

Vine and Branches

The Monthly e-Newsletter of Rachel's Vineyard Ministries *March 2010*

Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreats for emotional and spiritual healing after abortion are held internationally. Rachel's Vineyard welcomes women, men, couples, grandparents and former 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 partnership with Priests for Life and Gospel of Life Ministries.

Rachel's Vineyard Ministries is available on the web at www.rachelsvineyard.org and through our 24/7 help line 1-877-HOPE-4-ME.

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How Men are Harmed by Abortion

By Father Tadeusz Pacholczyk

An important but often unacknowledged angle of the abortion debate involves the serious effects that legalized abortion has on men.

A recent scandal surrounding John Edwards, former North Carolina Senator and U.S. presidential candidate, brought this issue into plain view. Mr. Edwards publicly acknowledged an extramarital affair with Rielle Hunter in the summer of 2008, a few months after pulling out of the presidential race. Even after admitting to the affair, however, he continued to deny having fathered Ms. Hunter's daughter, Quinn, until January of 2010 when he finally admitted that he was, in fact, her father.

A former aide to Mr. Edwards has just published a tell-all book describing how Mr. Edwards tried to coerce Ms. Hunter to get an abortion. Commentator Jill Stanek analyzed the situation this way: "Fortunately, Hunter resisted this all too typical coercive attempt by a sexually exploitative and irresponsible man to abort his own baby. Of course Edwards is a pro-abortion, which as we see is incredibly self-serving for men. Edwards was ready to sacrifice his own baby for political and personal expediency."

Mr. Edward's extramarital activities remind us how legalized abortion has the clear and pronounced effect of supporting sexual infidelity, providing "cover" and encouraging men to become less responsible and accountable for their personal choices. It enables men to justify and get away with sexual license.

Abortion hurts men in other, more direct ways as well. The fact that upwards of 3000 abortions occur each day in the U.S. implies the obvious corollary that about 3000 men lose a son or daughter each day to abortion. Some of these men may have encouraged or pressured their partners to abort; others may have strongly resisted; still others may not have known they were fathers until afterwards.

What is not widely acknowledged is that men can and do suffer emotionally and spiritually from their loss. It seems fair to say that men are not often encouraged to acknowledge their emotions around this issue -- whether relief, grief, anger, or resentment.

As post-abortion healing ministries like Rachel's Vineyard have expanded in recent years, many women along with their husbands or male partners have come to seek help in dealing with the negative effects of their abortion. A growing number of men have found themselves regretting their involvement in an abortion, and various websites now include testimonies from men who have lost a child this way (cf. rachelvineyard.org or priestsforlife.org).

Many of the testimonies are poignant, raw and searingly honest. Phil McCombs, a Washington Post Staff writer shared his own post-abortive struggles in a 1995 article in the Post:

"I feel like a murderer, which isn't to say that I blame anyone else, or think anyone else is a murderer. It's just the way I feel and all the rationalizations in the world haven't changed this. I still grieve for little Thomas. It is an ocean of grief. From somewhere in the distant past I remember the phrase from Shakespeare, the multitudinous seas, "incarnadine." When I go up to the river on vacation this summer, he won't be going boating with me on the lovely old wooden runabout that I can't really afford to put in the water but can't bring myself to discard, either. He won't be lying on the grass by the tent at night looking at the starry sky and saying, "What's that one called, Dad?" Because there was no room on the Earth for Thomas."

