



Vine & Branches

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

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July 2023

The Miracle of Reconciliation

****The following homily was contributed to us by one of our Rachel's Vineyard priests****

As we continue with the Season of Ordinary Time we continue our focus on the day-to-day duties and responsibilities of a faithful Catholic. These include remembering that every Sunday is a Holy Day of Obligation, returning to normal routines of prayer, renewing those small acts of penance that make up the penitential lifestyle of the Catholic, and examining our conscience regularly to see how prepared we are to receive Holy Communion. These are not extraordinary acts, these are the common practices of every mainstream Catholic in the pew. But today, the Holy Spirit highlights one in particular: Reconciliation. This should be as common as all the rest – one of those "ordinary" practices, so to speak, of Ordinary Time. Saints and popes have consistently encouraged us to go to Confession at least on a monthly basis. But, for most of us, celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation is above and beyond the call of duty.

Our reticence toward Reconciliation can be for many reasons. Our society in general has lost a sense of sin. None of us likes to acknowledge that sometimes we do what is wrong. We can easily become unconvinced that we sin at all. We can fall under the illusion that we really wouldn't have anything to confess even if we were to go to the sacrament. If everything I do, or don't do, comes from my feelings or my upbringing or someone else then nothing is really my fault. Under this mindset, we can approach going to confession more like a discussion or a therapy session than a sacrament and the whole thing becomes very down-to-earth. In that case, I could say to myself: "That's a session I can put off until next month." In fact, all of these thoughts I have had myself, before I began to take my faith seriously, about 10 years ago.

Throughout my adolescence and early adulthood I never realized the real power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and what it really meant. But, thank God, it has become an indispensable part of my life and one of the greatest motivators, along with the Eucharist, of my vocation to the priesthood. Through it, my Baptism continues to work in my life, washing away my sins, changing my heart and soul with the very love and mercy of God, turning back-on the wellsprings of Faith, Hope, and Love, renewing my sonship with God and brotherhood with the Church, fortifying me to never sin again and to avoid the near occasions of sin, and removing all obstacles to God's grace.

Now I hunger and thirst to hear Jesus Christ Himself say, through the priest, "I absolve you of your sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His Mercy endures forever."

A couple of years ago, I had an experience of the sacrament of Reconciliation that helped me to realize that sometimes people... sometimes I... avoid the sacrament beyond reasons of laziness, or ignorance, or misunderstanding. Sometimes great shame is involved. The setting was a Rachel's Vineyard retreat, named after Rachel in the Old Testament who wept for the loss of her child. This is a weekend retreat for women, and increasingly men, who are suffering from an abortion, an abortion in their own life or in the lives of their daughters or granddaughters. A fellow seminarian, from another diocese, had volunteered at these retreats before, to assist with the Masses and other rituals that take place during the weekend and he invited me to come along. He knew I was passionate about the pro-life movement and wanted me to experience the other side of the picket line. Not only did this weekend become one of the most powerful examples for me of the beauty and power of the sacrament of Reconciliation, but it became one of the most powerful moments of my entire life.

Part of the weekend consisted of breaking the group of mostly women up into small groups, each with its own licensed counselor and another person with experience in the program who had walked, herself, with Jesus on the road from shame to healing. In these groups, each of the women was allowed to tell their story, how their abortion happened. I participated by telling the story of how one of my friends had an abortion and I felt ashamed because I thought I could have done more to help her. It was very difficult to hear the stories. You could feel the tension in the room.

Some of the women simply got carried away with themselves, like David in the account we heard from the second Book of Samuel. Before they knew it, they were at the brink of destruction. In David's case, it was lust. He saw a woman he wanted so he took her and sent her husband to the front lines of battle to get him out of the way. It took the prophet Nathan to help him realize that he was on a road of suffering that would last his entire life. When David finally confessed that he had sinned against the Lord, the Lord forgave him, and set him on the road to life. Nathan answered David: "the Lord on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die."

