



Vine & Branches

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

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Spring 2024

Rachel's Vineyard Team Updates & Announcements

This Spring, we're happy to debut this new "Rachel's Vineyard Team Updates & Announcements" section of our newsletter for our Rachel's Vineyard teams around the world! We'll feature special announcements, updates, and resources specifically for our teams. We are so blessed to have hundreds of loyal, compassionate people who freely give their time and resources to help women and men find healing.

Teams: please remember to update our main office with your upcoming retreat dates and your change in leadership! We receive inquiries daily from people who are looking for retreats to attend, and we want to give them the most updated information. You can call the office with your updates or email them to Kelly (2Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org), Katie (Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org), or Mary (Office@RachelsVineyard.org).

Thank you all for your continued dedication to our ministry. It is through your hearts and hard work that God is healing so many people who are suffering after their abortions.

"No matter how long the winter,
spring is sure to follow."
~ English Proverb

Rachel's Vineyard Receives Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Award

The vines of our Vineyard reach far and wide. Not only are we an international ministry (with 200+ retreat sites throughout the world), our teams are spreading into places we never dreamed possible. Recently, our Central Texas Rachel's Vineyard team received the Governor's Criminal Justice Volunteer Service Award for their work with women inmates.

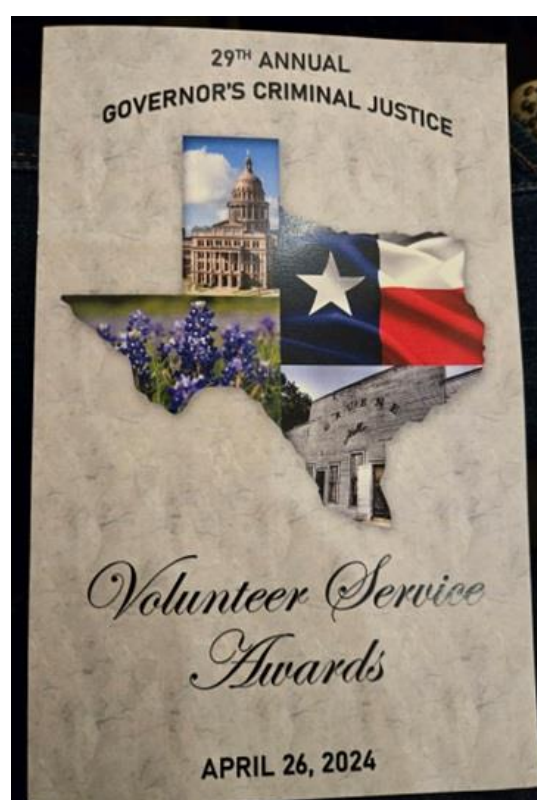
“We didn’t even know we were nominated until the Texas Department of Criminal Justice reached out to us,” said Carrie Mann, Central Texas’ team leader. “Originally, they called Lovette Vassar, my former Hope Pregnancy Center boss, and she gave them my contact info. I was stunned when I got the call. It wasn’t until shortly before the ceremony that I discovered who nominated us: the prison’s Chaplain, Franklin Robinson. It is so evident what God is doing in the prison through Rachel’s Vineyard, and Chaplain Robinson is seeing it first-hand. We are so thankful and honored.”

****[To Learn more about the Award Rachel’s Vineyard received, click here!](#)**



Carrie Mann(left) - Amy Vester(right)





"Every great dream begins with a dreamer.
Always remember,
you have within you the strength,
the patience, and the passion
to reach for the stars to change the world."
~ Harriet Tubman

Retreat Offers Support After Abortion By Jolene Toves

"The pain of abortion can be carried for years, but one program aims to provide a chance for healing.

The program, called Rachel's Vineyard, is a retreat held around the world, providing safe spaces and support for individuals who have experienced an abortion, according to a past participant who asked to remain anonymous."

**To read the full article by *The Guam Daily Post*, [click here!!](#)

"If you judge people,
you have no time to love them."
St. Teresa of Calcutta

Meet the Leaders!

