As she sat in the recovery room after her abortion, Emily turned to look at the woman in the chair next to her.

“We grabbed hands and we cried together,” she said. “Abortion hurts women. It hurts us all.”

In 2008, Emily was a sophomore at a Philadelphia-area Catholic school. After discovering she was pregnant, her parents issued an ultimatum: have an abortion, or leave the house.

“I left the house,” she said. “Abortion was not even a thought in my mind.”

Unable to find a safe living situation, however, Emily was forced to return, and her parents whisked her to a Planned Parenthood clinic.

“I was never the same again,” she said during a recent telephone interview. To cope with her feelings of grief and anger, Emily began using drugs and ended up homeless.

Like Emily, Diana suffered from depression after her abortion. In 1994, as a thirty-year-old single woman, she found herself pregnant while in a casual dating relationship. Anxious and confused, she sought an abortion, and began taking Vicodin afterwards to numb the emotional pain she felt.

“There’s a lot of doubt and regret,” she said, speaking by telephone earlier this week. “It haunts you.”

Neither Emily nor Diana were advised by clinicians that abortion can result in a number of distressing emotional “sequelae,” or aftereffects. A 2013 study published in the journal *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* concluded that “fetal loss seems to expose women to a higher risk for mental disorders than childbirth” and advised that “more research is needed in this field.”

**Connecting with the unborn child**
While the medical community continues to debate the existence of a “post-abortion syndrome,” many women have nonetheless found solace through a structured grieving process.

In Japan, women who have had abortions often perform a Buddhist ritual known as mizuko kuyo, in which the unborn child is commended to Jizo, a bodhisattva (or saint) who ensures its safe passage to the afterlife. Stafford Betty, a professor of religion at California State University, Bakersfield, notes that the ritual includes placing a stone mizuko doll, dressed as a baby, before a statue of Jizo in a cemetery or temple, and offering prayers of apology.

In the United States, a number of initiatives provide women with post-abortion resources. Rachel’s Vineyard, a weekend retreat model developed by psychologist Theresa Karminski Burke, offers participants the opportunity to reflect on their abortions through group activities, discussion and prayer. Founded in 1995, the outreach – now a ministry of Priests for Life – features over 1,000 retreats per year in 49 states and 70 countries. Professor Betty adds that women who perform the mizuko kuyo ritual are not necessarily religious. “The Japanese live in one of the most secular societies in the world,” he wrote in a 2008 article. “Yet even they experience the aftershocks of abortion.”

The retreat takes its name from several passages of Scripture, including Jeremiah 31:15-17: “Thus says the Lord: In Ramah is heard the sound of sobbing, bitter weeping! Rachel mourns for her children … they are no more! Thus says the Lord: Cease your cries of weeping, hold back your tears! … There is hope for your future … your children shall return to their own territory.”

After attending the Rachel’s Vineyard retreat, both Emily and Diana felt forgiveness and relief.

“It was a life-changing, positive way to deal with the grief,” said Diana.

During the retreat, Emily reconciled with her mother, who accompanied her daughter after “seeing how destroyed” she was after the abortion. The session included the chance to sit before the Eucharist in a rocking chair, holding a doll that represented the unborn child.

“It allows you to connect with that child in the presence of God,” Emily said.

A unique statue in Santa Cruz, California provides a similar opportunity. Designed by artist Thomas Marsh, the seven-foot bronze image depicts St. Joseph, seated on a curved bench, holding a six-month-old fetus in his hands.

**Healing through reconciliation with God**

The statue is located in the center of a large, carefully tended garden at the Shrine of St. Joseph, Guardian of the Redeemer, at the provincial house of the Oblates of St. Joseph. Visitors are invited to sit on a bench opposite the statue, which was erected in 2001, and to memorialize the names of aborted or miscarried babies on plaques that hang on nearby walls.

“Naming the child is such an important part of the healing process,” said Karen Newcomb, media and communications coordinator for the shrine’s evangelization efforts.
Newcomb notes that both the statue and the shrine – located on a busy, scenic drive along Monterey Bay – draws thousands each year from a variety of spiritual backgrounds.

