional thoughts or comments you’d like to share with our readers?

We would encourage people to examine how they’re working toward the transformation of the world through the love of Christ, as encouraged via Co-Workers In The Vineyard Of The Lord and across Catholic teaching.

And if anyone would like to use GIFT resources in their home, Parish or Catholic school, please feel free to have them contact me at 402-212-7973; tim.maurer@institutefortransformation.org.

We also have a GIFT Shoppe in the website to order properties. And properties help fund our global impact.

Certainly, if anyone would like to participate in helping GIFT transform lives, hearts and communities, we’d welcome volunteers as well. And should people want to donate to our overall mission and global impact, that would be so appreciated as well.