The beautiful branches in our vineyard are filled with 'grapes' that have been pressed through difficulty and hardship. Remaining in Jesus, the true Vine, they help turn their adversity into 'good fruit.' We're adding this new feature to our Vine and Branches newsletter to help other members of Rachel's Vineyard get to know some of our phenomenal team leaders.



Roaming Through South Africa

With a smile that can melt the hardest heart, Poppy More talks about growing up in a tight-knit family and singing in the church choir. "I have two brothers and two sisters," she says, "I'm in the middle." In South Africa, where Poppy was raised and still lives, family is considered the backbone of society. While many children don't live in homes where both parents are present, the family is seen as a crucial structure for society. Frequently, children whose parents are divorced move between members of the family (grandparents, parents, etc.) at different points in their lives.

Religion is another foundation of South African society. According to statistics, approximately 82% of the population is Christian. The Catholic presence dates back to the late 15th century when, 'hoping' to find a route to India, Bartholomew Diaz dubbed the area "Cape of Good Hope." And in 1837, Pope Gregory XVI established the "Cape" as an Apostolic Vicariate, which is basically an area of jurisdiction where parishes or dioceses have not yet been created. A year later, Bishop Patrick Griffith chose the Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Flight into Egypt, as patroness of the Vicariate. Today, it encompasses South Africa, Botswana, and Swaziland—and supports approximately 28 dioceses.

It's tempting to think that due to the strong sense of religion and family in South Africa, abortions are rare.

But they aren't.

While abortion was first legalized in in 1975, it was allowed only if the pregnancy was "life-threatening," if the baby was likely to be born with irreparable physical or mental defects, or if it was conceived in rape or incest. The 1996 Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act overrode the 1975 law, permitting abortion on demand for the first time in the country. And in public healthcare facilities (South Africa has both a public and private healthcare system), abortion is free. It's common to see women standing in long lines at the clinics, waiting for something they don't want but are told will "help" and "free" them. Many are college students. Some are married. And most live in silent pain over the abortions they've had. "They don't want to be judged," Poppy states. "They don't want people to know."

Fortunately, Poppy's childhood was sheltered from that. Her mom was devoted to her family while also working as a nurse. Poppy witnessed the care she gave to her patients, especially babies and children, and resolved to help people through the healthcare system, as well.

One day, while listening to Radio Veritas (the Catholic Radio station in her area), she heard Angie Farrenkothen (the Rachel's Vineyard Cape Town Team Leader) being interviewed. In the discussion, Angie spoke about abortion loss and the healing that was possible through Rachel's Vineyard. Without hesitation, Poppy contacted the team, and made arrangements to attend the next retreat. That decision would change the course of her life.

The retreat was profound and brought her to the realization of God's forgiveness, healing, and mercy. "I experienced the mercy and forgiveness of God through the Rachel's Vineyard retreat program and through Confession, Adoration of the Blessed Eucharist, etc.," says Poppy. Then she adds, "While on our silent and free time, I sat in the garden doing introspection on how God really and truly loves us—and on how I could give back." At that moment, she had a strong awareness that God wanted her to become part of the Rachel's Vineyard team.

Later that weekend, she consecrated herself to "My Mother Mary," as Poppy calls her. So when the priest who was part of the retreat gave Poppy the chance to join the team, she wasn't surprised. She went through the process of becoming a team member and received the required training. "I was the first African lady (later joined by one more) on a Rachel's Vineyard team in South Africa," she says. "There were only two team members when I joined. Now there are four."

As a member of the Cape Town team, Poppy uses the managerial skills she gained while working with the Department of Health and not only provides heart-felt compassion to the retreat participants, she assists the team in fundraising, advertising, and many other tasks.

The team is dynamic and quick to point out the good work and healing that is occurring through the retreats. For example, one woman who went on their retreat was 85 years old. At the end of the retreat, as she was leaving, she told the team that her children didn't even know she was there (she travelled from a different country). "What I have received here is the best healing I have found," she said. Another participant told the team that she had not menstruated for quite a while. During the Memorial Service, after releasing the painful burden she had been carrying since her abortion, her cycle started again.