Oblate provincial Father Paul McDonnell said that St. Joseph is an ideal patron of the unborn, since he was entrusted with Jesus – and since he too wrestled with fears and anxieties about fatherhood.

“Men also need healing from abortion,” said Father McDonnell during a telephone interview. “I know that from hearing confession.”

In fact, Father McDonnell believes that for both men and women, the sacrament of reconciliation is key to healing from an abortion.

“You’re receiving the grace and the mercy of God, which heals the pain and the damage to the soul,” he said.

Estela Reyes-Bugg, coordinator of Project Rachel for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, agrees.

“The healing takes place when you’re in touch with God,” she said.

Project Rachel, the Catholic Church’s ministry to those who have been involved in abortion, encompasses a wide range of resources that include pastoral counseling by trained clergy, individualized therapy and retreats such as Rachel’s Vineyard.

In the Philadelphia archdiocese, the ministry was established in October 2016 as a collaborative effort between Catholic Social Services and the archdiocesan Office for Life and Family.

Due to the shame associated with abortion, many women are reluctant to seek help, Reyes-Bugg observes. Through consistent and compassionate outreach, her team has provided “very confidential” counseling for 23 individuals to date. Reyes-Bugg, a social worker with over twenty years of experience, stresses the importance of one-on-one counseling sessions in addition to group retreats, so that participants can address specific issues in greater depth.

Fluent in both English and Spanish, she also focuses on making Project Rachel’s resources available in a number of languages. Her office is planning to hold a Spanish version of the Rachel’s Vineyard retreat in April 2018.

“My mission is to offer hope to all who have suffered from abortion,” said Reyes-Bugg.

And that hope is what both Emily and Diana now look to share with others who have had abortions.

“Our babies are with God,” said Diana. “And he’s opening doors so that I can help others find forgiveness and healing.”

***

For confidential information about Project Rachel in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, call (215) 587-2472 or email ebugg@chs-adphila.org.

**The original article that was posted by Catholic Philly can be found here.**
"You can't go back and change the beginning, but you can start where you are and change the ending."
~ C.S. Lewis

“SPECIAL ANGELS”
Anonymous

It takes very special people
to do what you all do.
Because you are so special
we owe a lot to you.

From the day of our arrival so welcoming you were
to help us with survival of the heavy hearts we bore.

Each one unique and yet the same
our journey had begun.
You loved us without question
never casting blame nor shame.

Slowly like a flower, we opened up to you.
You helped us see things differently
like only God who knew.

You helped us to set free
sad feelings of despair and turn them into joy
by helping us to recognize each precious baby girl and boy.

By journey’s end our heavy hearts were surely on the mend,
to have a chance to make things right
and up to God our children send.

You cried with us and smiled with us with every step we took.
The answers were not far from us
you helped us see we only had to look.

Praise God for you and all you do
you’ll never be forgotten.
You truly are God’s angels
and I will always pray for you!

**This beautiful poem was written by a participant at a recent Rachel's Vineyard retreat,
and was sent to the team and volunteers who serve in the RV ministry.**
I Spent Four years of My Life Defending This Country... 
But I Couldn’t Prevent the Death of My Child
By Kevin Burke

[Excerpt from Tears of the Fisherman: Recovery for Men Wounded by Abortion, by Kevin Burke, LSW]

David:

I was in the Army and was called to complete my last year of service stationed in Germany. We agreed that Susan would stay with her folks. We would save our money, and she would begin looking at houses for when I returned. That was the plan.

Susan called me shortly after I began my duty overseas and shared that she was pregnant. The first thing I told her was, “we’re not ready for this; I have to finish my service. We can’t do this with me away for the next year.”

I convinced her that abortion was the right decision. The day of the abortion was the day I died. I felt dead for 14 years.

When I returned home I dealt with this wound...by not dealing with it. I stuffed it down deep, and put all my energy into my work. I felt like my identity was taken from me and I never felt whole. I spent four years of my life defending this country, but couldn’t prevent the death of my child because of fear, inconvenience, and selfishness.