Since that first retreat as a participant, I've gone to three others as a volunteer. I certainly have not been counting, but I guess I have heard close to fifty abortion stories. Abortion always hurts. Women, and many men, we are learning, always suffer. It not only takes the baby's life but it ruins the mother's as well, sometimes in ways she doesn't realize. It often comes from abuse and leaves a legacy of abuse. And many women end up spiraling into drugs, alcohol, depression, promiscuity, or rabid advocacy of the pro-abortion cause, in order to justify the choice they made. Sooner or later their suffering catches up with them and they come anonymously, courageously, to these retreats for healing. The Friday they arrive is like Good Friday. But by telling their stories and hearing the stories of others, they become able to admit their share of the wrongdoing and turn to God for mercy and forgiveness. This opens the door to tremendous healing and sets them on the road not to death, but to life. They come to him as on Good Friday and at the end of the weekend, they go back into the world as on Easter Sunday.

By this time, the shame has gone away. They have named their children and adopted them from heaven. They have written them letters of remorse with the hope that their children are in a place now in which they do not know pain or resentment. They have placed themselves, through prayer, into each of Jesus' miraculous healings in the gospels. And we even celebrate a memorial Mass for their children. All of this is made possible for them by the sacrament of reconciliation.

Many of you may be regular confessors and I applaud you. Keep it up! Make sure it is always something you hunger and thirst for. It is necessary for a good life. If you are having difficulty going to confession, I tell you this story of the Rachel's Vineyard retreat, because I know that shame is a particularly difficult thing to overcome. If it's laziness, ignorance, or misunderstanding, snap out of it! But if it's shame, a much harder obstacle, know that it can be conquered too. Throw yourself at the feet of Christ's Divine Mercy, like the woman in our Gospel today, like so many people who have gone through the Rachel's Vineyard retreats, for example. Shame need not keep you from the sacrament forever or sentence you to a vicious cycle of confessing the same thing over and over. God's Mercy endures forever, I've seen it unfold before my very eyes. Let Jesus say to you too, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." Let his forgiveness enflame your heart with love, love for those who suffer, but especially love for Him, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.



**"It takes courage to live through suffering;
and it takes honesty to observe it."**

~ C. S. Lewis



Men's Silence on Their Partner's Abortions is Like Adam's Silence While Eve Ate the Apple

By Kevin Burke, LSW

"You have likely heard the creation story from Genesis featuring Adam and Eve, the snake and the forbidden fruit. Our enlightened society tends to dismiss the account as a whimsical myth.

Yet, if we take the time to unpack the deeper meaning, this biblical account is very much a contemporary story. One that powerfully intersects with one of the more contentious and divisive issues of our day – abortion."

To read the full article from [LifeNews, click here!!](#)



**"Hate cannot drive out hate;
only love can do that."**

~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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.



A Special Forces Soldier in the House of God

When he was a child, he wanted to be a Green Beret. In college, he studied politics and aimed for the House of Representatives.

God had other ideas.

He wanted a different kind of Green Beret—a spiritual Special Forces soldier—to work in the House of God.

But let's go back to the beginning. Born in Kokomo, Indiana, Ben Cameron's family was Catholic, yet he attended a Baptist High School. As you can imagine, that created interesting theological interactions with classmates. Being challenged about the tenets of Catholicism, he had to dive into the Faith to defend the Church's teachings. It also created interesting social dynamics. He laughingly describes himself as "the one guy the girls felt safe with because I was off limits." In retrospect, he can see how God was using that experience to prepare him for Rachel's Vineyard.

That didn't happen until after he was ordained a priest in the Congregation of The Fathers of Mercy and began preaching missions in the United States, Canada, and Australia. In the course of his missionary work, Fr. Ben repeatedly heard how much pain the women suffered from their abortions. Sadly, many of them had been carrying their heartache for decades. It was common for him to hear, "Father, this has been with me for 20 years..." Fr. Ben wanted to help and told the women about Rachel's Vineyard, but beyond that, he didn't have the tools he needed to help them.

