

Vine & Branches

*The Monthly e-newsletter of
Rachel's Vineyard Ministries*

December, 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 providers. Our retreats are held in both Catholic and Interdenominational settings. Rachel's 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. 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 line 1-877-HOPE-4-ME.

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Incarnation of Hope and Healing

By Kevin Burke

THE GOSPEL OF LIFE is at the heart of Jesus' message...At the dawn of salvation, it is the Birth of a Child which is proclaimed as joyful news: "I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2:10-11). The source of this "great joy" is the Birth of the Saviour; but Christmas also reveals the full meaning of every human birth, and the joy which accompanies the Birth of the Messiah is thus seen to be the foundation and fulfillment of joy at every child born into the world (cf. Jn 16:21)... The Church...feels called to proclaim to the people of all times this "Gospel", the source of invincible hope and true joy for every period of history...The Gospel of God's love for man, the Gospel of the dignity of the person and the Gospel of life are a single and indivisible Gospel. – Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life – Pope John Paul II)

The heart of healing abortion loss, involves creating a safe way to reconnect in love with the aborted child. Many of the symptoms of post abortion suffering (as outlined in Theresa's book *Forbidden Grief*, [click here](#) for more info) serve to call attention to this loss. Yet without education and healing these symptoms can also create a great obstacle to healing. This is reinforced by the collusion of media, academia, psychology and medicine to downplay the very real physical and emotional aftermath of abortion. This leaves so many women and men to suffer alone, or to live disconnected from this loss, and living lifestyles of hyper active denial, so easy to do in our busy culture.

As we enter this Advent season, the themes of Christmas can be painful reminders to many parents ...a very sad but real suffering for many at this time of year. The initiation of the frenzied Holiday shopping season initiated on Black Friday, reveals a deeper distraction in the heart of man that is at least partly due to the fact that we are *a post aborted nation*.

It is good to step back from all the hype and materialism to look at the progressive numbing of the Christmas message through excessive shopping and the holiday marketing blitzkrieg. This noise can drown out the voice in our soul which cries out for the greater gift of spiritual preparation in Advent. It can also serve to numb our hearts to the pain and loss of abortion that cries out for reconciliation and healing. It reveals our failure as a society to face the grief and loss of over 50 million abortions. As *Forbidden Grief* reveals, there is a very high price to pay for not doing the very painful and challenging work of grief.

But to those of us in the healing fields of Rachel's Vineyard, we know that this grief work is well worth the journey. Because we discover the heart of the Gospel message, "the indivisible Gospel of life." We discover as *Evangelium Vitae* proclaims, "the joy of every child born into the world." Rachel's Vineyard and the loving service of the retreat team allows the participants to pass through the dark and fearful past to rediscover that there is a special place in their hearts reserved for their lost child. Freeing the mother and father to safely grieve this loss, their role in their child's death, to forgive

others and embrace their children with love...this is "the source of invincible hope." This hope is real, it was once a baby in the arms of Mary, grew to proclaim God's Kingdom, and after giving His life for us, revealed the power of His Resurrection. Let us pray this Advent and Christmas that the infant Jesus will awaken in the hearts of all post abortive Mothers and Fathers a longing for reconciliation and healing. May the Christ Child lead them to their own children, and through the Church's ministry of post abortion healing may they find reconciliation and forgiveness and be freed to embrace their sons and daughters with the deepest love and affection.

"Christmas has lost its meaning for us because we have lost the spirit of expectancy. We cannot prepare for an observance. We must prepare for an experience."
~Handel Brown

Blanket of Love

By Clarissa Cincotta

Last October (2009), we hosted a Spanish retreat led by Cristina and Freddy Martinez. There was a 74 year old woman (we will call Mary) who heard their testimony in one of our churches and contacted Cristina. Mary said she needed to make the retreat before she died because she was elderly and not well. She told Cristina she didn't have any money, but Cristina let her know financial assistance was available.