I was successful in my business...I had a wife, a nice house, and a couple of beautiful children. But I never felt whole. It was like something was missing.

I worked all the time and was emotionally distant from my wife and kids. I felt in many ways like an outsider; more like a hired caretaker without a deep bond with my family.

When this painful realization would break through I would drink, look at porn on the internet, and try to get away from these feelings as quickly as possible. But this denial was slowly eating away at my marriage and robbed me of the gifts that surrounded me-gifts that I was unable to fully embrace and celebrate.

Susan and I separated several times and we both turned to people outside our relationship to help ease the loneliness and pain we secretly carried in our hearts...

Despite our struggles, we clung to our Christian faith, even as we fell short and sinned, and tried to make things work for the sake of the children. We started to see a Christian counselor at our church. For the first time, someone asked us if there was an abortion in our past. Susan just broke down. It was clear that this was the greatest wound in our marriage, and the source of our martial struggles.

If we were to stay together and build a new foundation in this marriage, we had to face this loss, and all the dark feelings associated with it. The counselor recommended a weekend retreat for post abortion healing called Rachel’s Vineyard. We found their website and registered for the next retreat in our area.

We arrived at the retreat center very anxious of what was to come, but quietly excited and hopeful that maybe this would help in some way...if it didn’t I was sure
our marriage was headed for divorce.

The Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat is a healing process that uses various activities and exercises that are specially designed to heal the deeply buried grief and other pain that arises from an abortion loss.

One of the first activities of the retreat on Friday evening is based on the bible story of “The Woman Caught in Adultery.” These scripture stories are “reenacted” in a process called “Living Scripture.” In these meditations you enter the scripture story and become a participant in that event.

After the exercise, as we shared our experience of the meditation, we touched on the issue of self-condemnation and were made aware of a pile of rocks of various sizes, shapes, colors and textures placed beneath a table at the center of the room.

It turns out that many of us gathered on that retreat struggled with forgiving ourselves for our role in the death of our unborn children, and others struggled to forgive those who had pushed them to abort.

The retreat facilitator invited those of us struggling with forgiveness issues to carry a rock as a reminder — a symbol of condemnation — of our inability to forgive. The rock represented (in a very concrete way!) our conflict.

At any point during the weekend, we could freely put it down. Until that time you were instructed to carry it with you at all times. Through this simple exercise I became aware as the retreat progressed, of how the burden of self-condemnation was impacting my life in so many ways…

With each exercise and activity I began to trust that we were on a painful but rewarding journey that would bring the healing in our lives we so desperately longed for. For the first time we were able to share the story of our abortion experience, and felt safe to share our hearts with each other and the group.

On Saturday afternoon we participated in the Living Scripture exercise based on the story of Lazarus in the Gospel of John…

You are probably wondering how they reenacted this scripture account.

The retreat participants are asked to name a part of themselves that has died because of sin. The facilitator then takes a strip of gauze bandage, and gently wraps the area we identify.

Some in our group wrapped their eyes because they lost sight of God. One woman asked that her heart be wrapped as it was broken by abandonment of her father and later her boyfriend when she became pregnant. Another man felt powerless to stop an abortion he did not want and asked that his hands be wrapped.

When the retreat team approached Susan my wife decided to have her left hand wrapped. Susan said, “This is the hand that my wedding ring is on, and I want to see our marriage restored”.

As the team approached me, I shared “You have to wrap my heart . . . it is just broken. It’s been broken ever since I got the call that the abortion was over and my child was gone.”
Each of us was then given the opportunity to profess our faith. Through faith in Christ we believe that we can rise from the death caused by sin and be healed of our deepest wounds. After Susan made her statement of faith a team member went to un-wrap her bandage.

I received a gift of grace at that moment that led me to say, “No, no, please, let me do it — I think this is my place as her husband. I want a partnership to begin that we never have had. I want to be there for her, not so distant anymore.”