Most of the retreatants keep in touch with the team afterwards and tell them about the changes they've noticed since attending the retreat. For the Cape Town team, that's par for the course. They have witnessed miraculous healings – large and small – and know the power of the retreat.

But one question has been nagging them for years: What about the poorest women who can't afford to come on a retreat? Some women, who are blessed with the financial means, have travelled all the way from Zimbabwe to come to the Cape Town retreat. But there are hundreds, if not thousands, of others who can't.

The team has a strong drive to help them – to find a way of reaching them. So they are embarking on a new venture for Rachel's Vineyard in South Africa: a "Roaming" team. "We have to go to these poor women," Poppy declares on behalf of the team. The destitution of the women they want to help is depicted in a short video clip they sent our office. Windowless, grey homes, pieced together from scrap metal provide a grim contrast to the hazy blue sky.

As you can imagine, there are many challenges in becoming a Roaming team. Doing that with very little funding is even more difficult. Currently, the Cape Town team is blessed to have Fr. Theo April, who was ordained four years ago, as part of their team. He believes in their goal and is doing everything he can to help.

They have begun advertising this new team and are trying to book retreat centers in various locations within the country. With the help of Fr. Theo, they are reaching out to priests to see if they are willing to be trained and assist at the retreats.

Finding an affordable retreat center and creating scholarships for women who cannot afford to pay for a retreat are other challenges. "We need to get financial support," Poppy says emphatically. Discovering ways to advertise the retreat in the most remote areas and developing creative modes of travelling to those areas is another.

The team is researching as many avenues of funding as possible, but it's an uphill battle. They had a fundraising "Ladies' Day Out" last August, which was an afternoon tea at a Catholic Portuguese Restaurant. Everyone paid for their own meal and added a little extra money for the fundraising effort. During the tea, one of the team members gave a brief talk about Rachel's Vineyard.

To help create awareness of the ministry, the team has also been interviewed on local radio stations and has visited parishes and universities throughout the province. "After our presentations, we offer one-on-one talks in confidentiality. If the women later decide to go on a retreat, they will have already talked to a team member and will feel more comfortable when they arrive," Poppy states. She noticed that at one of their university presentations, the women and men were in tears. "It is very difficult for them to acknowledge their abortions in the presence of other people," she explains. So they suffer in silence and isolation. Like the grey scrap-metal homes that have no windows for the light to shine through, they remain in the darkness of their pain.

But with God's help, the Roaming Team can bring His Light and Healing. And Poppy's smile will help open the door.

+ + +

Please pray that God will open avenues of support and funding for the Roaming Team. If you would like to help them reach some of the most the impoverished women in South Africa, please email or call Poppy or Angie. You can find their contact information at www.rachelsvineyard.co.za/contact-us.

*Rachel's Vineyard Roaming retreat
Team members*

Ursulla Mashinini Carmelita Johannes



Poppy More

Bella Vilakazi



A snapshot from the video clip mentioned above

**"Do not go where the path may lead;
go instead where there is no path
and leave a trail."**

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Rachel's Vineyard on the Airwaves

Dr. Theresa & Kevin Burke on "More to the Story" with Molly White

Kevin and Dr. Theresa Burke join Molly and Mary to talk about their 40-plus years of work in abortion healing.

[**To listen to this episode in full, click here!!](#)



"Is My Sin Unforgivable?" The Patrick Madrid Show

"In a heartrending episode of *The Patrick Madrid Show*, we witness a poignant conversation between Patrick Madrid and a caller named Erin from La Habra, California. Erin, carrying the heavy burden of past abortion, shares her struggle with faith, feeling abandoned and unworthy of God's love."

You can listen to the [full episode here!](#)

Thank you, Erin, for sharing your story. And thank you, Patrick, for sharing healing resources, like Rachel's Vineyard, with those in need.



**"Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths."**

~ Proverbs 3:5-6



Rachel's Vineyard; The Greatest Experience of Human Healing Ever Seen

By Rvdo. P. Orlando Lugo Pérez, JCD

Many people think that you have to live life with pain. We are so accustomed to suffering, that we don't believe that another life is possible. It's hard for us to open our wounds because we don't want to risk reliving the terrible pain of the past for fear of not getting up from the ground again.