Then he decided to learn more about Rachel's Vineyard.

Initially, he wanted to observe a retreat, but when he discovered that wasn't possible, he attended one. The weekend was so powerful, he asked his Religious Superior if they could start a Rachel's Vineyard team in Kentucky. The response came quickly: Yes.

Fr. Ben began recruiting people for the team. He found two local women who wanted to help: Cindy Vincent and Debbie Ward. Then Maria Steele from Tupelo, Mississippi, and Mary Crone from Memphis, Tennessee, came to help run the first retreat. It typically takes two years to develop a new retreat team, and having a low population density in Kentucky didn't help the process. Unique to the Bowling Green team, their members live in four different states. However, Fr. Ben and his team remained steadfast, and only 15 months after he made his own retreat, the Kentucky team held their first retreat.

Like their team members, participants travel quite a distance to attend a retreat. At the last count, nine states – including Massachusetts – have been represented.

When asked how he manages different stress levels and personalities on a team, Fr. Ben says, “We think long and hard about who can be part of the team. Sometimes people want to be part of the team because they still desperately need healing.” In those instances, it can be wise to wait until more healing occurs and the person is ready. “But the biggest possibility of people getting cross-wise, is when the therapist and facilitator are both post-abortive and don’t realize and appreciate how different they are: Why is she triggered and I’m not? Or she’s more emotional than I am.” He then adds that having at least one team member who is not post-abortive can help “stabilize the team because they have not gone through the trauma. They anchor the team and keep it grounded.” It also helps participants when they feel loved and accepted by people who have not experienced an abortion. In that sense, the team can be “a bridge to the larger Church.”

Through his 17 years with Rachel’s Vineyard, Fr. Ben has witnessed the painful reality that many women endure. When unplanned pregnancies occur, they commonly get “pressured into abortions from boyfriends, siblings, doctors, and even parents.” They’re afraid. They don’t know where to turn or what to do. Hearing their stories has changed his perspective, and Fr. Ben appreciates the grace—and irony—in his story. “If you would have told the 20-year-old me, who used to pray in front of abortion clinics every Saturday, that someday many of my closest friends would be women who have had abortions, I would not have believed you.”

And he probably wouldn’t have believed that God could keep the kernel of all his childhood and young adult dreams yet turn them into something far greater. Nor would he have thought that one day he’d be “a shepherd of souls, an incarnation of the Merciful Jesus” to men and women in Rachel’s Vineyard retreats.

But he loves it.

As Mark Twain once wrote, “Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities; Truth isn’t.”^[1]

* * *

Fr. Ben Cameron is currently working on a book for priests and ministers about post-abortion healing. In his spare time, which is somewhat of a rarity, he enjoys hiking, kayaking, and sitting with friends savoring a little Kentucky Bourbon.