Mary never sent in her registration form and Cristina had a difficult time contacting her, so we assumed she wasn't coming. On Friday night Mary arrived at the retreat center. Last minute scrambling was done to squeeze her into the already over-filled retreat. She made the retreat, had a wonderful healing experience and before she left, she said she could die in peace.

During the retreat all participants receive a prayer shawl. These are hand-made with love by local women who pray for the retreatants as they knit the shawls. The retreat participants are deeply touched by the love and prayers that have been lifted up for them well before their actual retreat, and the time taken to prepare the shawls for them.

Seventeen days after the retreat, Mary died of a stroke. Mary lived alone, so when she had the stroke no one was there to call for help and she died. This past weekend there was a one year memorial Mass for her. A friend of hers came up to Cristina and said that Mary had confided in her after the retreat about her abortion and gave her an instruction if she were to die:

"If I die, please make sure that the prayer shawl that I received on my Rachel's Vineyard retreat is wrapped around me in the casket because I want to bring it with me to Jesus and my baby."

So, she had the prayer shawl wrapped around Mary in the casket. This story brought tears to our eyes and really touched our hearts. It goes to show you how beautiful this ministry is and the affect it has on the participants. On the retreat, Mary was united with her baby and most of all, with Jesus.

Mary had a hole in her heart and soul because of the abortion and suffered many years with this loss. It meant so much to her to have that beautiful prayer shawl wrapped around her body as a memorial to her child when she was buried.

I thank God every day for this ministry.

Clarissa Cincotta coordinates Rachel's Vineyard in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Italy's First Retreat

In July, Monika Rodman Montanaro and the Italian team offered Italy's first Rachel's Vineyard retreat in Bologna, and in September they met again for the day-long follow-up reunion. Nine women and one single man made the entire weekend, while two husbands also joined them for Sunday's closing Memorial Service and Mass of Entrustment, in which participants commended their children to God's Mercy. Participants came not only from Bologna but from all over Italy: Florence, Turin, Rome, Verona, Genova, other areas of the center-north, and even from Sicily. Each brought the courage needed to do the inner work required by the weekend. The sharing and mutual support among participants was remarkable, and many have stayed in touch with each other since then. A couple who made the retreat will soon marry in the Church, after an abortion chosen together 10 years ago had seemed to make this step all but impossible. And several retreatants will travel to celebrate this sacrament with them!

Joining Monika and her husband Domenico on the retreat team were Valeria, a young Catholic psychotherapist in training from near Turin, who has collaborated with Monika since she arrived in Italy. Valeria made a Rachel's Vineyard retreat in Ireland and has trained with Theresa and Kevin Burke in England. The priest on team, Fra' Rosario, is a Franciscan hospital chaplain near Naples. His participation flowed quite naturally between that of a "retreatant" and, in the necessary moments, serving as team priest. This dual role, and the vulnerability which it required, were a special blessing to the other retreatants, as were the Dominican sisters who run the facility that hosted the retreat. In fact, both male and female retreatants commented on the nuns' heartfelt welcome and unobtrusive solicitude as a special grace!

The next retreat in Italy will be held February 18th, 2011- February 20th, 2011. Please keep Monika and team in your prayers as they continue to labor in the Vineyard.

A Note from the Pastoral Director

Dear Friends,

Once again, it was a great joy for me to travel internationally with Kevin and Theresa Burke, and also with Janet Morana, as we spread the word about Rachel's Vineyard in Austria in mid-November. This trip arose at the invitation of Cardinal Christoph Schönborn. We addressed a gathering of his priests, met with other bishops, and presented an all-day seminar at the International Theological Institute to students from countries including Mexico, Lithuania, Slovakia, Poland, Georgia, Ireland, China, and many others!

I trust that it no longer surprises you that people greeted us constantly with words like, "We never knew about all this damage abortion does," and "We don't have anything like this healing program in our country, and we need it!"

All of us are going to be very busy in the months and years ahead as Rachel's Vineyard, the world's largest ministry of healing after abortion, becomes even larger!

