



Vine & Branches

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

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February/March 2024

"I was extremely cautious of going to Rachel's Vineyard. But I felt the strong nudge that God was leading me in that direction. I finally said 'yes'. RV has tremendously helped me in my healing process through forgiveness, mercy and compassion. It became the start of my path to freedom. God also revealed other areas for my healing.

The beautiful part of the retreat was when we shared our feelings and emotions, as we never had the opportunity to do it anywhere else. It was done in an environment of acceptance and non-judgement. I have GAINED so much from this retreat. It felt like I have been finally released from prison after years of harboring the pain and guilt of abortions in my heart."

The Paschal Mystery of Rachel's Vineyard: Lent is the Perfect Time for a Deeper Healing of Abortion Loss

During the season of Lent, we journey with Jesus from his temptation in the desert, the final days of his public ministry, and the dramatic events leading to the great Paschal Mystery of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday.


Beginning in 1986, Theresa Burke developed the Rachel's Vineyard retreats for healing after abortion. The theological framework for the weekend retreat is centered upon this same paschal mystery of Jesus - as revealed in the Paschal mystery of one's life, touched by abortion.

The weekend program is an integrated emotional and spiritual process to bring a deeper peace and healing for mothers, fathers, grandparents and others wounded by the loss of a child from abortion. Rachel's Vineyard is offered by sites across the U.S and around the world.


While nothing can compare with the lived experience of the program, let's take a journey through the Rachel's Vineyard Weekend. It is our hope and prayer that this may inspire you to consider attending a healing retreat, or to recommend this for a friend or loved one hurting after abortion. The Lenten

and Easter season is the perfect time for women and men wounded by abortion to enter a process of deeper reconciliation and healing.

[\[Read full article here.\]](#)



**"For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him
shall not perish but have eternal life."
~ John 3:16**



Listen Up!!


Dr. Theresa Burke was recently a guest on "Counseling Culture." The episode was broken up into two parts:

*Part 1: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/2011283/14371915>

The first of two conversations on cognitive behavioral therapy - and post abortion stress. Who needs it? As it turns out, a lot of men and women. Dr. Theresa Burke, the founder and researcher of Rachel's Vineyard, offers retreats of healing of mind and body all over the world. Here is the first part of this conversation.


*Part 2: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/2011283/14415451>

"What about men?" Rita Schulte asked our guest, Dr. Theresa Burke, on the subject of "after abortion." The conversation of counseling men who have had an abortion experience is one that rarely is discussed in media or mental health. We took a good look at the practices and retreats that Rachel's Vineyard offers. It isn't talk radio-it is Think Radio.




Check out the Interview of the Week with Dave Palmer on Guadalupe Radio featuring Bernice Simmons (Rachel's Vineyard therapist) and Hillary Cable (Project Rachel Coordinator) from our Dallas Rachel's Vineyard retreat team.

[*Listen here!!](#)



**"For last year's words belong to last year's language,
and next year's words await another voice.
And to make an end is to make a beginning."
~ T.S. Eliot**



The Transformative Power of Personal Stories after Abortion

By Kevin & Theresa Burke

In January members of the *Silent No More Awareness Campaign* walked together at the March for Life in Washington D.C. and the West Coast Walk for Life in San Francisco.

Mothers and fathers, grandparents and others directly impacted by abortion loss were seen carrying the Campaign's iconic signs of regret.


These signs provide a compelling visual testimony to the true reality of "reproductive choice." They also serve as an invitation to gather with *Silent No More* at the conclusion of the March, when participants shared a more detailed story of their experience of abortion loss and journey to healing.

For those called to offer testimony, there is a great blessing in sharing one's story. The [testimonies](#) connect the pain of the past into the transformation we long to achieve in the future, to forge through what seems insurmountable, and discover our strength.


Blessed by the merciful healing of the Lord, the choices and situations we may regret can become moments of opportunity for defining our depth and courage and discovering a new perspective from which to make sense of our pain.

Abortion testimonies also have the power to encourage and empower the listener.

[Read the Full article at [Pregnancy Help News](#)]




**"It's never too late to become who you want to be.
I hope you live a life that you're proud of,
and if you find that you're not,
I hope you have the strength to start over."
~ F. Scott Fitzgerald**



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 Window to God

Most of her days are spent helping women who are in crisis. She listens to them. Works with them. Walks with them. “They don’t have anyone they can turn to,” she says quietly. But when they talk to Teresa Shepard, they discover someone who understands their suffering and shame. They experience genuine concern and love. They see a spark of God.

You’d think that working with women in such difficult moments of their lives would dampen a person’s spirit or promote a glass-half-empty perspective. But Teresa is quick to joke around, find the positive, and laugh. That’s not too surprising, given her family background.