[1] *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World*, by Mark Twain



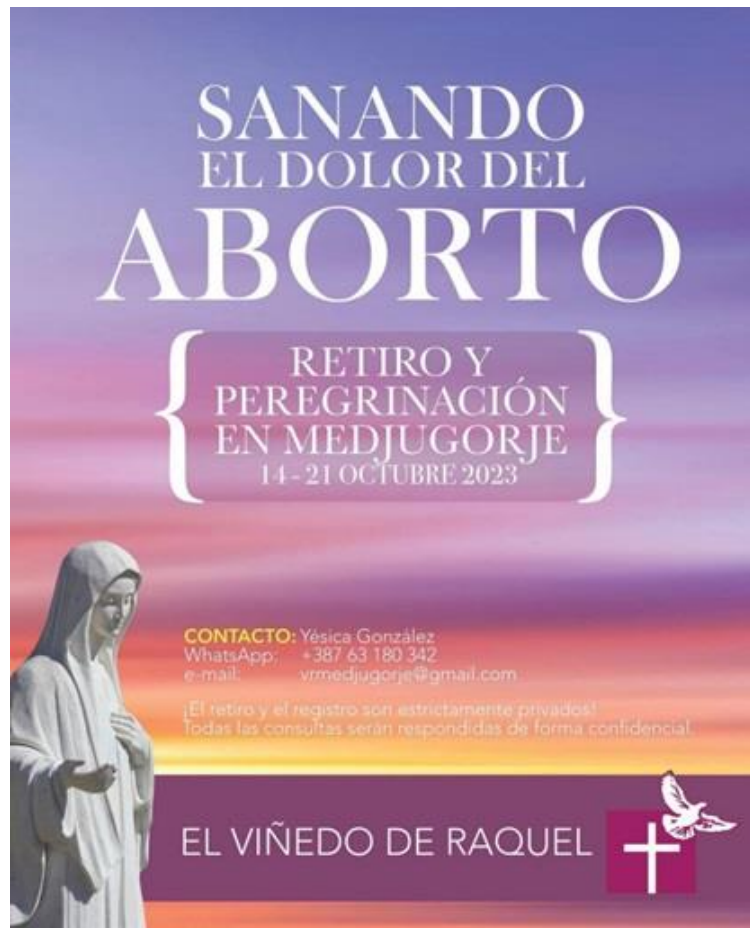
Pastor Jim Robinson (from the Methodist Church), who has been part of the Kentucky RV team;
Mr. Steve Nally, the Master Distiller at Bardstown Bourbon Company; and Fr. Ben Cameron, CPM.



Fr. Ben visiting Norbertine priests in California, and Dr. Leslie Kacsir, a psychologist from Virginia who helps with the RV retreats in Kentucky and Tennessee. They ran into each other "by chance" in southern California.

**"Be yourself;
everyone else is already taken."
~ Oscar Wilde**

Event of Interest



We are thrilled to share that our newest retreat site in Medjugorje is hosting their first retreat, followed by a beautiful pilgrimage through Medjugorje. For more information, [click here](#), or contact Yésica González at vrmedjugorje@gmail.com, or via WhatsApp at +387-63-180-342.

"The future belongs to those
who believe in the beauty
of their dreams."

~ Eleanor Roosevelt

United in Prayer

Please pray for the family of **Tim Mosser** (our new site leader from Fargo, ND) **and his family**, as they grieve the recent passing of Tim's sister. We pray for peace and strength during this difficult time.

Please pray for special intentions for **Rose Romant Todd** and her **Grandson**.

Please keep **Bernadette Roy and her family** in your prayers as they are dealing with health issues at this time. We pray for peace and healing for all.

We want to offer our prayers and congratulations to **Marie** from our Kelowna

RV team, as her family celebrates the birth of her granddaughter, **June Moselle** on June 30th!!




"Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."
~ Isaiah 41:10


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

"The staff's complete acceptance
of all they heard truly allowed me and the
other women to be honest and to reach down
deeply into painful memories. I cannot say
enough how impressed I am by their
commitment of time, energy, emotion,
faith, and love to help other
people find God's healing."

Facebook: [Facebook.com/RachelsVineyard](https://www.facebook.com/RachelsVineyard)
Instagram: [Instagram.com/rvhealing](https://www.instagram.com/rvhealing)
Twitter: [Twitter.com/RVHealing](https://twitter.com/RVHealing)
Youtube: [Youtube.com/user/RachelsVineyard](https://www.youtube.com/user/RachelsVineyard)



"I don't think of all the misery
but of the *beauty* that still remains."
~ Anne Frank



Grief to Grace Retreats
Healing the Wounds of Abuse
Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity

Phoenix, AZ

Email: Phoenix@griegtograce.org
Call: 480-215-6762
July 9-14, 2023

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Email: Diane@griegtograce.org
Call: 612-440-7247
August 15-20, 2023

