



Vine & Branches

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

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January 2021



Dearest Friends and Laborers in the Vineyard,

This 2020 end of year report marks my 35th year of doing ministry with those who have suffered the loss of a child through abortion. Yes, I guess at this point it's been a life's work! I have heard thousands of stories over the years disclosed to me in therapy sessions, private letters, years on our hotline, in support groups, and Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreats all over the world; as well as during hundreds of training seminars where I meticulously outlined the symptoms of unresolved trauma and grief from pregnancy loss.

These stories were shared with a deep recognition of heartache signaled by tears and after some time of composure I repeatedly heard, *"I've never told anyone."*

It always amazed me that these individuals would reveal something so intensely personal—often for the very first time—to a person willing to hear about their loss. This truly demonstrated to me how desperate they were to be heard, validated, supported, and healed.

Although every person's story is their own, there are some common themes which stand out in what they shared.

The first was pain—I was struck again and again by the depth of betrayal that both women and men have suffered; by how they defined themselves because of what they were enduring, and how devastating and long term the fallout of abortion can be felt while it rises and sets upon the soul over a lifetime.

The second theme was isolation. The word "secret" was uttered again and again along with feelings of abandonment and shame. They might have been surrounded by people in schools, big families or corporate board rooms—it didn't matter—they were isolated and fearful of sharing their secrets with anyone who might judge or reject them, but more than that was the fear of remembering and mourning.

And third, the testimonies spoke of courage. Actually, hearing the incredible suffering that followed, and even the acting in and acting out of grieving behaviors, revealed the layers of despair and destruction. To have survived this searing grief was incredible, an awe-inspiring act of courage and faith when they took the risk to share. I was holding courage and hope in my hands, because the act of reaching out for help, the act of breaking the silence that imprisons so many of those who have survived the trauma of abortion is deeply courageous.

And finally, transcending all these themes was the yearning for peace and reconciliation, with God, themselves, and their babies.

For some reason, I felt a great responsibility to these brave women and men and wanted them to know that they had been heard and that they could have hope. I studied the subject, went back to school for advanced degrees in counseling psychology, and dedicated my life to this work. I felt compelled and called to address this pain. I knew I wanted to bring God, the author of life into healing the pain suffered in the loss of life.

When people have experienced the deep pain of abortion... for a time it can be like the gate into their soul is secured and sealed. The goal of Rachel's Vineyard is to let the light in, and to mend the broken heart, to reclaim the life and the love which was nearly extinguished; to banish the darkness and invite God to fill the pain with his Holy and Living presence. In sum.... To let the healing begin.

The result was Rachel's Vineyard Ministries.

Through our healing retreats and communities, Rachel's Vineyard has been able to realize our vision of having healing weekends throughout the world, in scores of countries and in dozens of languages.

There has also been a steady increase in thousands of brave new voices offering their personal testimonies through efforts like the Silent No More Awareness Campaign.

I couldn't be prouder of Father Frank Pavone and the staff at Priests for Life who work tirelessly on behalf of life and have never stopped helping us to move Rachel's Vineyard Ministries forward for the past 17 years. I'm especially grateful to our small staff (Katie D'Annunzio, Lairen Vogan, Kate O'Donnell) who keep the wheels running at our international office with a continual stream of requests and updates.

Now we pray that society will have the courage and compassion to grieve this unprecedented loss of life and to address these issues, to risk talking about them in the news and media as well as in public and political formats.

I am honored to stand with all those who work in our ministries, all those who have suffered from abortion and had the courage to heal, the advocates, the teachers, the pregnancy resource centers, the prolife groups and many church ministry groups; the law and policy makers and all those who support our mission to protect and heal the family from the devastating impact of abortion.

As we close the year we are assured of God's presence and protection for our ministry.

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Hope is not only found in the dawning of the new day, but in our trust- even in the darkest night- that the dawn will indeed come. We see this miracle every day in our ministry and it is a privilege and grace to build and spread the light to all the corners of the earth.

So as we close out 2020 and get ready for a new year, we are happy to share not only all the things that have been accomplished despite the pandemic... But moreover, to share our gratitude for all that God has done with us and through all of us as our Rachel's Vineyard family continues to spread and grow throughout the world. We celebrate how God raises new leaders as retreats continue to flourish

and grow through decades of faithful ministry work, education, and all the healing that continues to unfold!