Her mother was raised in the South, loved being a mom, and gave tremendous “Southern hugs,” as Teresa calls them. “No matter what I wanted to talk about, I could go to her,” she says. “Just being in the room with her was fun.” And it *still* is. “She’s brilliant, very funny, and the hardest worker I have ever known. I love being around her.”

Even with her mom being a solid rock in her life, traumatic events in Teresa’s childhood led to her low self-esteem and making poor choices, including an abortion.

Following that decision, her first healing experience was in post-abortion counseling. Later, she attended a “Forgiven and Set Free” bible study. It wasn’t until 25 years later that she went on a Rachel’s Vineyard retreat. “My retreat was life changing,” she says. It made such a profound impact on her life, when she had the opportunity to bring a Rachel’s Vineyard site to Dubuque, she jumped on it—even while wondering if she could get enough volunteers or resources. But she progressed through each stage, and when the team started facing the inevitable challenges of all new teams, she worked hard to keep everything—and everyone—together. “Kelly [from our headquarters], God, and Amy (my Co-Facilitator) got me through it,” she proclaims. “I laid it out to God, ‘If this is Your will, show me a glimmer of hope.’ And He showed me one step at a time. My strength came from Him.”

Her team is an interdenominational one that includes a priest. While there is a high population of Catholics in Dubuque, sometimes women are concerned that a Catholic retreat will carry with it a judgmental tone. Having the combination of an interdenominational site with a priest has provided a welcoming, nonthreatening balance. “Father is wonderful,” Teresa says. “I’m fortunate to have a team that’s unbelievable. They are kind, support one another, and collaborate on getting work done. Rachel’s Vineyard is never about one person,” she affirms. “It’s *always* about the team.” She quickly adds that the team must be there for the retreat participants, as well—during the weekends *and* afterwards. Follow-up is crucial. “Healing is not ‘one and done.’ It takes a lifetime,” she states. “We have to lay the solid foundations for that, and the team works hard to get what they need for the participants’ next stepping stones.”

Initially, the team held their retreats in a church that had rooms available for their use; now, they’re in a retreat center that has a chapel on the property.

And the retreats have been powerful—for the participants *and* the team members. “I can’t say enough good things about these retreats,” she exclaims. “I don’t know what it is, but it works every time. I’ve never seen it *not* work. Never. When I watch the women walk in, I look at their body posture and hear their language. And I know they are going to leave different people.” Inevitably, they do.

Seeing the remarkable transformation that can happen when a woman is healed from her shame, guilt, and anger compels Teresa to help women who are struggling with unplanned pregnancies. She works at a local pregnancy center, Clarity Clinic, which has a vast array of resources and programs. “We mentor the women and call them every six weeks to see what they need,” she says. “Our current economy is preventing most of them from getting their basic needs met.” Some of the women have absolutely no support from family or friends; others have minimal help.

At the center, women can receive free pregnancy tests and ultrasounds, and they can talk to women who are knowledgeable about unexpected pregnancies. The center also: gives them information on finding food resources and getting help with their electric bills, refers them to programs that can help them go to school and get jobs, and offers free classes on subjects like what to expect during pregnancy, how to perform CPR on a child, and setting up a budget. And the center’s boutique has items the women need, like cribs, strollers, diapers, clothing, bottles, and baby formula. Their “Earn While You Learn” program allows the women to get points they can redeem at the boutique by watching videos and taking classes. If they need anything that the center doesn’t have, they write their need on a wish list, and as soon as the item comes in, we let the mom know so she can come and pick it up. As a Christian-based center, they are blessed to have a community that eagerly supports them.

Their center is also an oasis for women who have suffered pregnancy loss. “We help women who have had abortions in their past,” Teresa explains, “and those who have had miscarriages. The numbers of both are increasing. One in five women will suffer a first-trimester miscarriage.” She sadly recalls a woman who called the hospital for help during her miscarriage. The hospital told her to flush her baby’s remains down the toilet. The baby was eight weeks old. In response, Teresa called the local funeral homes that have programs to help women and families bury or cremate the remains of their miscarried babies free of charge. Frequently, family and friends don’t understand the loss, grief – and sometimes – shame and guilt they experience. The staff at Clarity Clinic walks with them through their pain and helps them in difficult moments. “You will always think about that baby,” Teresa tells them gently, “but it won’t always be this acute. The light will keep getting bigger, and the grieving won’t be as intense, but you will never forget them.”