This weekend, in Palm Beach, Florida-USA, I had the greatest experience of human healing ever seen in my 43 years of life and in my almost 14 years of priestly life.

The wounds caused by the reality of abortion are one of the deepest pains that any woman and man can carry. The silence, the shame, the negative judgment and the taboo on the subject, exacerbate that pain even more. These realities imposed by an "advanced" society force fathers, mothers, grandparents, grandmothers, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts of unborn girls and boys to

often live an incomplete joy. They do not talk openly about the subject for fear of being confronted with violence by some people, politicians, journalists, artists and media absolutely alien or numb to the immense pain caused by this serious social evil.


This weekend all of us who have participated in this psychological-religious exercise inspired by God to a health professional woman (Theresa Burke) in the United States, we have realized that the joy offered by the Risen Christ is one that can be lived with deep authenticity, if we give ourselves permission again to open our wounds with the right people and in the right environment. Christian joy does not exist to pretend! The death of Christ was not feigned! Therefore, the resurrection of Christ is not a false story either!

Raquel's Vineyard already exists in Puerto Rico, specifically in the Archdiocese of San Juan and the Diocese of Fajardo-Humacao. It's not a traditional retreat. Their manual has been translated into 33+ languages, with over 400 retreats held each year. The most important thing for us is a psychological-spiritual exercise approved by the Catholic Church.


As far as I know, this presence is not in my Diocese of Ponce. I promise you that I will talk to my Bishop about what "I have seen and heard" (1Jn.1,3) this weekend of Divine Mercy together with an excellent team of professional women, of various nationalities, committed to life and the Church, led by a great Puerto Rican woman, Emily. I will do everything possible to bring, for the first time to my Diocese, this great and intense experience of healing and forgiveness from God to so many people who suffer the scourge of death in life. It is no coincidence that this same day, that of the Annunciation to Mary, where the declaration "Infinite Dignity" is published - the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on human dignity -, I am writing this. Thanks to my parents, I have always been committed to life. After the Rachel's Vineyard retreat, I am even more so. Without life, there is nothing.

Don't be afraid to look at the cross from the front and talk about your pain with the right person and in the right confidential environment. God can heal everything. Let yourself be transformed like a grape, so that it is Christ, the Wineman, who brings out the best of the wines of your precious life, so that you can live to the fullest and with dignity, as you deserve it.

All life matters! All life is WORTHY! Live happily and without pretending! Only God heals!



**"In order to write about life,
first you must live it."
~ Ernest Hemingway**



Events/Updates from Around the Vineyard



November 2024: **Latin American Rachel's Vineyard Leadership Conference** El 3er Congreso Latinoamericano del Viñedo de Raquel "Del Dolor a la Sanación" se llevará a cabo del 7 al 11 de Noviembre de 2024 en la ciudad de Bogotá - Colombia. El cual tiene como objetivo actualizar, compartir, intercambiar conocimientos y establecer redes de contactos, con los coordinadores y equipos del Retiro Viñedo de Raquel de todas las partes del mundo.

**For more information in English, [click here!!](#)



Curando el dolor del aborto

Retiro
EL VIÑEDO
DE
RAQUEL

Abortos provocados
o espontáneos

Ven y deja de sufrir,
encuétrate con Dios, sé
perdonado y perdónate a ti
mismo.

¿Estás sufriendo el dolor del aborto?

¿Tú o tu pareja han tenido un aborto?

¿Conoces a alguien que ha tenido un
aborto?

Próximo Retiro 19 al 21 de julio de 2024
Para mujeres, hombres y parejas

Para más información llamar a:
Patricia Ortiz 787-398-6591
Karla Cintron 787-528-1708

Bajo estricta confidencialidad



Update from Rachel's Vineyard Nicaragua

Ana, the retreat facilitator in Nicaragua, shared the following:


We had a wonderful Rachel Vineyard retreat this past March 15-17. This was our 21st retreat here in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. It was very blessed with 12 participants and 34 babies that we were able to honor.