Another anonymous father wrote a letter, excerpted here, to his deceased son as part of his own journey towards healing and peace:

"My Dear John Peter -- This past weekend I did something I should have done a very long time ago. I confessed to your death by abortion. John, you would today be a young man of twenty, vibrant and alive... Tears come again John, as they did Saturday night... In the fall, John, when the leaves fall from the trees I shall think of you, for you too fell from life. In the cold of winter, John, the snow shall remind me of you: for like the snow you were and are white and pure. In the spring, John, I shall think of you: for the birth of spring shall remind me that you, too should have been born into this world. John, I shall think of you in the summer: I shall imagine your laughter. I shall see you as you might have been, a little boy running and playing, scraping your knees from a fall. I shall miss, John, all that I might have gained from your life. My Little One, John Peter, I can only now ask you to forgive me as Jesus and God have done. May you rest in the arms of God -- Dad"

The deep emotional scarring of both men and women that follows in the wake of legalized abortion should be a growing concern for all of us, and should challenge us to craft a more just society where every man, woman and child is unconditionally protected, respected, welcomed and loved.

This article is reprinted with permission of the author, Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. Father Pacholczyk writes a monthly column, Making Sense out of Bioethics, which appears in newspapers in the US, Canada and Australia. See:
<http://www.ncbcenter.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=249>

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org

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Rachel's Vineyard Leadership Conference-Save the Date

The next Rachel's Vineyard Leadership Conference will take place July 18th-21st, 2011. Mark your calendars now and save the dates for an incredible experience that you won't want to miss!

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Healing the Pain of Abortion...one Weekend at a Time The Archdiocese of Newark Offers 50th Rachel's Vineyard Retreat!

By Kevin Burke, LSW

In January the Archdiocese of Newark offered their 50th Rachel's Vineyard retreat and I was blessed to serve as team counselor for the weekend. It was an amazing manifestation of God's mercy and healing power as the women, men and couples were transformed as they journeyed through the paschal mystery of their lives.

The Rachel's Vineyard retreat is part of the outreach of the Archdiocese Respect Life Office and Director Fr Joseph Meagher and Associate Director Michelle Krystofik. Reflecting on the 50th retreat in their Archdiocese, Michelle said, " It seems like yesterday that we began this beautiful ministry. Msgr. Richard McGuinness, who was the Director in 1997 when we offered our first retreat, supported Rachel's Vineyard 100%. He attended every weekend up until his illness and death. He was a very wise and respected priest, which attracted many priests to this ministry. It is because of Msgr. that we have 2 or 3 priests on every weekend! We are blessed that Fr Joseph builds on this legacy and continues to support our Rachel's Vineyard ministry and serve on the weekend retreats"

It was an honor and joy to work with the site leader Michelle and her team of laity and priests. Each team member and their awesome hospitality volunteers, adoration and prayer warriors placed their personal and professional gifts at the service of the Holy Spirit as He led them to offer just the right support, encouragement and love to the participants to help them on their journey to the Heart of Jesus. Here they found the healing, peace and most importantly the ability to embrace the gift of forgiveness...something that many participants felt impossible given the gravity of their sin and the weight of their complicated grief, shame, anger and guilt. Thankfully as the retreat process unfolded they began to allow Jesus to carry the weight of that cross on His shoulders, uniting their pain with him to be transformed by his sacrificial death and resurrection.

The Lazarus Living Scripture exercise on Saturday afternoon of the retreat is an appropriate metaphor for the entire retreat experience itself. Observing people come out from their caves of death, grief and shame and seeing them physically, emotionally and spiritually set free is awesome! Even after 50 retreats, the beauty and fruits of this process are ever new and glorious!

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A Note from the Pastoral Director

By Fr. Frank Pavone

Dear Friends,

The Word of God tells us that salvation is not only a matter of believing in the heart, but also of confessing with the lips. The Word of truth has to be spoken. Just as this eternal Word did not remain enclosed in God, but rather was spoken out loud, leading to creation and redemption, so the Word planted in our hearts does not remain internal. It becomes external. It is spoken, proclaimed, and heard.

That word of truth is also the word of healing. This is why, in the course of every Rachel's Vineyard retreat that Word is spoken openly by each participant. The word of pain, the word of repentance, the words that come through the tears, the word of hope, the word of anger, the word of forgiveness, the word of new life - all of this is part of Rachel's Vineyard. That is so precisely because the dynamic of speaking the Word is part of God's plan of salvation. He doesn't want to simply heal in a quiet, secret, solitary setting. He wants His people to come together and speak to and listen to each other! Hence we become part of a community of healing.

