

WSCT

In my own words ...

We would just like to say that after attending three sessions now, we continue to find Wyoming School of Catholic Thought rewarding and productive. My wife and I use it to charge our batteries, after which we come home for another year with more things to think about and work on. That Bishop Ricken has been so instrumental in the School's life since its inception – to the extent that he taught a course on prayer this year – makes it clear just how important he thinks this is. He “walks the walk”! To be an American, a Catholic, and to be given opportunities like this – It just doesn't get any better!

Tom and Clare Casey, St. John the Baptist, Buffalo

We “wined and dined” in community with the blazing fire of truth and discovered authentic freedom in prayer, song, dance, conversation and the sincere.

Janelle Wingert, St. Margaret's, Riverton

The faith of two people, one an immigrant, passed on their faith in God to me. And they sacrificed that I and my siblings could attend Catholic schools through the 12th grade. However, little did I know that one's faith walk never ends. And this week, I received yet another special gift - this time from the Holy Spirit in the form of attendance at the WSCT. To experience the faith of a 17-year-old, nearly one third my age was more than inspiring! And to soak in the knowledge of such gifted instructors was not only humbling, but caused this child of God to want more and more, and more...

Carroll J. Schell, St. Mary's, Cheyenne

Wyoming School of Catholic Thought is always interesting, even when you disagree with what the esteemed professors say. I would recommend it to anyone who actually wants to be a solid Catholic.

Andrew Mock, Sydney, Neb.

The WSCT has been a remarkable experience and has re-

talized my Catholic faith.

Martin Ellbogen, Casper, St. Anthony's

This class helped me to open my mind and eyes to a more fruitful faith and a deeper understanding of our Catholic faith.

Raymond DuFresne, St. Mary's, Cheyenne

The WSCT is a blessed fountain for the thirsty traveler. It is a place of refuge where one can simply “be” This is a program where participants grow in knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. The professors are truly inspired by love, which is God, and his bride, the Church. A stanza from a poem shared in class is reflective: “...for love, and in all weather this is what she has done...” The WSCT teaches students to think and see through reading God's creation from the greatest book to visions of the smallest flower.

“O to be a flower on the altar of the Lord,
To be perfect in every way,
A reflection of God's love with a spirit of life,
Growing and blooming so completely,
For the will of my creator,
O to be a flower on the altar.”

Tere Bragg, Casper

The music brought to us by the community of the Beatitudes is still in my mind, transforming my heart and at times, lifting my feet to dance. Once again, the WSCT has awakened my consciousness. Like Gil Bailie said, “We are on a Paschal journey.” As we feast on redemptive grace, Bishop Ricken reminded us to remain faithful to prayer and attentive to God's will. Any weary head nodding due to late nights and early mornings of listening, praying and playing was overcome by laughter because of incessant bantering between Father Bob Cook and Bob Carlson. Most importantly, I was assured that we have all been picked by God to do special work. When we hear the “bell ring” like Mother Mary, we must say, “Fiat, my Lord, Fiat!”

Connie Rodgers, Casper, Our Lady of Fatima

Helping men through aftermath of abortion

Rachel's Vineyard open to men also

KING of PRUSSIA, Penn. Zenit.org - One man's sharing gives other men permission to examine their own role in abortion and the impact it has had on their lives, said counselor Kevin Burke.

Burke is the associate director of Rachel's Vineyard Ministries, and pastoral associate at Priests For Life.

Q: Your new book, “Redeeming a Father's Heart,” addresses the suffering men experience from abortion. Why do you think this issue has gotten so little attention until now?

Burke: We have all heard the exhausted phrase repeated over the years that “abortion is a private personal decision between a woman, her health care provider and her God.” Men were seen to be peripheral figures in the process, detached and unaffected by the woman's “choice.”

The reality is that men are involved in 95 percent of all abortion decisions, and they are profoundly impacted by their participation in the abortion of their child. In our work as counseling professionals, my wife, Theresa, and I have worked with many individuals and couples who came to us for healing after abortion.

In the last eight years we have seen a steady increase in men who attended our Rachel's Vineyard Retreats seeking healing. Many came with their wives or after their partner had attended. As they shared their experiences of abortion we quickly recognized the devastating impact it had on their lives.

Similar to women, when men experience deep healing of post abortion pain, they are freed from the shame and guilt that feeds silence and isolation. There is a willingness to share their experience with others because they finally recognize that their feelings are normal, they are not alone.

Abortion hurts, and it impacts relationships in the home and workplace.

When one man shares his experience with close friends and family, it gives other men permission to

examine their own role in abortion and the impact it has had on their lives and come forward to find healing.

Q: Aside from the absence of the physical suffering caused by the actual abortion, how does the psychological pain and healing process in post-abortive men differ from the experience of women?

Burke: The majority of men encourage, manipulate and even force their girlfriends, partners or wives to abort. Many other men physically and/or emotionally abandon the mother of their child when they learn she is pregnant. She is left alone to carry the full burden of the decision and the physical and emotional aftermath of the abortion. Often the man may rationalize that abortion is in the best interest of the mother and deny her post-abortion grief.

An important part of healing for many men begins with an agonizing repentance of their role in the abortion procedure and the failure to protect mother and baby from harm. This act of humility opens the door for them to acknowledge that they have also lost a son or a daughter.

This recognition gives them permission to examine how this loss has impacted their lives, how it has injured their father's heart, and encourages them to reach out for reconciliation with God and their child on the journey to healing, peace and restoration in Christ.

On the other end of the spectrum, there are those men who have an instinctive desire to prevent the mother of their child from having an abortion. They do everything they can to offer support to care for both mother and baby.

If they are powerless to prevent the death of their son or daughter, they typically experience serious depression, rage and grief following an unwanted abortion that can be turned inward in self destruction or acted out in numerous unhealthy ways including the abuse of drugs/alcohol/gambling addictions, anger management issues and pornogra-

phy. Other men suffer from sexual dysfunctions, addictions to pornography and related problems. The place of the wound is typically where symptoms emerge – and those symptoms then are likely to occur in future relational difficulties or obsessions and compulsions surrounding sexuality.

Jonathan Flora's story in “Redeeming A Father's Heart” reveals that symptoms can be hidden beneath a very successful businessman who is emotionally detached and involved in transitional physical relationships for many years ... yet whose heart is wounded, closed off from deeper intimacy and love that we all hunger for.

Men often do not connect these symptoms with an abortion loss unless they are guided to explore this with a counselor, clergy, friend, through a post-abortion Web site, or a book like “Redeeming a Father's Heart.”

Q: What resources are available to help men deal with post-abortion pain both at Project Rachel and elsewhere?

Burke: I am the co-founder with my wife, Theresa, of Rachel's Vineyard, an international post abortion healing ministry of Priests For Life. We are blessed to be partnered with Father Frank Pavone, who serves as the pastoral director of Rachel's Vineyard, as we work together to build a culture of life. More than 500 healing retreats were offered around the world in the last year alone.

Men and couples do beautifully on the retreats and provide a special blessing to all participants. It is a special gift for many women to see a man grieving his role in an abortion decision, and the loss of his child.

It's also a great joy to see a man embrace his child with love as the weekend progresses. Project Rachel, or other diocesan ministries, such as family life offices, sponsor about one-third of our weekend retreats in the United States.

For information on a Rachel's Vineyard retreat in the Diocese of Cheyenne, please call Pat at 800-788-4616.