Blessings,

Fr. Frank Pavone

Pastoral Director and Chairman, Rachel's Vineyard

National Director, Priests for Life

Follow me at twitter.com/frfrankpavone

A Christmas Appeal

Christmas is a time for joy, laughter, and especially family. This Christmas, consider helping someone heal from the loss of a family member due to abortion. Give someone the gift of healing this Christmas.

Rachel's Vineyard Ministries is a non-profit organization. We are able to minister to those hurting after abortion through your contributions and prayers. We offer thanks and gratitude for all those who have supported Rachel's Vineyard this past year.

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

Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy's First Retreat

On the weekend of September 17-19, the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy held its first ever retreat at the Passionist Monastery in Whitesville, Kentucky. Ten ladies made the retreat, and eight of them were veterans of Rachel's Vineyard retreats for healing after abortion.

The theme of the retreat was "Holiness: The Answer to Abortion." Fr. Ben Cameron gave five talks relating to the call that we have for holiness of life — we are not only called to be forgiven for past abortions, or to be healed of the wounds of abortion, but we are called to be holy — to become Saints! We were blessed to pray the Liturgy of the Hours with the Passionist Nuns, and to have lots of quiet time for personal prayer and reflection. In addition to our quiet prayer time, Mass, Eucharistic adoration, and the talks, we also had some good time for fellowship! One of the ladies shared an insight with the rest of us that is definitely worth sharing with everybody: Healing of our wounds does not mean that there will be no trace of the wounds, rather, our wounds are to be glorified, like the glorified wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ! Jesus still bears the wounds of His Passion, but He does not suffer from them anymore; we also will always have the wounds from our past abortions — but glorified and perfected and healed in Him! Let us each join our wounds with those of our Blessed Lord, and know that He will bring them to glory in heaven!

On another note: Confraternity retreats have now been scheduled for this coming May (2011) in Kelowna, British Columbia and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Pray for the growth of our little Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy! For more information on the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mercy, or to join us in our quest to seek holiness, please visit our website: www.OLMercy.org.

Fr. Ben Cameron, CPM helps on the Rachel's Vineyard team in Bowling Green/Owensboro, Kentucky and can be reached at missions@fathersofmercy.com

"The spirit of Christmas needs to be superseded by the Spirit of Christ. The spirit of Christmas is annual; the Spirit of Christ is eternal. The spirit of Christmas is sentimental; the Spirit of Christ is supernatural. The spirit of Christmas is a human product; the Spirit of Christ is a divine person. That makes all the difference in the world."

~Stuart Briscoe

Rachel's Vineyard Leadership Conference 2011-Save the Dates

The next Rachel's Vineyard Leadership Conference will take place July 18th-21st, 2011 in Malvern, PA. Mark your calendars now and save the dates for an educational and inspirational gathering that you won't want to miss! We are moving into high gear in the planning of our conference. If you'd like to suggest any topics that would be helpful to your ministry, please email Kelly Smith at kelly@rachelsvineyard.org. We are doing our very best to provide speakers and workshops that will be targeted to your needs.

"Advent, like its cousin Lent, is a season for prayer and reformation of our hearts."
~Edward Hays

Upcoming Events/Trainings

Washington, D.C.

January 22, 2011

38th Annual March for Life

Details: Kevin and Theresa Burke, along with many of the staff from Priests for Life Ministries and Rachel's Vineyard Ministries will be attending the annual march.

Grief to Grace-Healing the Wounds of Abuse

Grief to Grace - Healing the Wounds of Abuse will be held in a number of different locations this year. If you or someone you love is suffering because of past abuse visit www.griegtograce.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.

Aston, Pennsylvania

March 21-25, 2011

info@griegtograce.org

Rachel's Vineyard Social Networking

Click the links below to visit Rachel's Vineyard social networking sites. Join today and send to your friends and family!