Those who are so called, moreover, take the further step of speaking the word of healing publicly through the Silent No More Awareness Campaign. That is not everyone's calling, but those who do it are making a profound impact and appreciate your prayers.

And we are promised that God's Word, through which all things came to be, will not return to him void. It will accomplish the end for which it was sent.

That's why you and I can be confident, as we continue to spread the work of Rachel's Vineyard and invite the world to healing. Thanks for what you do to be vessels of truth and mercy!

Sincerely,
Fr. Frank Pavone
Pastoral Director and Chairman, Rachel's Vineyard
National Director, Priests for Life

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A Letter from a Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Participant

The following is a letter from a retreat participant who attended a Rachel's Vineyard retreat at the Fairfield County, Connecticut site led by Clarissa Cincotta:

I just wanted to express my sincerest thanks to you and all the compassionate people who help to make the Rachel's Vineyard retreat such an extraordinary experience. I was truly moved by how caring everyone was. I really felt like I was wrapped in a cocoon of love and warmth, protected from the judgments and distractions of the outside world. You've created a safe place where healing and forgiveness can begin. From the moment I was greeted at the door by your friendly, cheerful volunteers, I had the sense that I was in a special place. The guest rooms are cozy and pleasant. I was so impressed by all the thoughtful details like the gift baskets and beautiful flowers. Such beautiful flowers everywhere, from the guest rooms to the upper room and especially the dining room. I know that I expressed my gratitude in person but I feel the need to reiterate. The food was outstanding. The table settings were amazing. You really made me feel pampered and special. I was really overwhelmed by the depth of your compassion.

All of the exercises and the living scriptures that we enacted really helped to heal the heart and lift the spirit. Being able to unburden all of the guilt and the anger and the grief and share my

story with others felt like a cleansing river of life washing the stains off my soul, rushing over me, carrying me to the bright, sandy banks where my new journey could begin with renewed hope and faith. Again, the awakening of the senses, the passing of the stone, the lighting of the candles, all the meditations had such a profound effect on me. They really captured the depth of God's forgiveness and love for each us. I am truly grateful for having been able to experience this retreat. I keep the prayer shawl draped over the footboard of my bed. I wrap it around my shoulders when I read each night. It reminds me of the warm embrace of God's love and the wonderful people who make Rachel's Vineyard a sanctuary of hope for those suffering from the effects of abortion.

I can't say it enough, thank you for everything.

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Upcoming Grief to Grace Retreat

Healing the Wounds of Abuse- Reclaiming the Gift of Sexual Dignity

Grief to Grace - Healing the wounds of Abuse will be held in a number of different locations this year. If you or someone you care about is suffering because of past abuse visit www.griefftoGrace.org . This new program was composed by Theresa and Kevin Burke, the founders of Rachel's Vineyard, to provide a psychological and spiritual healing journey for anyone impacted by sexual, physical, emotional abuse or neglect.

Kelowna, British Columbia

May 6-9, 2010

G2GKelowna@shaw.ca

Aston, Pennsylvania

June 6-10, 2010

info@griefftoGrace.org

For more information visit: www.griefftoGrace.org

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United in Prayer

We pray for the following intentions:

For an ongoing prayer for Wilma Lombardo as she undergoes radiation and chemotherapy for cancer. We pray this last phase of treatment will be successful.

For an ongoing prayer for Anita Sonntag of the Saskatchewan RV team who has been diagnosed with breast cancer. May she place her trust in God and know his healing comfort.

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Fetal Abnormality Abortions

Abortion due to Fetal Abnormality is often a controversial issue. Our newest publication *Sharing the Heart of Christ* explores the issue of poor prenatal diagnosis, abortion and the struggle to find healing.