Blessings and Peace,
Dr. Theresa Burke
Founder, Rachel's Vineyard Ministries



END OF YEAR REPORT 2020

To read the full report click here:

<https://www.rachelsvineyard.org/PDF/2020EYR.pdf>



The Cross Above the Manger By Kevin and Dr. Theresa Burke

As the lockdowns and riots transformed our nation, and the election season unfolded, many struggled with anger and fear, wondering if events were spinning out of control. Our elderly neighbors, especially those quarantined in care facilities, suffered the emotional and physical ravages of social isolation.

As the year comes to a close, families struggle to make ends meet. Working parents are stressed out trying to manage their workloads while their children are kept out of school. Small businesses face ongoing threats to their survival.

So what do sparking lights, angels, and quaint manger scenes have to with any of that?

As the mystery of the incarnation of Jesus unfolds, before the choir of angels sang to the shepherds in the fields, we see in the Gospel accounts the first reaction of Mary and Joseph upon learning of their unique vocation and calling from God – fear and anxiety.

As the Angel Gabriel encounters Mary and Joseph, he responds to the anxiety that rose up in their minds and hearts. It is a message to all those facing the loss of a loved one, physical and emotional illness, job loss and other stress and suffering need to hear:

“Do not be afraid Mary...do not be afraid Joseph...”

Mary and Joseph are overwhelmed with the mysterious, massive changes being unleashed in their lives, and they are naturally afraid. This touches upon the mystery in the lives of the Holy Family, and in our own stories.

Alongside the joy of the incarnation, and the birth of the Christ with angelic choirs proclaiming the Good News, the Holy Family face looming threats; murderous political persecution, exile from family and friends, and in time, the rejection, brutal torture and execution of the Christ Child in the manger.

[Fr. Bernhard Springer shares:](#)

...the Cross above the Manger is more than a mere decoration...The birth and death of Jesus Christ, the Manger and the Cross, belong together indissolubly. God became man in order to die for us as man. God was born in Bethlehem in order to be able to lay down his life on Golgotha out of love for men...Both the Manger and the Cross are for us the revelation of God's love.

The temptation to despair, give up hope, or numb ourselves in various ways is a natural response to feeling overwhelmed, alone, afraid. How do we regain a sense of perspective, hope and peace amidst the challenges of our time?

Reconcile with God, and make prayer and faith the foundation of your life. This will not magically solve all your problems. But over time, it will give you the grace and peace you need to persevere in suffering, to regain a sense of hope and trust in the future.

If you have been away from the Church and the sacraments – now is the time to return! Make a good confession each month – attend mass, on a daily basis if possible, and have that intimate encounter with the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. Meditate on the [mysteries of the rosary](#) each day.

For Those with Pregnancy Loss

Those ministering in the abortion healing ministries know that during the Christmas Holidays, the focus on the Christ Child and the joy of children at Christmas can surface feelings of regret and sadness about a past abortion loss (or losses.) We remember the son, daughter, grandchild, brother, sister, niece or nephew who will never share in the wonder of the season.

This repressed grief associated with abortion and other losses can contribute to substance abuse, anxiety, depression and a sense of melancholy. You may find yourself pulling away from social situations or keeping hyper-busy and distracted.

Some Coping Strategies for the Holidays

- Lower your expectations and the expectations of others. Our commercialized culture puts great pressure on families this time of year. Avoid those things that take you away from focusing on the deeper meaning of this great feast.
- Give yourself permission, especially if you are struggling with your own grief and loss, to avoid or at least limit certain situations that will drain you emotionally and spiritually. Instead do things that will feed your soul and be healthy for your body, mind and spirit.
- At Holiday gatherings, avoid those conversation topics and encounters that will feed into conflict and stress you out. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the strength to avoid getting pulled into any old toxic dynamics and exchanges and let the peace of the Christ Child reign in your heart.
- If you have a friend or relative who is going through a tough time or had a rough year, try and make some time to be with them. Above all give the gift of listening with love and acknowledge their losses. Embrace them with love and assure them of your continued support.

– If you are doing ok financially, buy your gifts/gift cards for family friends from local small businesses that have been hit so hard by the Coronavirus.

– If you know a friend or loved one who was impacted by an abortion loss and they have shared this with you in the past, check in with them to see how they are doing. Share a pamphlet or the website information on [Rachel's Vineyard](#). It really is the best Christmas gift you could offer them.

– Exercise daily as your health allows. It's very challenging to take that first step when you are grieving or struggling with depression. Start with something simple and build on the positive results. A daily walk and simple stretching have been proven to be very effective medicine for anxiety and depression. If you need additional support ask a friend, family physician, or your pastor for [a counselor referral](#). Avoid the over use of alcohol or other drugs or behaviors to avoid your feelings and find relief of your pain and grief.

