



Vine & Branches

Rachel's Vineyard
Healing the Pain of Abortion
One Weekend at a Time

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December 2016

Christmas Gratitude

Our hearts are full of gladness during Advent, as we wait in joyful hope for Christ to come.

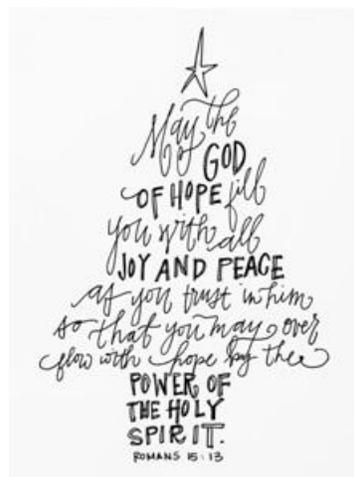
Many of us do remember times of great darkness. This makes the coming of His light especially sweet.

As Placide Clappeau writes in the great carol, "O Holy Night":

*O holy night, the stars are brightly shining;
It is the night of the dear Saviors birth!
Long lay the world in sin and error pining,
Till He appeared and the soul felt its worth.
A thrill of hope, the weary soul rejoices,
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.*

We are so grateful to everyone who reads "Vine and Branches," and to everyone who supports Rachel's Vineyard in prayer, in word and in deed. Your kind attention and loving thoughts make a world of difference.

May God bless you greatly during Advent of 2016, and may 2017 be a year for you and your loved ones of renewal and joy in and through Our Lord Jesus Christ.





Mercy Becomes Personal

By Sarah J.

In November 2015 Pope Francis announced the Jubilee Year of Mercy. I thought of mercy in very broad terms. I was merciful-I did corporal acts of mercy: fed the poor, helped the sick. I also believed that I received mercy when I participated in Mass and went to confession. So what is so important about Mercy? Why did the Holy Father want us to celebrate mercy?

In June I went on a healing retreat. During the retreat, participants were asked to take a rock and reflect on what it meant in our lives. As I carried the rock, it began to symbolize my own unworthiness.

Unworthiness – I was unworthy. I reflected that I often felt like a fake or fraud and felt that if people really knew me, they would see I was unworthy. These “if only” thoughts went through my mind for quite some time. I spoke with the priest on the retreat and he asked me to prove to him that I was a fake, a fraud, or unworthy. I could not. I laid my rock down during the retreat and asked God to show me that I was worthy.

The journey continued after the retreat. God gave me courage I never knew. I began reflecting on my life. I was writing down my story for the first time. I knew the events in my life, and as long as I just remembered them and did not share them, I did not have to deal with them. Writing them on paper makes them real.

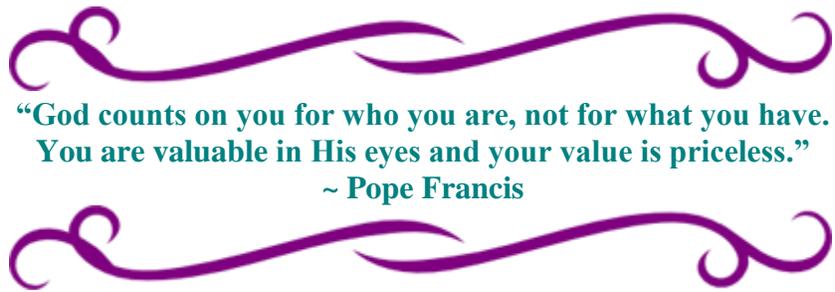
I dealt with the top layer of my own unworthiness – my abortion. I had worked for 13 years on the healing from the abortion. The Lord wanted me to go down further. I began to write about being bullied and raped by a classmate in 5th grade. I wrote about my mother’s suicide attempts and so much of her physical and emotional abuse. I began to realize the depth of my shame. This was where I felt unworthy.

I began to pray through my sins and shame. Through the sacraments of the church I started to grow. The weekly and often daily reception of the Eucharist continued to give me courage. Facing so many of my sins and having the courage to say them out loud in the confessional removed the shame. I no longer had secrets-the “if you only knew” type secrets. As the layers of shame fell from my overburdened soul I began to receive mercy. I was, in fact, worthy of God’s mercy.