And so, I un-wrapped her hand; Susan, in turn, un-wrapped my heart and asked forgiveness for her bitterness toward me. We embraced for the longest time…

For the first time since we were dating, we held hands as we walked along the road together to the cafeteria for our evening meal…

**Please enjoy the original song, “Back Home” written and performed by Kevin Burke & Henry Gennaria**

"When I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me."  
~ Micah 7:8

**Message from the Pastoral Director**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we reflected last month on Mother’s Day, so the month of June leads us to similar reflections appropriate to Father’s Day.

Often fathers are afraid to be fathers, and abortion is the result. At other times, fathers aren’t allowed to be fathers, and can’t stop the abortion. And as far as the law, since the flip side of rights is responsibilities, the lack of a legal right to stop the abortion of one’s own child only creates a climate that encourages abandonment of paternal responsibilities.

I’ll never forget a day when, praying at an abortion mill, a preacher began speaking directly to the men who were there. He called out to them using the name of the first man, who failed to guard the garden to prevent entry of the Serpent. “Adam!” he cried, “Adam! Stand up, be a man, live out your call to protect that woman and that child!”

May this Father’s Day inspire all to know that Adam has a call, and Adam has a Savior!

Sincerely,

Fr. Frank Pavone
A Father's Day Appeal

Father’s Day is a time to express the joy, love, and gratitude for the father’s in our lives. However, for a post-abortive father, it can be a reminder of the pain and loss they have suffered. By donating to Rachel’s Vineyard this Father’s day, you can help men to redeem their father’s heart on a healing weekend retreat.

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](http://www.RachelsVineyard.org/donate)
By Phone: 610-354-0555
By Mail: P.O. Box 140130 Staten Island, NY 10314

"Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly."  
~ John F. Kennedy

Connect with us!
Rachel's Vineyard Social Media

“That weekend was such a gift. With the help of the retreat team and God’s Grace and Mercy, I was able to turn the bitterness into forgiveness, and the hatred into compassion.”

RachelsVineyard.org
1-877-HOPE-4-ME
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

“It takes nothing to join the crowd. It takes everything to stand alone.”
~ Hans F. Hansen

United in Prayer

Please say a special prayer for our Jamaican RV team. They lost their retreat house and have been searching for a place to hold their retreats so that they can continue providing healing to those in need!

"Sunshine comes to all who feel rain."
~ R.M. Drake

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

Aston, PA
Call: 610-203-2002
Email: info@grieftograce.org

Beaverton, OR
Contact: grieftograceoregon@gmail.com
Call: 541-357-7501
September 11-15, 2019

Houston, TX
Call: 866-763-6557
Email: G2GTexas@grieftograce.org
June 29-July 3, 2019
August 18-23, 2019
Lake Charles, LA
Contact: Marjorie Long
Email: grieftogracelouisiana@lcdioce.org
Call: 337-489-2473
May 13-17, 2020

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN
Contact: diane@grieftograce.org
Call: 612-440-7247
August 18-23, 2019

Newark, NJ
Contact: info@grieftograce.org
Call: 610-203-2002
September 8-13, 2019

Phoenix, AZ
Contact: Aryn Sylvester
Email: phoenix@grieftograce.org
Call: 480-215-6762
June 12-16, 2019 (Spanish)
July 7-12, 2019

~International:

Buenos Aires, Argentina
Contact: Fr. Matías Jurado
Call: +54 11 5220 3619
Email: padreMatias@gmail.com

Cote D'Azur, France
Email: g2g.lsi.france@gmail.com
Call: +33 6 09 39 79 27
August 19-24, 2019

El Salvador
Contact: anajhill@hotmail.com
Call: Ana Julia Hill - 503 77297721
Call: Nueava Alianza – 503 22987000
June 20-23, 2019
September 19-22, 2019

Kelowna, Canada
Call: 250-878-7603
Email: G2GKelowna@gmail.com
May 2-5, 2019

London, UK, England
Contact: 020-7937-4297
07849-029-442
07770-373-758
Email: G2Guk@yahoo.com
November 16-21, 2019
Tasmania, Australia
Contact: info@grieftograce.org.au
Call: +61-407704539
May 26-31, 2019