Oceanside, CA

Email: grief2grace.tps@gmail.com
Call: 951-234-5053
August 29-September 3, 2023

Houston, TX

Email: G2GTexas@Griegtograce.org
Call: 866-763-6557
September 9-14, 2023
November 4-9, 2023

Lake Charles, LA

Email: griegtograncelouisiana@lcdiocese.org
Call: Marjorie Long – 337-489-2473
September 26-30, 2023

Philadelphia, PA

Email: Philadelphia@Griegtograce.org
Call: 610-427-1187
Call: 610-203-2002
October 8-October 13, 2023

Tulsa, OK

Email: healing@cceok.org
Call: 918-508-7122
April 14-19, 2024

Detroit, MI

Email: vnmary2@icloud.com

Call: 313-346-6070

INTERNATIONAL:

Slovenia

Email: tomaz.mikus@gmail.com

Call: +386-64-178-014

www.odbolecineknilosti.si

July 26-30, 2023

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Email: padrematias@gmail.com

Call: +54 11 5220 3619

September 13-17, 2023

London, UK

Email: info@griegtograceuk.org

Call: +44 208 154 2719

July 9-14, 2023

September 18-23, 2023

November 20-25, 2023

Kelowna, Canada

Email: G2GKelowna@gmail.com

Call: 1-250-808-6403

October 24-28, 2023

LSI, France

Website: www.duchagrinalagrace.com

Email: g2g.lsi.france@gmail.com

Call: +33 6 09 39 79 27

Glasgow, Scotland

Email: info@griegtograceuk.org

Call: 020 8154 2719

El Salvador, Central America

Email: Anajhill@hotmail.com

Call: Ana Julia Hill – 503-772-97-721

Call: Nueva Alianza – 503-229-87-000

Malopolska, Poland

Email: a.t.pecak@gmail.com

Call: +48605-335507


Barcelona, Catalonia Spain

Email: noemisuntlacrimae@gmail.com


Email: info@deldoloralagracia.org

Call: Noemi Venegas +34 686-487-031

www.deldoloralagracia.org



**“Obstacles don’t have to stop you.
If you run into a wall,
don’t turn around and give up.
Figure out how to climb it,
go through it,
or work around it.”
~ Michael Jordan**



Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Weekends July & August

Ann Arbor, MI

Contact: Beth Bauer call/text (734) 879-0427 toheal4give@outlook.com

Friday, July 7, 2023

Sunday, July 9, 2023

Midland, TX

Contact: Madeline Medrano 432-897-
4788 projectrachel@sanangelodiocese.org

Friday, July 7, 2023

Sunday, July 9, 2023

Note: Please call any of the phone numbers above for more information

Naguabo, PR

Contact: Patricia Ortiz Rosario 787-398-
6591 ortiz_patricia17@yahoo.com

Language: Spanish

Friday, July 7, 2023

Sunday, July 9, 2023

Austin, TX

Contact: Sheryle Knorre 512-876-
8049 sheryle@healedinmercy.org

Website Address: www.healedinmercy.org

Denomination: Interdenominational

Friday, July 14, 2023

Sunday, July 16, 2023

Bogotá, Colombia

Contact: Martha Elena Soto Rojas 315
8111118 direccion@derechoanacer.org

Language: Spanish

Friday, July 14, 2023

Sunday, July 16, 2023

Language: Spanish

Denomination: Catholic

Friday, August 11, 2023

Sunday, August 13, 2023

Cajicá, Colombia

Contact: Sandra Zamora 310-580-7319 vinedo.pasosporamor@gmail.com

Language: Spanish

Friday, July 14, 2023

Sunday, July 16, 2023

Orlando, FL

Contact: Carmen Claypoole: English & Spanish 407-222-8584 projectrachel@cflcc.org