Two men participated who surprised me a lot with their ability to write. I'd like to share with you a poem that one of them wrote from the retreat.

(To read the poem in Spanish, [click here](#), to read the poem in English, [click here](#)!)

I'd also like to share with you a photo of our team before starting the retreat, and another at the conclusion of the Eucharist at the end of the retreat. We are very blessed to have the charisma and accompaniment of Fray Dimas, our priest.





"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot
and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light,
and winter in the shade."


~ Charles Dickens



United in Prayer

Please pray for the healing of **Sr. Marcelina Mikulska's father**, who is hospitalized in Poland. Sr. Marcelina works on both, our Rachel's Vineyard and Grief to Grace teams in Philadelphia.

Please pray for all those who have attended or will be attending retreats this Spring—that they may find comfort, peace, and healing on their retreat weekend. We also pray for our dedicated volunteers who serve on our teams—that they may have the strength and grace as they facilitate to those in need. Amen!!



"Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight."

~ Proverbs 3:5-6



Father, My Heart is Ready

A Reflection on The Passion and the Rachels Vineyard Retreat
By Maria Grace, a Rachel's Vineyard retreatant

Father, my heart is ready -- accepting this cup of suffering, dear Jesus,
I know You struggle beside me -- Uniting myself to Your Passion, Lord... stay
with me.

I want to flee- to hide from this pain -- yet in the Father's Love, He calls me
here.

My heart is so heavy as I step into this vineyard; feeling abandoned, confused,
desperate, and
terrified. The accusations of my life assail me -- and hit me from all sides.

I dare not raise my head -- My Lord... I have sinned.

The world shouts vicious threats -- a myriad of accusing voices imprinting
themselves on my
soul -- clenched fists and their words and judgments hit like stone.

Quietly...gently...a tender peace penetrates the turmoil -- the world and its
hatred fade.

Forgiving hands placed upon my head...

My Lord... do You not condemn me??

My trembling hand reaches out to You...

Son of David, have pity on me! I take courage as You draw near -- Master, Light of the World,

I wish for you to disperse the darkness of my life -- please, Lord, restore my sight.

Open the eyes of my faith. In my suffering, May I only have eyes for You.

Father, my heart is ready -- stooping to pick up my cross, dear Jesus; I sense my Mother so close

to me -- my strength and my comfort -- She knows the agony of my heart as I walk-this.

My Way of the Cross

Father, my heart is ready -- I struggle beneath the weight of my secret agony. Purify me in this suffering -- wash me in the Blood of the Lamb, Your Son, Who walks beside me.

My Jesus, stay with me -- I cannot walk this without You -- my hands reach out to touch my Lord.

Adonai!

My sins have disfigured me -- and grief has broken my spirit. With blind faith I grasp hold of

Your cloak, Saving Lord, please heal the hemorrhaging of my heart

Father, my heart is ready -- I believe You are with me and have brought me here

Search me, Lord, and know me -- help my unbelief -- cause me to recognize You as You are

I am thirsting for You. Jesus, I accept Your Living Water -- let the rivers of Your Spirit flow

through me.

Father, my heart is ready -- Your mercy and forgiveness have pierced my heart The emotions come so fast...

Abba! Daddy!

This pain is too much and my strength is failing -- My Mother, dear Mary -- as You draw me to

your heart, my bitter tears mingle with Your sacred tears -- My heart is weeping...

O, Mother, you know intimately my grief -- Hold me, dear Mother.

Hide me in the mantle of Your tender love -- Strengthen me to remain here with You at the foot

of your Son's Cross.

Father, my heart is ready -- I surrender this cross -- my pain, my tears, my sorrow and love

the emptiness within threatens to consume me -- Teacher, quench the thirst of my heart
satisfy the hunger of my soul -- I ache to know You- to see You -- all I have to offer, Lord[1]my brokenness, my losses, my grief.

O Crucified Christ! Draw me to Yourself -- hold me, sweet Jesus, in Your heart. In You alone is life -- I empty my heart to You, dear Jesus in Your love, prepare a place for me.