The ‘light keeps getting bigger’ for Teresa, too. “God is the reason I’m here,” she explains. “When I share parts of my journey, He is going to be in it. To leave God out would not be true to my story.” Even her favorite hobby carries with it His light and power: she loves going out to the countryside to witness “His beauty through a camera lens.” For Teresa, the splendor of

nature is "a window to God." And for the women who turn to Teresa in their times of crisis, *she* is that window.



One of Teresa's "Windows to God"



Far left is Loie Poll (our counselor), then Amy Houselog (my co-facilitator), then Father James Miller, Amy Maas (team member) and the me Teresa Shepard (facilitator)



Follow the Leaders



Do you remember Karen Ord from our [Autumn “Meet the Leaders”](#) article? She and her Rachel’s Vineyard team in Phoenix, Arizona have been actively promoting their retreats for the past 23 years. When we asked if she would mind sharing the team’s outreach to the community, Karen readily replied, “Of course! I hope it helps other teams grow and spread the word that there is hope and healing after abortion. I believe our goals are all the same: we all want to reach as many people as possible that are hurting.”

Below are the ways in which the Phoenix team spreads the word about Rachel’s Vineyard and their retreats:

- Members of the team take flyers to their churches to put in the vestibule with the parish’s other available resources.
- The Diocese has always supported their ministry, and they were invited to the Diocese of Phoenix “Bishop’s Hour” podcast. That gave them the opportunity to talk about the ministry and share their stories. [Listen to the recording](#) from their last podcast.
- Members of the team also visit various parishes, Respect Life, and Pro-Life groups throughout the Diocese. This not only spreads the word about Rachel’s Vineyard, it also leads to other speaking engagements.
- The [Arizona Life Coalition \(ALC\)](#) has also been supportive. “They help connect all the pro-life groups so they can support one another,” Karen says. They also sponsor a “First Saturday Mass, Brunch & Learn, and Fellowship.” Following the Mass, a pro-life speaker addresses the group, after which everyone enjoys a potluck breakfast and some fellowship. Karen and her team have been invited to talk at this monthly event, as well.
- The team participates in the Arizona March for Life. They have a table at the event and also participate with their Silent No More signs and testimonies.
- Karen “keeps a stack of my Rachel’s Vineyard business cards on hand” while going to Mass at different parishes. When she greets the priest after Mass, she asks him if he knows of Rachel’s Vineyard. Regardless of his familiarity with our organization, this quick greeting presents an opportunity to hand Father some business cards “and let him know we are available to talk with anyone, anytime. Many of the priests give the business cards out in the Confessional.”
- Her team has retreats in July, so when the seminarians are home for the summer, they typically attend the retreats (as participants). “They have been coming on our retreats for about 15 years. There has been so much healing for them too, as many of them have moms or family members who’ve had abortions or miscarriages. It is so beautiful to witness them honoring their siblings and entering into the

mystery of Christ and His healing when we are giving dignity to the unborn. I believe they are better able to serve people who are post-abortive, instead of not knowing how to approach them or what to say. Most of the seminarians have become priests now, and they send people to the retreats.” For the seminarians who don’t have a family member or friend who has experienced a pregnancy loss, the team lets them know that “they can spiritually adopt a child in heaven who needs someone to name him or her.”

- The team also attends the Memorial Masses for the Unborn (or Holy Innocents) and sets up a table with packets they make for people who have had miscarriages. “There are so many people hurting from the loss of a child, either from abortion or miscarriage,” Karen says. The packets, which include grief information and a crocheted angel, are touching ways the parents can begin their healing.
- The English- and Spanish-speaking teams have their retreats at the same retreat center on the same dates. This gives them “the wonderful opportunity of coming together for Mass and meals,” where they widen their fellowship and support of one another.
- The team also has a monthly support group, Mantle of Hope, which is a confidential, safe respite for those recovering from abortion trauma. While of Catholic origin, the group is open to people of any religion. It gives members the freedom of healing “in the protection of this community through an encounter with Christ.” Meeting on Saturday mornings, they enjoy coffee and refreshments before their meditation and discussion. The participants are reminded that many of the people who attend the meetings come “with heavy burdens, fresh or years of buried pain. Underneath this we also bring insights, personal struggles, hope, friendship, and new life.” Originally, Mantle of Hope was started as a weekly support group by Karen Williams ([read her story here](#)). It has been another powerful avenue of healing for the Rachel’s Vineyard retreat participants.
- At the heart of everything they do, whether retreats, the monthly support group, or the preparation involved in both, is a solid foundation of prayer:
 - At 3:00 p.m. on the Friday of the retreat, Father celebrates Mass in preparation for the weekend. Prior to every retreat, the team meets and prays for all the participants.
 - They’re also blessed to have the St. Sharbel Shrine near their retreat center, so several of the team members “stop on our way to the support group or retreat to pray.”