Language: Spanish

Friday, July 14, 2023

Sunday, July 16, 2023

Bogotá, Colombia

Contact: Fanny Ester Jiménez Marzal +57 3105560662 fajimar69@gmail.com

Contact: Luz Marina Pedreros +57 320 4856724 vinedodiocesisengativa@gmail.com

Language: Spanish

Friday, July 21, 2023

Sunday, July 23, 2023

Jacksonville/St. Augustine, FL

Contact: Mary Huston 904-221-3232 Rachelsvineyardjax@yahoo.com

Friday, July 21, 2023

Sunday, July 23, 2023

Miraflores, LM

Contact: Yanina Diaz Martell 51 997225419 yanidima@gmail.com
Website Address: <http://www.elvinedoderaquel.org/weekend/sites.aspx>

Language: Spanish

Friday, July 21, 2023

Sunday, July 23, 2023

Phoenix/Mesa, AZ

Contact: Karen Ord 480-329-6795 karenord.rv@gmail.com
Website Address: www.sttimothymesa.org/rachels-vineyard

Friday, July 21, 2023

Sunday, July 23, 2023

Indianapolis, IN

Contact: Bernadette Roy 317-650-2920
Contact: Maria Hernandez (Spanish) 317-946-3813
Website Address: www.archindy.org/projectrachel

Friday, July 28, 2023

Sunday, July 30, 2023

Santa Clarita, CA

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

Friday, July 28, 2023
Sunday, July 30, 2023

Dallas, TX

Contact: Hilary Cable 214 544 2273 healing@racheldallas.org
Website Address: www.racheldallas.org
Friday, August 4, 2023
Sunday, August 6, 2023

Kansas City, MO

Contact: Teresa O'Donnell 1-816-679-
4973 rvkcmo@gmail.com
Friday, August 11, 2023
Sunday, August 13, 2023

Lake Charles, LA

Contact: Marjorie Long 337-489-2473 rachels.vineyard@lcdiocese.org
Website Address: www.lcdiocese.org
Friday, August 11, 2023
Sunday, August 13, 2023

Weinheim, Germany

Contact: Gabriele Huter-Ramm +49(0)6201-392219 g.hueter-
ramm@aktion-leben.de
Language: German
Thursday, August 17, 2023
Saturday, August 19, 2023

Cypress/Katy (Interdenom), TX

Contact: Mary Lee Mason 866-763-
6557 rvinfo@newheartoftexas.org
Website Address: www.newheartoftexas.org
Thursday, July 20, 2023
Saturday, July 22, 2023

Language: English
Denomination: Interdenominational
Friday, August 18, 2023
Sunday, August 20, 2023

Houston, TX

Contact: Cindy 713-825-0649 cindy@rvhouston.org
Contact: Julie Fritsch 713-741-8728 jkfritsch@archgh.org
Contact: Zulema (Spanish Contact) 713-440-
3443 zgonzalez@archgh.org
Website Address: www.archgh.org/projectrachel
Local Host: Office of Pro-Life Activities, Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
Friday, August 18, 2023
Sunday, August 20, 2023

Medellin, Colombia

Contact: Margarita Agudelo 316-657-
8585 entretusmanos33@gmail.com
Language: Spanish

Friday, August 18, 2023
Sunday, August 20, 2023

Central Texas (Interdenominational), TX

Contact: Lovette Vassar 254-289-1595 lovette@hopepc.com
Contact: Susie Wilde 254-718-2823 abortionrecovery@hopepc.com
Friday, August 25, 2023
Sunday, August 27, 2023

Sacramento, CA

Contact: Silvia Andrade (916) 733-0161 projectrachel@scd.org
Contact: Moises de Leon (858) 456-
HOPE projectrachel@scd.org
Language: Spanish
Friday, August 25, 2023
Sunday, August 27, 2023

Vancouver Island, BC

Contact: Nicola Gallagher 250-514-
3973 rachelsvineyardvancouverisland@gmail.com
Friday, August 25, 2023
Sunday, August 27, 2023