Jesus: the Way, the Truth, and the Life -- help me to follow You through to the promise of the resurrection -- where my precious blessings await to greet me.

Father, my heart is ready -- You have called me by name, dear Jesus to share in Your Passion
You have graced me with the joy and suffering to labor in this vineyard -- in the painful journey to the Cross.

Sweet Mother, dear Mary -- how tenderly you lead me to Your Son the losses of my heart You know.

Peace of Christ- inebriate me! control my wayward, anxious heart. Live in me, Lord, so I may live in You.

Father, my heart is ready -- I walk beside Mary --my Comfort. My Shield and persevere in love.

In the dying and rising of Your Beloved Son, my Lord, Jesus Christ -- You turned grief into joy transformed mourning into dancing -- in my dying, too, dear Father --raise me to new life in faith reveling in Your love and mercy.

Dear Father, I give you my heart in its brokenness and pain --I give you my bruised and tired spirit -- my untrusting, defeated soul --the tattered remains of my life -- I surrender my sorrow, my agony --my losses... my loves.

O my Mary- O my Consolation! Be with me --immerse me in the ocean of Your Son's love and forgiveness.

Lord Jesus, Crucified Christ, King of my heart, Lord of my life. You make all things new -- create me anew, sweet Savior. so I may share in the joy and hope of this resurrection.

Father, my heart is ready.



**"Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted."**



Social Media

Did you know that April was Abortion Awareness Recovery Month?? Throughout the month of April, we made an extra effort to spread the word that healing after abortion is possible. Here are a few of the posts and resources we shared throughout April:



Are you suffering from a traumatic pregnancy loss and experiencing:

- Depression
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Intense grief, sadness, rage
- Feelings of shame and guilt
- Suicidal thinking and behavior
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Problems maintaining intimate relationships
- Eating disorders
- Nightmares, flashbacks

you can find healing. 

Experience forgiveness and be freed from shame. There are countless women and men who know what you're going through. Confidential, compassionate, non-judgmental help is available. You're not alone:

- **For an in-person weekend retreat:**
RachelsVineyard.org
- **For online and/or in-person* Bible-based programs:**
HerChoiceToHeal.com (part of RamahInternational.org)
SaveOne.org
SheFoundHisGrace.org



Because no heart is too broken to be healed

“ I thank Rachel's Vineyard for allowing the unconditional love and acceptance to be present that was needed for me to release the pain of my past. ”



Because no heart is too broken to be healed

RachelsVineyard.org

“My retreat was, life altering.”



ABORTION
Recovery
AWARENESS

Because no heart is too broken to be healed

RachelsVineyard.org



*“I feel healed in my soul!
The burden of shame is
gone from my life!”*



ABORTION
Recovery
AWARENESS

Because no heart is too broken to be healed

RachelsVineyard.org

Social Media provides a wonderful opportunity for us to connect with our teams, retreatants, and ministry supporters from around the world!

Give us a follow to stay up-to-date with the latest from RV:

[Facebook.com/RachelsVineyard](https://www.facebook.com/RachelsVineyard)

[Instagram @RVHealing](https://www.instagram.com/RVHealing)

[Twitter @RVHealing](https://twitter.com/RVHealing)

[Youtube.com/RachelsVineyard](https://www.youtube.com/RachelsVineyard)



"The greatest glory in living lies not in never falling,
but in rising every time we fall."

~ Nelson Mandela




Additional Healing Retreats from Dr. Theresa Burke

The founder of Rachel's Vineyard, Dr. Theresa Burke, has developed two additional healing retreats: Grief to Grace: Healing the Wounds of Abuse, Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity, and Duty to Heal: Finding Peace for a Soldiers Heart.

To see the retreat schedule for Grief to Grace, [click here!](#)

For more information about Duty to Heal, [click here!](#)



"And above all these put on love,
which binds everything together
in perfect harmony."

~ Colossians 3:14



Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Weekends

We have over 100 retreats happening around the world throughout May and June.

To see our full retreat schedule by date, [click here!](#)

If you need help connecting with the retreat site closest to you, please reach out to Kate at Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org.