Perth, W. Australia
Contact: g2gperthwa@gmail.com
July 14-19, 2019

Walsingham Norfolk, UK
Email: info@grieftograceuk.org
Call: +44 20 7 937 4297
+44 07484 248 799
June 2-7, 2019

"Through all that bends and breaks,
you are still wrapped in grace."
~ Morgan Harper Nichols

Rachel's Vineyard Training Events

On June 12, 2019, Dr. Theresa Burke will be presenting at the Catholic Medical Association "Boot Camp" in Mundelein, IL. More information for this event can be found here.

"Like wildflowers;
you must allow yourself to grow
in all the places people thought
you never would.
~ E.V.

Rachel’s Vineyard Retreat Weekends
~ June & July ~

Atlanta, GA
Contact: Jody Duffy
404-717-5557
pathjody@gmail.com
Friday, June 7, 2019
Sunday, June 9, 2019

Dallas (Español), TX
Contact: Eileen Kuhlmann
972-679-4760
Jacksonville/St. Augustine, FL
Contact: 904-221-3232
Rachelsvineyardjax@yahoo.com
Contact: Mary Huston
904-885-9959
mtliai@bellsouth.net
Friday, June 7, 2019
Sunday, June 9, 2019

Yellowknife, NT, Canada
Contact: Patricia Regan
867-872-0026
rachelsvineyard.nwt@gmail.com
867-920-2129
Friday, June 7, 2019
Sunday, June 9, 2019

Bogotá-Minuto de Dios, Colombia
Contact: Blanca Yanet Uribe
(321)436-5828
yaneturibe9@outlook.es
Language: Spanish
Friday, June 14, 2019
Sunday, June 16, 2019

Denver, CO
Contact: Lori Frank
303-904-7414
lorgreg@msn.com
Contact: Edith Gutierrez
303-775-4108
edieg2@aol.com
Friday, June 14, 2019
Sunday, June 16, 2019

Farmington, CT
Contact: Marie Laffin
203-631-9030
mlaffin@prolifeministry.org
Friday, June 14, 2019
Sunday, June 16, 2019

Springfield, MA
Contact: To Register
413-452-0661
Contact: Joetta
516-457-2838
joettadawson@gmail.com
Contact: Donna Crean - Spanish
631-258-5062
charitydc@optonline.net
Friday, June 14, 2019
Tampa, FL
Contact: Emma Boe
813-924-4173
projectrachel@ccdosp.org
Contact: Carmen
813-631-4398
Friday, June 14, 2019
Sunday, June 16, 2019

Tucson, AZ
Contact: Gail Phelps
520-743-6777
rachelsvineyardtucson@cox.net
Denomination: Interdenominational
Friday, June 14, 2019
Sunday, June 16, 2019

Allentown, PA
Contact: Sr. Meg Cole, SSJ
1-866-3Rachel
mcole@allentowndiocese.org
610-33-042 (x2019)
Language: English/Spanish
Friday, June 21, 2019
Sunday, June 23, 2019

Fresno, CA
Contact: Jennifer Butcher
877-629-6626
butcher_jennifer@yahoo.com
Contact: Paula and Edward Davalos - Español
paula.d@fbcares.org
Language: Spanish
Friday, June 21, 2019
Sunday, June 23, 2019

Lancaster County, PA
Contact: Becky Biter - English
717-788-4959
undefeatedcourage@gmail.com
Contact: Indhira Garcia - Spanish
717-788-4959
vdryorkpa@gmail.com
Language: Spanish
Friday, June 21, 2019
Sunday, June 23, 2019

Medellin, Colombia
Contact: Margarita Agudelo
316-657-8585
entretusmanos33@gmail.com
Language: Spanish
Friday, June 21, 2019
Sunday, June 23, 2019
Midland, TX
Contact: Priscilla Fuentez
432-897-4788
rachelsvineyardsanangelo@gmail.com
Friday, June 21, 2019
Sunday, June 23, 2019