– Spend time each day in quiet prayer with God. Ask the Lord to help you avoid both isolation but also over-business as ways of coping with your pain. Open your heart to the Spirit and ask for consolation, strength and the peace to accept the will of God in your life. Unite your suffering with that of the Holy Family and pray that the grace from your simple sacrifice may touch someone you love who is in need of God's mercy.

– Make a resolution to get involved in services and activities at your local church. Pray for discernment to see if God is calling you to reach out with the love of Christ to the homebound elderly, prisoners, the homeless, children in the womb, and other children in need. Ask your pastor or local charity how you can best serve.

Finally I want to share a music video of a Christmas song I wrote with Henry Gennaria, an accomplished musician and producer. The lyrics of our song, "On this Silent Night," communicate two themes.

The surface story is that of a young man estranged from his beloved, and his longing for reconciliation and coming home; this is a strong emotional theme for many at the Holidays.

But on a deeper level, it about the relationship of each person's heart and soul with their Heavenly Father. This relationship can be injured by sin, and by the challenges faced in life. But like the woman in the song, God is waiting to welcome you back, to forgive your sins, bind up your wounds, and have you enter into His presence. He is saying, "Come be transformed by the fire of my Divine Mercy and Eternal Love."

May that fire burn brightly for you *On this Silent Night*.

["On This Silent Night" - By Kevin Burke & Henry Gennaria - YouTube](#)



**"Peace is not absence of conflict,
it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."
- Ronald Reagan**



Message From a Pastoral Director

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We are at that time of the year when the anniversary of *Roe vs Wade*, Sanctity of Life Sunday, various Marches for Life, and increased coverage and commentary on the abortion controversy in the media, bring many face to face with a past abortion that they likely prefer to forget.

With the compassion that marks our work all year through, we are particularly sensitive and ready to help those who are dealing with these open wounds and painful memories. We help them follow St. John Paul II's advice to "*Try to understand what happened and face it honestly*" (Gospel of Life, n. 99).

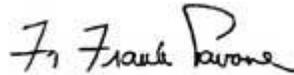
As part of our mission, we help them to reject the temptation to **ignore or bury** the pain, but rather help them walk through the pain to the healing. I'm reminded of one of the many weekends when I was a guest preacher giving a pro-life homily at a parish, and when I started talking about abortion, a couple right in the front got up and walked to the back of the Church, apparently planning to leave. A member of the parish pro-life community intercepted them and began to talk with them. They were upset, but agreed to sit down with me after the Mass.

It ended up being, in their words, one of their happiest days, because they were able to finally talk about their past abortion and bring it before the Lord to start the healing process.

Whether it is a sermon, a news story, or anything else that brings abortion pain to the surface, that experience can be the start of a new life. May our Rachel's Vineyard Ministries make that happen, day after day, for all whom our Lord is so eager to heal.

Sincerely,

Fr. Frank Pavone



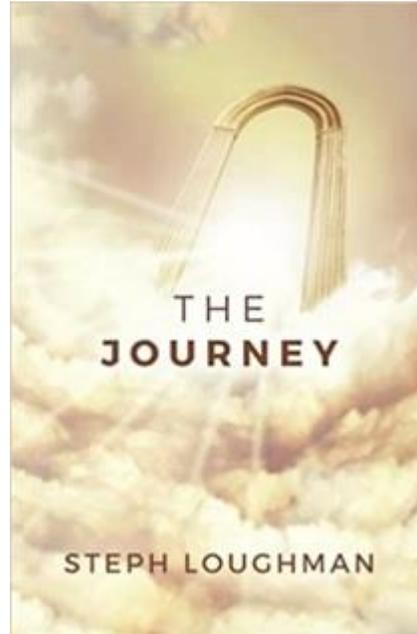
Pastoral Director, Rachel's Vineyard Ministries
National Director, Priests for Life



**"Peace begins with a smile."
- Mother Teresa**



Rachel's Vineyard Recommends



This book, **The Journey** is a double journey of acquaintance of son and his mother! Steph Loughman, in “The Journey,” shows the transformation of heart from conscious inhibition and despair to conversion, hope, and intense responsibility to help others. Her experience of pain, shame, guilt, and embarrassment is mirrored with the sheer love of her child who walks eternally with the purest Love, Jesus. The horrifying experience and result of abortion lead her to more relational friendships. Above all, hopelessness leads to a beautiful and longing relationship between mother and her child.

Steph allows herself to mourn, after a long time of suppressed loss, for Joshua. The power of forgiveness is revealed when a desolate soul meets the Unconditional Love of a Merciful God. Jesus’ lap becomes a safe place for a child lost by abortion, while a mother’s heart metamorphoses into inner tranquility amid suffering.