Facebook Fan Page: www.facebook.com/rachelsvineyard

Facebook Cause: www.causes.com/rachelsvineyard

Youtube: www.youtube.com/user/rachelsvineyard

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 including "Traumatic Reenactment," "PTSD," and "The Genesis of Abortion." 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. It also includes suggested reading and discussion questions for each lesson. This set was made possible by a grant from Our Sunday Visitor.

Suggested Donation: \$60.00

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

Here is some recent praise for the DVD from Lynda Munroe of the Ottawa, Canada site:

"I've been meaning to pass on how our team has appreciated the Dvd's. We have viewed & discussed some as a team, & our prayer team has viewed the one giving an overview of the actual retreat which was excellent for those who had not participated in one. Also, our pastor viewed the Fr Pavone clergy ones. We intend to view a couple more with our team before our next retreat end of November. I highly recommend them."

Book Review- *Where Do Broken Hearts Go?*

Jane Abbate has written a wonderful book called *Where Do Broken Hearts Go?* Jane reflects on her own abortion experience and lays out the steps for grieving an abortion with a reflection on the chapter's theme, an exercise and a prayer. Theresa Burke shares: "Both a workbook and a devotional, it gives women practical steps to move forward in peace, draw close to God, and lead more fulfilling lives."

Jane has attended a Rachel's Vineyard retreat and now serves on the Pittsburgh, PA retreat team. [Click here](#) to order her book from Amazon.com.

Book Review-*Unplanned*

Unplanned is the true story of the former Planned Parenthood leader, Abby Johnson, who now fights for life and women in crisis. Since Abby's departure from Planned Parenthood, she has been traveling the country sharing her story and motivating others to support and encourage women to choose life. She also works on projects for the national 40 Days for Life team.

Unplanned releases in January 2011 everywhere books are sold! To read the first chapter and view videos of a special message from Abby, visit www.UnplannedTheBook.com

Church Awareness Project

The Elliot Institute is planning a special awareness event for churches. The event would be an "Awareness Day" (or week) to highlight in churches the issues of unwanted and coerced abortions, the spiritual and emotional wounds caused by abortion, and the need for support for those who are at risk of abortion or have already been hurt by it. They especially want to encourage pastors and other church leaders to teach and preach on these issues on a chosen Sunday or other day. They would like ideas and participation with this project. Please [click here](#) for more information.

Healing and Signature Ads for January

The Elliot Institute's "UnChoice" campaign has released Ads to be used in flyers, church bulletins etc. Its is suggested to use them in the month of January for the March for Life, but they can be used at any time. [Click here](#) to view the Ads.

"The Advent mystery is the beginning of the end of all in us that is not yet Christ."
~Thomas Merton

United in Prayer

We pray for the following intentions:

For the repose of the soul of **Chris**, nephew of **Donna Augustine** of the **Jacksonville/St. Augustine, FL** Rachel's Vineyard team. May her family and friends be comforted in Christ's love during this time of loss.

For **Guido Fetta**, of the **Doylestown, PA** retreat team as he recovers from a mild heart attack. May God continue to bring rest and healing to both him and his wife, **Susan Fetta**, also of the Doylestown, PA retreat team.

For **Carlos Gonzalez**, husband of **Janice Gonzalez** of the **Shreveport, LA** Rachel's Vineyard site who recently had a stroke and was hospitalized. We pray for his full

recovery and strength for his family during this time.

We pray in thanksgiving:

For the new site in **Rotorua, New Zealand** and site leader **Catherine Gillies** and for the new site leader for the **Lisbon, Portugal** team, **Maria Jose Vilaca**. Please keep Maria and Catherine as well as their teams in your prayers as they labor in Rachel's Vineyard.

Other Conferences/Events of Interest

Washington, D.C.

December 3, 2010

50 Years of "The Pill" in America: A Comprehensive Analysis

Sponsored by Human Life International

Contact: info@hliamerica.com or (785) 256-0132 or

[Click here](#) to visit the registration page.

Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard Retreats

December 3 - December 5, 2010 -- Baltimore County (Interdenom), Maryland

Local Host: Serenity Pastoral Counseling

Contact: Pam Bell 410-977-2571 serenitypcc@comcast.net

Website: www.serenitypcc.com

Note: Interdenominational

December 3 - December 5, 2010 -- Buenos Aires, Argentina

Contact: Lala Rey Méndez 0291 154 74 4500 lalareymendez@gmail.com

Retreat Location: "Casa de Ejercicios de Las Esclavas del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús"

December 3 - December 5, 2010 -- Los Angeles (Español), California

Contact: Amparo Kinnsch 877-2-RAQUEL

Note: Español

December 3 - December 5, 2010 -- Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Contact: Joanne Forgue rachelsvineyardokc@gmail.com

Contact: Paulette Finnegan 405-623-3844

Note: We have available: ongoing, confidential "before and after the retreat" spiritual support meetings called Layers of Healing.

December 3 - December 5, 2010 -- York County, Pennsylvania

Contact: Joy 717-788-4959 Rvpamd@gmail.com

December 10 - December 12, 2010 -- Fort Worth, Texas

Contact: Betsy Kopor 817-923-4757 forgiven@racheltx.org

Contact: Macaria (espanol) 817-886-4760 misericordia@racheltx.org

Website: www.racheltx.org

December 10 - December 12, 2010 -- Tampa, Florida

Contact: Emma Boe 813-924-4173 emmaboe@aol.com

Retreat Location: Bethany Retreat Center, Lutz, FL

January 7 - January 9, 2011 -- Baltimore, Maryland

Contact: Denise Douglas 410-625-8491 projectrachel@archbalt.org

Contact: Deacon Frank Zeiler 410-299-9597

Website: www.project-rachel.net

January 7 - January 9, 2011 -- Houston (Interdenom), Texas

Contact: Stephanie Walker 713-690-2210 steph@gulfcoasthealing.org

Contact: Apri 281-236-8719 april@gulfcoasthealing.org

Website: www.GulfCoastHealing.org

January 7 - January 9, 2011 -- Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

Contact: Nancy Blom 612-508-2184 rvr-nancy@usfamily.net

January 14 - January 16, 2011 -- Linden, New Jersey

Local Host: Archdiocese of Newark

Contact: Michelle Krystofik 732-388-8211 arnewrespect@sjanj.net

January 14 - January 16, 2011 -- Rotorua, New Zealand

Contact: Catherine Gillies 06-867-7335 catherine@gilliesbiz.co.nz

Contact: Dawn de Witt 021-0212-8255

January 14 - January 16, 2011 -- Williamsburg, Virginia

Contact: Linda Riva 757-887-3144 lindajr2@yahoo.com

Retreat Location: Smithfield

Note: Hampton Roads/Virginia Beach Areas

January 21 - January 23, 2011 -- Fort Worth, Texas

Contact: Betsy Kopor 817-923-4757 forgiven@racheltx.org

Contact: Macaria (espanol) 817-886-4760 misericordia@racheltx.org

Website: www.racheltx.org

January 21 - January 23, 2011 -- Santa Rosa/St. Helena, California

Contact: Valerie Johnson Fish 707-967-1101 rachelsvineyard@gmail.com

Contact: Christine 415-260-4406 christinew@firstresort.net

January 28 - January 30, 2011 -- Fairfield County, Connecticut

Local Host: Diocese of Bridgeport

Contact: Clarissa Cincotta 203-218-0291 jeremiah31v17@aol.com

Website: www.rachelsvineyardbpt.com

January 28 - January 30, 2011 -- Phoenix (Español), Arizona

Contact: Rosie Villegas-Smith 602-234-2156 vocesporlavidaymail.com

Contact: Josefina Mata 602-402-0867 josefina@canyonstatebox.com

Contact: Margarita Marquez 480-820-3593 margarita1960@msn.com

Contact: Carmen Portela 602-354-2031 cportela@diocesephoenix.org

Note: Español