Sioux City, IA
Contact: Stormy Poss
712-898-5550
RachelshelpersofIowa@gmail.com
Language: English
Denomination: Catholic
Friday, June 21, 2019
Sunday, June 23, 2019

Tulsa, OK
Contact: Mary Lee
918-508-7142
marylee@cceok.org
Contact: Martha - Spanish
918-508-7134
mstanton@cceok.org
Friday, June 21, 2019
Sunday, June 23, 2019

Bogotá, Colombia
Contact: Myriam Fernandez
312-406-7127
miryamf52@gmail.com
Language: Spanish
Saturday, June 22, 2019
Monday, June 24, 2019

Albuquerque/Santa Fe, NM
Contact: Sophie Serna
505-386-7922
Smserna1@gmail.com
Friday, June 28, 2019
Sunday, June 30, 2019

Lancaster County, PA
Contact: Becky Biter - English
717-788-4959
undefeatedcourage@gmail.com
Contact: Indhira Garcia - Spanish
717-788-4959
vdryorkpa@gmail.com
Friday, June 28, 2019
Sunday, June 30, 2019

Springfield, IL
Contact: Donna Moore
217-321-1161
dmoore@dio.org
Friday, June 28, 2019
Sunday, June 30, 2019

**Ann Arbor, MI**
Contact: Beth Bauer
734-879-0427
toheal4give@outlook.com
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019

**Bogotá, Colombia**
Contact: Fanny Ester Jiménez Marzal
+57 3004060878
fajimar69@gmail.com
Contact: Luz Marina Pedreros
+57 3504332283
vinedodiocesisengativa@gmail.com
Language: Spanish
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019

**Bologna, Italy**
Contact: Responsabili Nord-Centro-Sud
Monika Rodman e Domenico Montanaro
39.099.7724.518
info.vignadirachele@yahoo.it
Language: Italian
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019

**Fresno, CA**
Contact: Jennifer Butcher
877-629-6626
butcher_jennifer@yahoo.com
Contact: Paula and Edward Davalos - Español
paula.d@fbcares.org
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019

**Melbourne (Interdenominational), VIC**
Contact: Anne Neville
(03) 9870 7044
anne@opendoors.com.au
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019

**Mexico City, MX**
Contact: María Esther
52603178
me.cardoso@irma.org.mx
Contact: Maria Esther Cardoso
52-60-31-78
ayuda@irma.org.mx
Language: Spanish
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019
Peoria, IL
Contact: Colleen Harmon
309-264-1489
rvrpeoria@gmail.com
Contact: Cathy Trowbridge
309-264-1489
rvrpeoria@gmail.com
Language: Spanish
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019

Santa Clarita, CA
Contact: Roseanne Becker
661-510-8258
RachelsvineyardSCV@gmail.com
Friday, July 12, 2019
Sunday, July 14, 2019

Cartagena, Colombia
Contact: Maylen Silva Aguirre
300-803-7871
msilva650@hotmail.com
Language: Spanish
Saturday, July 13, 2019
Monday, July 15, 2019

Provincia Colon, Panama
Contact: Maria Jose
(507) 442-0683
Contact: Sister Maria Magdalena
(011507)-442-0683
Language: Spanish
Denomination: Catholic
Friday, July 19, 2019
Sunday, July 21, 2019

Kansas City, MO
Contact: Teresa O'Donnell
1-816-679-4973
rvkcmo@gmail.com
Friday, July 26, 2019
Sunday, July 28, 2019

Mesa, AZ
Contact: Karen Ord
480-329-6795
karenord.rv@gmail.com
Friday, July 26, 2019
Sunday, July 28, 2019

Note: Spanish available Monthly Support Group Available. Contact Karen Ord for details!
Winston-Salem/Greensboro, NC
Contact: Jackie Childers
980 241-0251
jackie.childers1@gmail.com
Contact: Karina Hernandez (Spanish Speaking)
336-267-1937
karinahernandez@live.com
Language: Spanish
Friday, July 26, 2019
Sunday, July 28, 2019