

VINE AND BRANCHES

The Monthly e-Newsletter of Rachel's Vineyard Ministries
December 2005

Rachel's Vineyard is on the web at: www.rachelsvineyard.org
Our national toll-free hotline is (877) HOPE-4-ME.

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Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreats for emotional and spiritual healing after abortion are held internationally. Rachel's Vineyard welcomes, women, men, couples, grandparents and abortion providers. Our retreats are held in both Catholic and Interdenominational settings. Rachel's Vineyard Ministries is a resource for clinical training, education, and healing models.

Rachel's Vineyard is a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization. All contributions are tax deductible. We work in close partnership with Priests for Life and Gospel of Life Ministries.

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Help us spread the Good News! Pass along this newsletter to friends and colleagues. If you are receiving this newsletter because a friend forwarded it to you, details on subscribing (or unsubscribing) appear at the end.

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Was Rachel's Vineyard Weekend what you expected?

By Theresa White

Was the Rachel's Vineyard weekend what I expected? I was asked this question a week or so after the mountaintop retreat center faded in the rear-view mirror.

My answer: an unequivocal no.

I had expected a solo-journey of my heart and soul. Instead, I was drawn gently in to a gentle and strong community, a safe place, where the image of God was reflected in the faces of fellow travelers.

I had expected the shared stories of women to lead us on a pathway of unrelenting sorrow. I was surprised to find joy, like fragrant petals, strewn all along the way.

I expected tears would flow (explaining the boxes of tissue always within arm's reach). I never imagined that our tears would blend together to wash the feet of Jesus, our mutual friend.

I had expected the Holy Spirit to be present. But I had never imagined that the love of the Father would shine so brightly from young and old, women and men.

My great expectations were far exceeded. After Rachel's Vineyard, we sing a new song; we stand a little taller, we walk a whole lot lighter. On wings like eagles we fly, set free by the Father's perfect love.

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Salvation Begins with a Little Child

By Kevin Burke, MSS/LSW

Associate Director, Rachel's Vineyard

The Christmas season is always a kind of paradox. On one hand it is a joyful time of preparation, lights, and sharing in the child-like excitement and anticipation of the Holidays. But I know that many of us also can be surprised to find alongside this joy a deep sadness and longing. Perhaps we are missing a deceased parent, sibling, child or friend. The holidays are powerful connectors to our personal history and the activities, rituals and music of this magical time can also surface profound grief and even anger at our losses. This can add to feeling impatient and stressed by the demands of the holiday. It is important during this hectic season to take time in prayer to remember and honor those loved ones. We may need to share our feelings with a special friend or support person. We may also need to lower the demands and expectations that others place upon us, or more likely, that you may place upon yourself during this season.

For persons who have lost a child to abortion, and have not found healing, the season can be especially painful; for this is the time of year we celebrate the birth of a child. It is essential that during this time of year that we continue to raise awareness of the reality of post abortion grief and invitations for healing. With healing, those who have suffered the loss of a child can enter the joy of the season knowing that with the incarnation of our Savior, they can celebrate the saving power of God coming in a little child and in a certain sense through the repentance and reconciliation to God and their own children.

Certainly, in this ministry we discover that God can transform even the loss of children to abortion as a means to bring us home to Him. This is only possible because of the Incarnation. Because Jesus was born of Mary, mothers and fathers have the real hope and expectation of one day embracing their aborted children in heaven for all eternity; the separation from their children is only temporary. These precious little ones are ever present in the depths of each parent's heart and soul because they have found healing and reconciliation and can now embrace them with love. As we embrace our children, the humble heart also receives the wondrous and miraculous gift -- the Christ.

This is a timeless and eternal mystery - that the Creator of the universe came to save and redeem his broken human family through a child. God incarnated in the Christ child born in the most simple, humble surroundings to a Jewish peasant girl named Mary. May this mystery fill your hearts with the greatest peace and joy this Advent and Christmas season.

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Christmas... that magic blanket that wraps itself about us, that something so intangible that it is like a fragrance. It may weave a spell of nostalgia. Christmas may be a day of feasting, or of prayer, but always it will be a day of remembrance -- a day in which we think of everything we have ever loved

Augusta E. Rundel

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A Note from the Pastoral Director

Dear Friends,

The work of healing and the season of Advent go hand in hand. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill made low.” The prophecies of the coming of Christ are prophecies about how the whole universe will be healed – and healed in and through the One who comes.

Yet when he came, “there was no room in the inn.” How could there have been no room for the Son of God, who owns the inn, and Bethlehem, and every inch of room in the entire universe? Could God, who announced through the prophets hundreds of years before the first Christmas that He would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem, have possibly forgotten this detail of the planning?

Of course not. Obviously, God did this on purpose, to show that the One who comes is coming into a world that is broken, that has rejected him, and that needs his healing. Today, he does not seek room in the inn, but room in our hearts. When we make room for him, we are healed, and we heal others.

Let this Advent renew all of us in the grace and mission of healing!