Loughman wanted to portray a glimpse of heaven seen through curated human imagination. While reading “The Journey,” a reader can hear singing choirs of angels by the throne of God and meet biblical people such as Mary, a sister of Lazarus, Joseph, King David, Stephen, Paul, and many more holy people.

The meaningful image of the beautiful river is mentioned a few times on the pages of this book. The water that is our life, that cleanses us, and sanctifies us, is a favorite and most attended place for her hospitable son, who wants to share its life-giving characteristics with those who enter the magnificent sacredness. Notwithstanding, Joshua is waiting nostalgically for the arrival of his mommy the same way Jesus awaits His Children to turn to His Sacred Heart.

To purchase please go to: <https://www.amazon.com/Journey-Steph-Loughman/dp/1532707940>



“All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word:

freedom, justice, honor, duty, mercy, hope.”
– Winston Churchill



Connect with us!!
Rachel's Vineyard in Social Media



Facebook Fan Page: facebook.com/rachelsvineyard

YouTube: youtube.com/user/rachelsvineyard

Twitter: twitter.com/RVHealing

Pinterest: pinterest.com/rachelsvineyard

Instagram: www.instagram.com/rvhealing



“Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul and
sings the tune without the words and never stops at all.”

– Emily Dickinson



United in Prayer

Please keep **Jackie Wilson** in prayer as she battles advanced cancer. Please pray for peace, healing & protection as she goes forward for treatment.

Please keep **Patty Decker**, Rachel's Vineyard Site leader in your prayers. She is undergoing treatment for Cancer. Please pray that God stretches forth his hand and heals Patty from her infirmity.

Please keep **Patsy Seely**, Grief to Grace team member, in your prayers as she undergoes treatment for cancer. Please pray that she receives the miracle of healing.

Please pray for **Mary Lee Weaver**. In her words, “It has been my joy to be involved in many programs at Catholic Charities and Growin’ on the Vine and Rachel’s Vineyard has held a very special place in my heart. I have been invited into a sacred space in your journey. Thank you for that trust that you extended. It will be cherished and you are cherished by me and the Lord. In the Irish tradition there is a place called the “Thin Places.”

In Irish Celtic lore, “thin places” are those locales where the veil between this world and the otherworld is porous, where there is mystery in the landscape. The earth takes on the hue of the sacred among peoples whose connection to place has remained unbroken through the ages. It is the place where God meets us between heaven and earth. We have been there together on these retreats and in the Growin’ on the Vine meetings. It is sacred and holy (which means set apart... those things that are ordinary are set apart for us to meet Christ).

So what exactly makes a place thin? It’s easier to say what a thin place is not. A thin place is not necessarily a tranquil place, or a fun one, or even a beautiful one, though it may be all of those things too. Disney World is not a thin place. Nor is Cancún. Thin places relax us, yes, but they also transform us — or, more accurately, unmask us. In thin places, we become our more essential selves. And yes, the Rachel’s Vineyard retreats and Growin’ on the Vine certainly transformed all of us!

I will be retiring at the end of the year and my last day in the office is this Friday. I will begin a private practice doing Adoption Home Studies in 2021 and my art is now at The Sky Gallery on 11th Street in Tulsa. I will also be spending more time with my two daughters who now live in Tulsa along with their husbands and 3 “grandboys!”

Information about retreats and support groups can be found on the Catholic Charities website.

I wish we could be together and share our experiences together. In another Irish tradition...

a prayer...

May the wind always be at your back.
May the sunshine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your fields.
And until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.”



“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”



Upcoming Grief to Grace Retreats

www.GriefftoGrace.org

(Retreat dates subject to change due to Covid-19)

Phoenix, AZ

Email: Phoenix@griefftoGrace.org

Call: 480-215-6762

Houston, TX

Email: G2GTexas@GriefftoGrace.org

Call: 866-763-6557

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Email: Diane@griefftoGrace.org

Call: 612-440-7247

April 16-21, 2021

Lake Charles, LA

Email: griefftoGracelouisiana@lcdioocese.org

Call: Marjorie Long – 337-489-2473

June 30-July 3, 2021

Newark, NJ

Email: info@griefftoGrace.org

Call: 610-203-2002

Beaverton, OR

Email: GriefftoGraceOregon@gmail.com

Call: 541-357-7501

Philadelphia, PA

Email: Philadelphia@GriefftoGrace.Org

Call: 610-427-1187

Call: 610-203-2002

March 21-26, 2021

International:

Perth, Australia

Website: <https://rachelsvineyardministriesperth.wordpress.com/grief-to-grace>

Email: perth@griefftoGrace.org

Call: +61-0-413-593-059

Cote D'Azur, France

Email: g2g.lsi.france@gmail.com

Call: +33 6 09 39 79 27

El Salvador

Email: Anajhill@hotmail.com

Call: Ana Julia Hill – 503-772-97-721

Call: Nueva Alianza – 503-229-87-000

Kelowna, Canada

Email: G2GKelowna@gmail.com

Call: 250-878-7603

London, UK

Email: info@griegtograceuk.org

Call: +44-207-937-4297

Call: +44-07484-248-799

Slovenia

Email: tomaz.mikus@gmail.com



**“Do your little bit of good where you are;
it’s those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.”
- Desmond Tutu**



**Rachel's Vineyard Retreats
(Retreat Dates Subject to Change due to Covid-19)**

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Website Address: www.rvineyardmn.org

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

Friday, January 8, 2021

Sunday, January 10, 2021

Poznan, Poland

Contact: Agnieszka Lewandowska +48 737 90 30 99

WinnicaRacheli.Poznan@outlook.com

Language: Polish

Denomination: Catholic

Friday, January 15, 2021

Sunday, January 17, 2021

Tulsa, OK

Website Address: www.cceok.org/healing-after-abortion

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

Contact: Martha – Spanish 918-508-7134 mstanton@cceok.org

Language: Spanish

Friday, January 22, 2021

Sunday, January 24, 2021

Asheville, NC

Contact: Jackie Childers 980 241-0251 jackie.childers1@gmail.com

Contact: Spanish - Karina Hernandez 336-267-1937

Contact: Spanish - Lorena Haynes 828-620-3815

Friday, January 29, 2021

Sunday, January 31, 2021

Santa Clarita, CA

Contact: Roseanne Becker 661-510-8258 RachelsvineyardSCV@gmail.com

Friday, January 29, 2021

Sunday, January 31, 2021

Zapopan Jalisco (Cerca de Guadalajara), Mexico

Contact: Sandra Lillingston 3322593873 lillingstons@yahoo.com

Language: Spanish

Friday, January 29, 2021

Sunday, January 31, 2021

Dallas (Español), TX

Website Address: www.racheldallas.org

Contact: Eileen Kuhlmann 972 900 7262 sanacion@racheldallas.org

Language: Spanish

Friday, February 5, 2021

Sunday, February 7, 2021

Atlanta, GA

Website Address: www.healingafterabortion.org

Contact: Liz Youngs 404-717-5557 programdirector@pathatl.com

Friday, February 12, 2021

Sunday, February 14, 2021

Lake Charles, LA

Website Address: www.lcdiocese.org

Contact: Marjorie Long 337-489-2473 rachels.vineyard@lcdiocese.org

Friday, February 12, 2021

Sunday, February 14, 2021

Portland, OR

Contact: Lori Eckstine 541-942-2861 ProjectAurora@aol.com

Friday, February 12, 2021

Sunday, February 14, 2021

Cypress/Katy (Interdenom), TX

Website Address: www.newheartoftexas.org

Contact: Mary Lee Mason 866-763-6557 rvinfo@newheartoftexas.org

Denomination: Interdenominational

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Saturday, February 20, 2021

Cape Town, South Africa

Website Address: www.rachelsvineyard.co.za

Contact: Angie Farrenkothen +27828521284 farrenkothen@mweb.co.za

Friday, February 19, 2021

Sunday, February 21, 2021

The Netherlands

Website Address: www.rachelsvineyardnederland.com

Contact: Zuster Sterre +31 06 -1700 8167 c.sterrederzee@servidoras.org

Language: Dutch

Friday, February 19, 2021

Sunday, February 21, 2021

Central Texas (Interdenominational), TX

Contact: Lovette Vassar 254-702-6723 abortionrecovery@hopepc.com

Contact: Susie Wilde 254-718-2823 swilde58@gmail.com

Friday, February 26, 2021

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Lansing, MI

Contact: Della Seeley 989-828-6002 nlcrachelsvineyard@gmail.com

Contact: Toll Free Hotline 517-993-0291

Friday, February 26, 2021

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Trenton, NJ

Contact: Judy Warenkiewicz 732-536-6871 judywarren543@msn.com

Friday, February 26, 2021

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Wichita, KS

Contact: Bonnie Toombs 316-269-3935 toombsb@CatholicDioceseOfWichita.org

Contact: Stephanie Nemechek 316-269-3900x134

nemecheks@catholicdioceseofwichita.org

Friday, February 26, 2021

Sunday, February 28, 2021