On a trip back home to see visit my family this past summer I was able to visit the garage where I was raped and bullied by a classmate in 5th grade. I sat in my car for nearly an hour outside that garage. I said some prayers, some Hail Mary’s, and reflected on the sorrow and shame I felt as that little girl back then. I then traveled and prayed outside the abortion clinic where I sacrificed my baby so many years ago. I prayed. Next I went to the local Door of Mercy.

I walked through that Door of Mercy. Mercy—how can Mercy change my life? Little did I know, Mercy was changing me. I went to hear Rev. Theodore Lang give a talk on the Effects of Mercy. I learned that Mercy forgives, heals, restores and then elevates me to new life.

I began to reflect on my journey. I no longer feel ashamed of my past, I am a worthy, beloved daughter of God. I have received unprecedented forgiveness for my sins, deep healing from the abortion and the childhood abuse. Mercy also removed layers of pain restoring my soul. I have been elevated to a new life in Christ. Mercy has become personal to me.



**“God counts on you for who you are, not for what you have.
You are valuable in His eyes and your value is priceless.”
~ Pope Francis**

Pope Francis Extends Catholic Priests' Right to Forgive Abortions

By Tim Hume, Christiana Moisescu and Daniel Burke, CNN

(CNN)[Pope Francis](#) has extended indefinitely the power of Catholic priests to forgive abortions, making the announcement in an apostolic letter released Monday.

It continues a special dispensation granted last year for the duration of the Year of Mercy -- which finished Sunday -- which gave all priests, rather than just bishops and specially designated confessors, the power to absolve the sin of abortion.

While the practical effect of Francis' announcement remains unclear, it draws attention to the prevailing theme of his papacy: That the doors of the Church must remain open, just as God's forgiveness and mercy extend to all those who repent from sin.

That said, the Catholic Church's stance on abortion has not changed -- it is still viewed as a "grave sin." But it makes it easier for women who have had abortions to be absolved for their actions, and rejoin the church.

"I wish to restate as firmly as I can that abortion is a grave sin, since it puts an end to an innocent life," the Pope's letter states.

"In the same way, however, I can and must state that there is no sin that God's mercy cannot reach and wipe away when it finds a repentant heart seeking to be reconciled with the Father."

The letter continues: "May every priest, therefore, be a guide, support and comfort to penitents on this journey of special reconciliation.

"I henceforth grant to all priests, in virtue of their ministry, the faculty to absolve those who have committed the sin of procured abortion."

'Moral evil'

Since the first century, the Catholic Church has held that abortion is a "moral evil."

The [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#) says that every human life "from the moment of conception until death is sacred" -- and that any Catholic who procures an abortion incurs automatic excommunication, a penalty that often only a bishop could lift.

Saint John Paul II, whose papacy ran from 1978 to 2005, emphasized the traditional Catholic view on abortion, [describing it as "murder,"](#) and the church has been a strong force behind pro-life groups worldwide.

According to canon law experts, John Paul already extended to priests the power to forgive abortion in 1983 when he updated the code of canon law, but only a bishop could lift the excommunication. But some bishops allowed priests to lift the excommunication as well, creating a patchwork of practices and some confusion among clergy.

Kate D'Annunzio of [Rachel's Vineyard](#), a Pennsylvania-based group that ministers to women who have had abortions, said Francis has "clarified" that now priests have the power to do both: forgive and welcome women back into the church.

"We are extremely ecstatic that the Pope is recognizing that the decision women have made has harmed them in so many ways, and they want to be reunited with the Church.

"The Church has had the ability to forgive these women, but many of these women had difficulty forgiving themselves. This outreach by the Pope is saying 'Don't isolate yourselves, come back to the church.'"

Pope Francis initially introduce the church's clarified policies last year when he said that [priests around the world would be authorized to forgive the "sin of abortion"](#) for the duration of the Church's Year of Mercy, which ran from December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016.

The Year of Mercy is a longstanding Catholic tradition during which believers may receive special indulgences for their sins.

"The forgiveness of God cannot be denied to one who has repented," he said at the time, expressing sympathy for women who had been through the "agonizing and painful" decision to terminate their pregnancy.