With prayers,
Fr. Frank Pavone
Pastoral Director
Chairman of the Board

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Whatever else be lost among the years, Let us keep Christmas still a shining thing: Whatever doubts assail us, or what fears, Let us hold close one day, remembering its poignant meaning for the hearts of men. Let us get back our childlike faith again

Grace Noll Crowell

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International Leadership Conference

By Theresa Burke, Ph.D. Founder, Rachel’s Vineyard Ministries

Our International Rachel’s Vineyard Leadership Conference this year was an incredible success! High up in the desert mountains of California, 150 leaders and team members from Rachel’s Vineyard spent the week at the San Damiano Retreat House. International representatives came from throughout the world: as far away as Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, Africa, Northern and Southern Ireland, Canada, Australia, and South America. Our senses were stimulated by incredible scenery, mountain vistas and exotic vegetation amidst the deer and wildlife that paraded past the open glass meeting rooms and gardens. Monika Rodman and her staff from “After the Choice” of the Diocese of Oakland did an outstanding job in organizing numerous details while extending warm and gracious hospitality that nurtured us with comfort throughout the week.

We had a wonderful combination of clinical building classes, personal growth opportunities and spiritual refreshment – and of course outrageous fun! I know my bus returning from dinner in

San Francisco shared more laughter than an all night comedy club! It was a tremendous time for fellowship, fun, learning and re-charging for another year of ministry, outreach and unstoppable growth. We also welcomed many individuals from numerous denominations, seeking to establish Rachel's Vineyard in interdenominational settings. In 2006, we anticipate over 350 Rachel's Vineyard weekends for healing. We continue to expand at a 40% growth rate. Although this has been challenging to keep up with, we remain exceptionally grateful to Priests for Life for their tremendous commitment to Rachel's Vineyard Ministries, in helping us continue in our mission and ministry as it continues to expand throughout the world. We are also exceptionally thankful for all those leaders and team members who have said "yes" to the ministry invitation from God in Rachel's Vineyard. This "yes" is in itself the pinnacle of grace; but, coming from us, it is also the highest achievement made possible by grace: an unconditional, definitive act of self-surrender. It is supreme faith, hope and love out of which arises an observable commitment to build up the broken body of Christ.

I felt so much joy and love at our leadership conference. As a dear friend wrote to me following the training: "Our leaders are a work of heart! It has been a great joy to finally make it to a Rachel's Vineyard Leadership Conference. Hearing about God's work over the years pales, compared to being here and experiencing the anointing on you and on your precious Rachel's Vineyard brothers and sisters. Wow! Thank you for pouring your life out for your God and his people."

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The most powerful energy on earth is the human soul on fire.
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We Are Called to Give Birth to Christ in Our Lives

In Luke 1:29-38 the angel Gabriel said to Mary "Don't be fear, Mary. You have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus." Mary was troubled by this announcement. She didn't understand how this could be. The angel answered her: "the Most High will overshadow you; hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God." Mary's answer was a complete and total surrender. Mary said: "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." Mary put her own fear of inadequacy aside and trusted God's will for her.

Today in the vineyard we experience a similar situation. Sometimes we are troubled with the news that God is calling us to do his work. He is asking us to surrender to His holy will and let the Holy Spirit overshadow us with Christ. He asks us to give birth to Christ in our daily lives. He asks us to share this new life with everyone. It is hard to accept the call when we have our own fears of inadequacy. Like Mary we ask ourselves how this can be. We tell ourselves that we aren't qualified, or good enough. The answer to this is question is simple. Trust in God. He qualifies the called.

This Christmas season there are many ways to give birth to Christ in our lives. It may be taking extra time in prayer thanking God for the many gifts He has given us, helping a neighbor, or working in the vineyard. Please consider supporting our efforts with your prayers and assist us by sending a tax-deductible donation of \$1,000...\$500...\$100...or even \$25 to defray our training and retreat costs. Click here: <http://www.rachelsvineyard.org/support/support.htm> to contribute via credit card or PayPal or send an e-mail directly to me t.burke@rachelsvineyard.org

and I will forward a postage-paid envelope or you can send a donation directly to Rachel's Vineyard Ministries, 800 N. Henderson Road, King of Prussia, Pa. 19406.

Theresa Burke, Ph.D.

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Reflections on the International Leadership Conference

By Susan Swander

This was my first International Conference. I was pleasantly overwhelmed. It was terrific!!! I would be remiss if I didn't start out by thanking Monika Rodman of the Oakland Rachel's Vineyard team for all of her amazing work, planning, organization and calm.

As a relative newcomer to the Oregon Rachel's Vineyard team, I have so much to learn. The Conference allowed me to gain a wealth of knowledge and experience from those who have been working in the ministry for years. A huge thanks to all of you who shared so generously at the Conference!

My only complaint is that I couldn't attend all of the workshops that I wanted to. Among others, I missed Scott Miller's Ministering to Men and Theresa's Care-fronting. I will rely on my team mates and the tapes to fill me in on the ones that I missed.

Of particular value to me was Fr. Ben Cameron's workshop, "Emotional and Spiritual Roots of Abortion." This gave me some good material to use when speaking with people on why to avoid situations that can lead to an unplanned pregnancy.