The Following is an excerpt from:

Sharing the Heart of Christ: For Clergy Counselors and Laity in Post Abortion Ministry

[\(For Details and order Info click here\)](#)

Susan attended a Rachel's Vineyard Weekend Retreats after aborting a child diagnosed with a condition that would lead to her daughter's death shortly after birth. She expressed a desire to leave the retreat Saturday morning. Susan shared:

I don't fit in with these other women and men who freely chose abortion for "selfish" reasons. I had no choice. The choice I made was in the best interests of my child.

One of the priests serving on our retreat team spoke with her after breakfast on Saturday encouraging her to stay through the afternoon and then if she still felt the same way, she could leave. Because of her trust in this priest, and the help of the Holy Spirit she decided to stay.

A major breakthrough occurred for Susan following the Living Scripture Exercise of the Woman Healed of A Hemorrhage offered on Saturday afternoon... [Please click here to read the full article](#)

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A St. Patrick's Day Appeal

March brings with it signs of St. Patrick's Day and many mentions of the "luck of the Irish." But, it takes more than luck to experience the healing after the tragedy of abortion. You can help others to experience recovery by donating to Rachel's Vineyard this March.

Rachel's Vineyard Ministries is a non-profit organization. We are able to minister to those affected by abortion through your contributions and prayers.

Here's how to make a donation:

Online: www.RachelsVineyard.org/donate

By Phone: 610-354-0555

By Mail: P.O. Box 140130 Staten Island, NY 10314

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New Educational Series

An Educational Series on the Psychological and Spiritual Impact of Abortion is now available through Rachel's Vineyard. The series is called *Abortion Loss and Unresolved Grief*.

The set includes a collection of professionally produced DVD's of many of our presentations that we use in our clinical and pastoral trainings along with a number of talks by Fr Frank Pavone including "The Parish-Home for Healing, Healing for the Abortionist, and Facing the Need for Healing."

A Course Guide has been developed to use with the DVD set that provides an outline of each talk to help facilitate discussion as well as a course syllabus and sample exams. This set was made possible by a grant from Our Sunday Visitor. It also includes suggested reading and discussion questions for each lesson.

Suggested Donation: \$60.00

[Click here](#) to order or for more information.

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Rachel's Vineyard Bumper Stickers

Don't forget to check out our new Rachel's Vineyard bumper stickers! Our bumper stickers are a great way to spread the word about our healing ministry.

To order our bumper stickers please [Click here](#)

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Leadership Talks Now Available on CD

All of the talks from the Rachel's Vineyard Leadership conference in Malvern, PA were recorded live by Vincent & Barbara Sumoski (Love Tape/CD Ministry) and are available on CD for purchase. There were 45 excellent talks which may be purchased individually or by entire set. Each CD is a conference special price of only \$7.00 per disc and includes FREE shipping and handling. Other conference special incentives are available on the order form. Order forms may be obtained upon request at rvcds@sumoski.com, 601-779-8989, or in your 2009 Leadership Conference book.

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"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, wailing or pain, (for) the old order has passed away. The one who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Then he said, "Write these words down, for they are trustworthy and true."

~Revelation 21:4-5

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Overus~Supports Rachel's Vineyard

By Keith Miklas

Overus is a certification mark—similar to kosher, fair trade, or organic—but it identifies brands that respect Christian values. The goal is to enable you to practice good stewardship when shopping: you can just look for our logo. Overus is now supporting Rachel's Vineyard with a portion of its proceeds. Rachel's Vineyard encourages you to take a look at how your purchases can support Christian values.

For a list of certified brands, please see our Shopping Guide:

[Click here.](#)

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Upcoming Events and Trainings

March 5-6, 2010

Clinical/Regional Training-Spokane, WA

Speaker(s): Theresa Burke, PhD and Kevin Burke, LSW

Contact info: Sherri Olsen 509-868-7207 sheri@lifeservices.org

Event details: CEUs available

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