Priest: 'Another gesture of mercy and welcome'

The Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit priest and editor-at-large at America magazine in New York, described Pope Francis' announcement as "a significant one."

Before the Year of Mercy, in dioceses in many parts of the world, special permission from a bishop was required to absolve the sin of abortion, he said.

"In the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis extended that permission to all priests for a year. Today he extended it indefinitely," he said.

"It's another gesture of mercy and welcome from a Pope whose hallmarks are mercy and welcome."

Pope Francis has forged a more forgiving, merciful direction for the Church since his papacy began in March 2013, taking a more welcoming position toward groups that had previously found themselves on the margins of the Catholic establishment, such as gays and lesbians, and divorced Catholics.

"Overall he is trying to make it easier for people to be forgiven and feel forgiven," said Martin.

CNN's Lindsay Isaac and Daniel Burke contributed to this report.
www.cnn.com/2016/11/21/europe/pope-francis-absolve-abortion/



A Message from the Pastoral Director

December 2016

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Let's build on the victory the pro-life movement has had with the election results. I ask you to stay mobilized and involved in prayer for our newly-elected officials (www.PrayerCampaign.org) and in action to work along with them to accomplish the goals that they share along with us (www.StopAbortionNow.org).

And, of course, we celebrate the wonderful Season of Advent. We need the coming of the Lord so much. As part of your Advent meditation, I invite you to download the booklet I wrote called *Christmas for the Unborn*. It will reveal to you many aspects of the Advent and Christmas celebrations that strengthen our commitment to save our youngest and most defenseless brothers and sisters. Find it at www.ChristmasForTheUnborn.com.

And please know of my prayers for you, your family and your intentions!

Sincerely,

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

“Hark the herald angels sing, “Glory to the new-born king.”
Peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!”
~ Charles Wesley

A December Appeal

Holy Night, Silent night, all is calm all is bright. Your future is bright, allow the light of Jesus to heal you body and soul.

This Christmas season we implore you to donate to Rachel’s Vineyard so that those who are hurting can find the healing they need.

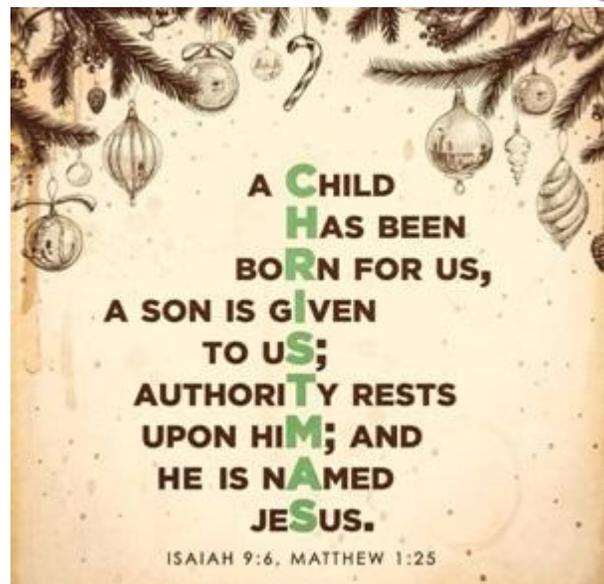
Rachel’s Vineyard Ministries is a non-profit organization. We are able to minister to those hurting after abortion through your contributions and prayers.

Here’s how to make a donation:

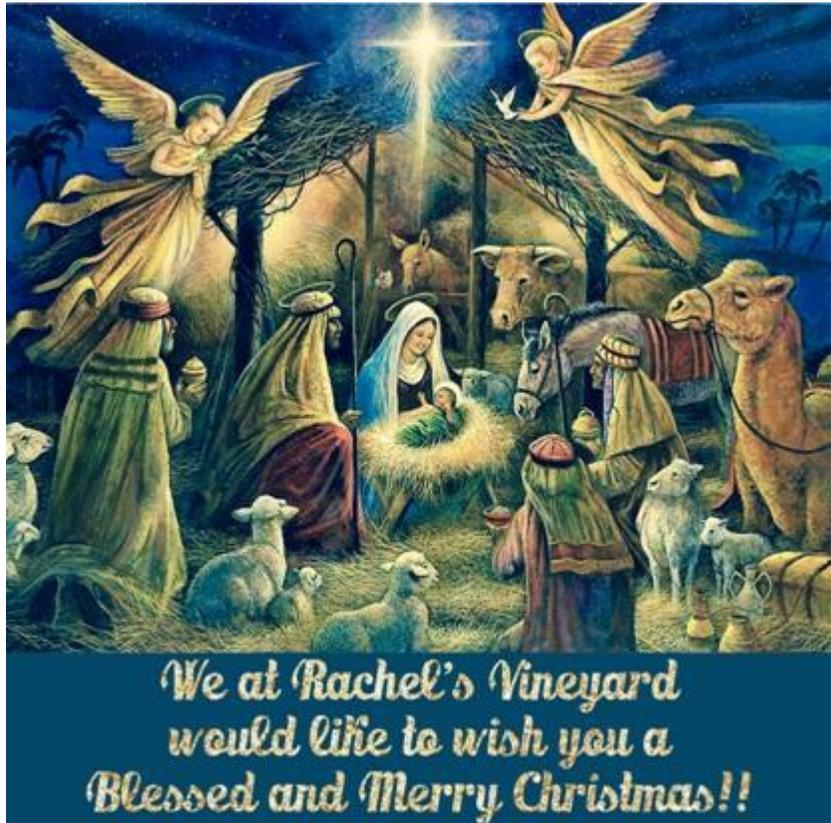
Online: www.RachelsVineyard.org/donate

By Phone: 610-354-0555

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



Rachel's Vineyard in Social Media



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

YouTube: www.youtube.com/user/rachelsvineyard

Twitter: www.twitter.com/RVHealing

Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/rachelsvineyard

Instagram: www.instagram.com/rvhealing

*"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
that ye may abound in hope. Through the power of the Holy Ghost."
~ Romans 15:13*

United in Prayer

Please pray for the repose of, **Pat Reynolds's** soul. Pat was a treasured and loved therapist who served on Rachel's Vineyard retreats in Dallas, TX. Please keep the Pat's family and the Rachel's Vineyard team in Dallas in your prayers as they seek comfort and peace.



Upcoming Grief to Grace Retreats
Healing the Wounds of Abuse
Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity
www.GriefftoGrace.org

Jamaica

Contact: Familylifecentreja@gmail.com

Call: 7-876-927-2525

December 2-4, 2016

Houston, TX (Non-Denominational)

Contact: G2Gtexas@griefftoGrace.org 254-383-1717

January 14 - January 18, 2017

July 1 - July 5, 2017

London, UK

Contact: g2guk@yahoo.co.uk

Call: 020 7937 4297 / 07849 029 442 / 07770 373 758

5th - 10th February 2017

Aston, PA (Philadelphia)

Contact: info@griefftoGrace.org 610-203-2002

March 5-10, 2017

Tasmania, Australia

Contact: info@griefftoGraceaus.org.au

March 26-31, 2017

Kelowna, BC, Canada

Contact: G2GKelowna@gmail.com

Call: 250-878-7603

May 4-7, 2017



**“O come, all ye faithful
Joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.**

**Come and behold him,
Born the king of angels!**

**O come let us adore him,
Christ the lord.”**



Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard Training Events

Anaheim, CA - Guest Speaker

On **February 25, 2017** Dr. Theresa Burke will be presenting at the Religious Education Congress.

To register online: www.recongress.org

For more information, email: congress@la-archdiocese.org



**“From home to home, and heart to heart, from one place to another;
the warmth and joy of Christmas brings us closer to each other.”
~ Emily Matthews**



Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard Retreats

Bogota, Colombia

Contact: Yahayra Montenegro 3006186326 yaenmo@hotmail.com

Language: Spanish

Friday, December 2, 2016

Sunday, December 4, 2016

Tampa, FL

Contact: Emma Boe 813-924-4173 projectrachel@ccdosp.org

Friday, December 2, 2016

Sunday, December 4, 2016

Oklahoma City, OK

Contact: Margo MacRobert 405-623-3844 rachelsvineyardokc@gmail.com

Friday, December 2, 2016

Sunday, December 4, 2016

York County, PA

Contact: Becky Biter 717-788-4959

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

Friday, December 2, 2016

Sunday, December 4, 2016

Dallas (Español), TX

Contact: Eileen Kuhlmann 972-679-4760 ekuhlmann@prolifedallas.org

Language: Spanish

Friday, December 2, 2016

Sunday, December 4, 2016

Rock Hill, SC

Contact: Sarah – Spanish 803 627 1209

Contact: Christy 803-554-6088 grace4healing@gmail.com

Contact: Kathy 803-546-6010 kcs6010@gmail.com

Language: Spanish

Friday, December 9, 2016

Sunday, December 11, 2016

Newark, NJ

Contact: Cheryl Riley 973-497-4350 rileyche@rcan.org

Language: Spanish

Friday, January 6, 2017

Sunday, January 8, 2017

Bowling Green/Owensboro, KY

Contact: Jennifer (931) 242-5506 jennifer@hopeafterabortionky.com

Contact: Debbie Ward (270) 570-4717 debbie@hopeafterabortionky.com

Friday, January 13, 2017

Sunday, January 15, 2017

Pittsburgh, PA

Contact: Toni Jester 412-352-5348 toniafj1@comcast.net

Friday, January 20, 2017

Sunday, January 22, 2017

Spokane, WA

Contact: Julie Olson 509-994-4355 spokanerv@gmail.com

Friday, January 20, 2017

Sunday, January 22, 2017

Atlanta, GA

Contact: Jody Duffy 404-717-5557 pathjody@gmail.com

Friday, January 27, 2017

Sunday, January 29, 2017

Denver, CO

Contact: Lori Frank 303-904-7414 lorgreg@msn.com

Contact: Edith Gutierrez 303-775-4108 edieg2@aol.com

Friday, February 3, 2017

Sunday, February 5, 2017

Palm Beach, FL

Contact: Donna Gardner 561-602-4778 isaiah61@bellsouth.net

Friday, February 3, 2017

Sunday, February 5, 2017

Houston (Interdenominational), TX

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

Contact: Shay Christophson 281-799-2002 shay@gulfcoasthealing.org

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

Friday, February 3, 2017

Sunday, February 5, 2017

Fort Hood / Killeen (Interdenominational), TX

Contact: Lovette Vassar 254-289-1595 aclassic74vette@aol.com

Friday, February 10, 2017

Sunday, February 12, 2017

Sacramento, CA

Contact: Paula Segno 916-733-0161 projectrachel@scd.org

Friday, February 17, 2017

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Lansing, MI

Contact: Cecelia Tombelli 517-993-0291nlc@resurrectionlansing.org

Contact: 888-456-HOPE nlc@resurrectionlansing.org

Friday, February 17, 2017

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Columbus, OH

Contact: Pegi Deeter 614-721-2100 PegiD@pdhc.org

Friday, February 17, 2017

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Tulsa, OK

Contact: Mary Lee 918-508-7142 marylee@cctulsa.org

Friday, February 17, 2017

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Williamsburg, VA

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

Friday, February 17, 2017

Sunday, February 19, 2017

Vienna, Austria

Contact: Claudia Schneidenbach (+43) 0699-1021-4241 info@rachelsweinberg.at

Contact: Tara Harbeck – Interdenominational tarinska73@yahoo.com

Language: German

Friday, February 24, 2017

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Bologna, Italy

Contact: Responsabili Nord-Centro-Sud Monika Rodman e Domenico Montanaro
39.099.7724.518 info.vignadirachele@yahoo.it

Language: Italian

Friday, February 24, 2017

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Tucson, AZ

Contact: Gail Phelps 520-743-6777 rachelsvineyardtucson@cox.net

Friday, February 24, 2017

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Lake Charles, LA

Contact: Marjorie Long 337-439-7400 ext317 rachels.vineyard@lcdiocese.org

Friday, February 24, 2017

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Grand Rapids, MI

Contact: Maggie Walsh 616-340-1824 mwalsh@ccwestmi.org

Contact: Toll-free (MI only) 800-800-8284

Friday, February 24, 2017

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Contact: Nancy Blom 763-250-9313 rachels@rvineyardmn.org

Friday, February 24, 2017

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Kansas City, MO

Contact: Teresa O'Donnell 1-816-679-4973 rvkcmo@gmail.com

Friday, February 24, 2017

Sunday, February 26, 2017