The panel discussion on Aftercare gave me some new ideas and ways that I can improve my personal involvement in the lives of our retreatants after the retreat.

Theresa's workshop, "Am I Ready to Lead?" gave me much food for thought. I came away with many questions for myself about how to be a good leader, how to be a good team member, and how to be a good branch on the vine.

It was such a blessing to hear Fr. Frank Pavone in person and such an honor to shake his hand and thank him for his work. What a wonderful, kind, compassionate man and defender of life. We are blessed to have him as our Pastoral Director.

The Tuesday evening concert and Holy Hour with Michael John Poirier was utterly spell-binding and deeply, deeply moving. His devotion to Christ in the Eucharist touched my soul.

It was such fun to meet the Vineyard workers at the Conference – people from all over the States & the world – and to spend time, talking, sharing and laughing together.

Finally, the opportunity that God gave me to participate in the Conference as a presenter was truly humbling. Speaking out of my own experience both as a sober alcoholic and as a healing post abortion woman allowed me to join formally and publicly the two healing parts of my life. What a blessing this was for me!

To those of you involved in Rachel's Vineyard Ministries who have never gone to an International Conference – I urge you to attend the next one!!! May God continue to bless Rachel's Vineyard!

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Let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.

1 John: 3

Clinical Training and Speaking Engagements

- January 13 Cathedral Committee for Protection of Life – Atlanta, Georgia
Contact: Dottie O'Connor
Cathedral of Christ the King, Atlanta, Georgia
(404) 233-2145 ext. 440
- January 14 Regional Skills Building Clinic – Atlanta, Georgia
Contact: Mary Ann McNeil
- January 23 March For Life – Washington DC
EWTN Broadcasts Live with guests from Rachel's Vineyard
Silent No More Awareness Campaign
- January 26-28 Lethbridge, Alberta - Canada Clinical Training
Contact: Cheryl lprolife@shaw.ca
Lethbridge and District Pro-Life
- March 3 Clinical Training, Jacksonville, Florida
(Kevin and Theresa will be presenting)
Contact Donna Augustine daugustine3@msn.com
- March 20-22 From Grief to Grace – Reclaiming the Gift of Sexuality
A new retreat model for those who have been victims of sexual abuse
Malvern Retreat House, Pennsylvania
Contact Katie (610) 354-0555 katie@rachelvineyard.org
- March 23-24 Facilitator Training – From Grief to Grace
Malvern Retreat House, Pennsylvania
Contact Katie (610) 354-0555 katie@rachelvineyard.org
- March 25 Clinical Training Baltimore, Maryland
(Kevin and Theresa will be presenting)
Contact Denise Douglass projectrachel@archbalt.org

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Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Schedule

December 2005 – January 2006

December 2-4, 2005 -- Minneapolis / St. Paul, Minnesota
Contact: [Nancy Blom](#) 952 882 2072

December 2-4, 2005 -- Wichita, Kansas
Local host: Rachel's Vineyard of the Diocese of Wichita
Contact: [Yvonne or Lori](#) 316 269 4673 or 1-888-456-4673 (statewide only)

December 2-4, 2005 -- Columbia / Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
Contact: [Joy Crimmins](#) 717 993 5450

December 2-4, 2005 -- Edmonton and Rural Area
Contact: [Marlene Javorsky](#) 780 424 4538 or 1 877 579 3223
Contact: [Carla Houston](#)
Note: Interdenominational Retreat

December 9-11, 2005 -- Sydney, Australia
Contact: [Julie Kelly](#) 02 9440 7980

December 9-11, 2005 -- Greensboro, North Carolina
Local host: Diocese of Charlotte
Note: Catholic Retreat
Contact: [Martha Shuping](#) 336-287-8421 (cell)

January 6-8, 2006 -- Fort Worth, Texas
Contact: [Betsy Kopor](#) 817 923 4757

January 6-8, 2006 -- Greensboro, North Carolina
Local host: Diocese of Charlotte
Note: Catholic Retreat
Contact: [Martha Shuping](#) 336-287-8421 (cell)

January 13-15, 2006 -- Linden, New Jersey
Contact: [Michelle Krystofik](#) 732 388 8211

January 13-15, 2006 -- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Contact: [Susan Lepak](#) 405 721 5651 ext 107

January 13-15, 2006 -- Rock Hill, South Carolina
Contact: [Martha](#) 336 659 1342 or 336 287 8421

January 20-22, 2006 -- Valley City, North Dakota
Contact: [Shelly Stone](#) 218 689 5454 or 500 241 5454

January 20-22, 2006 -- Cherry Hill, New Jersey
Contact: [Stephanie Claudy](#) 866 4 RACHEL

January 27-29, 2006 -- Fairfield County, Connecticut
Contact: [Clarissa Cincotta](#) 203 218 0291

January 27-29, 2006 -- Tulsa, Oklahoma
Contact: [Mary Lee](#) 918 585 8167 ext. 212

January 27-29, 2006 -- Amarillo, Texas
Contact: [Gwen Johns](#) 806 678-4673
Note: Interdenominational Retreat

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