Karen describes the team as “amazing men and women who have such servants’ hearts and a love for this ministry.” Their tireless efforts in promoting the retreats and support group—and the fruits of their work—are solid proof of her words. It’s also proof of what God can do when we put our lives in His service. One of Karen’s team members describes her Rachel’s Vineyard experience as “revisiting what unconditional love and forgiveness feels like through serving and seeing miracles happen.” That sums it up beautifully.

Memorial Mass for the Holy Innocents



"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted, saves those whose spirit is crushed."
Psalm 34:19

IN UNITY WITH BEREAVED
MOTHERS & FATHERS, ALL ARE
INVITED TO HONOR AND
REMEMBER THE HOLY INNOCENTS
WHOSE LIVES WERE LOST TO
ABORTION, MISCARRIAGE, STILL
BIRTH OR ANY CAUSE.

ST. GABRIEL THE ARCHANGEL CATHOLIC CHURCH

HOSTED BY RESPECTING LIFE MINISTRY

Saturday, February 10th, 10:00 am

JOIN US FOR A SMALL RECEPTION AFTER MASS.
LIGHT REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED.
GRIEF & HEALING RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

The Respecting Life Ministry is offering a pair of Holy Innocent Remembrance Hearts for those who have lost a child.

One half of the pair will remain in the St. Gabriel perpetual memorial for the Holy Innocents and the other is for the parents.



To request a pair, please visit stgacc.org/respecting-life or scan the QR code.



This is an example of the flyer for the Memorial Mass for the Innocents



St. Sharbel Shrine



Silent No More at the Arizona March for Life 2023



Phoenix Rachel's Vineyard team at the Arizona March for Life 2023



Phoenix Rachel's Vineyard team

**"Blessed are those who have not seen
and yet have believed."
~ John 20:29**

Whose Choice? Pressure to Abort Linked to Worsening of Subsequent Mental Health

"Over 60 percent of women who had abortions report high levels of pressure to abort from one or more sources, and those same women report higher levels of subsequent mental health and quality of life issues, according to a new Lozier Institute peer-reviewed study published in the [Cureus](#) medical journal."

****[Click here to read the full article and study from the Lozier Institute.](#)**

**"Let your light shine before others."
~ Matthew 5:16**

Dr. Burke Featured with Pro-Life Women in History

The month of March is celebrated as Women's History Month, and this year, Stand True and Priests for Life are celebrating Pro-Life Women in History.

Each day in March, they will reveal a new woman who is or was a heroine in the pro-life movement!

Visit this page each day to see who they are highlighting and to read a bit about her.

**To read about all the women being celebrated, [click here!](#)

"For this is the will of my Father,
that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him
should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."
~ John 6:40

Upcoming Events with Dr. Burke

Dr. Burke will be presenting at the Catholic Psychotherapist Association Conference, April 25-27, 2024 in New Orleans, LA. [For more information about this event, click here!](#)

On May 2, 2024, Dr. Burke will be speaking at the Union League in Philadelphia to celebrate 50 years of Discovery Ministries Inc. For more more information and to purchase tickets, [click here!](#)

May: Rachel's Vineyard Clinical Training in Minnesota for Elevate Life (an organization that supports 40+ pregnancy centers). This training will focus on trauma support for staff and volunteers. Please reach out to our main office for more information at 610-354-0555, or 2Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org.

Events Around the Vineyard



SANANDO EL DOLOR DEL
ABORTO

RETIRO Y
PEREGRINACIÓN
EN MEDJUGORJE

DEL 25 DE ABRIL AL 02 DE MAYO 2024

CONTACTO:
WhatsApp: +387 63 180 342
e-mail: vrmedjugorje@gmail.com

El retiro y el registro son estrictamente privados!
Todas las consultas serán respondidas de forma confidencial.

EL VIÑEDO DE RAQUEL 

**For more information about the Medjugorje retreat and pilgrimage, [click here!!](#)



3^{er} Congreso
Latinoamericano del
Viñedo de Raquel

“Del Dolor a la Sanación”

7 al 11
DE NOVIEMBRE
DE 2024

 Bogotá - Colombia

Inscripciones Abiertas
a partir de Enero 2024

Reserva tu Agenda

Informes:
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 El Viñedo
de Raquel

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, click here!!](#)



**"Be yourself;
Everyone else is**

already taken."

~ Oscar Wilde



United in Prayer

Please pray for **Everett**, the 10-year-old grandson of **Mary Goolsby**, who is suffering from a rare neurological disorder. We pray for comfort and peace during this difficult time for Everett and his family.

Please pray for **Judy Warenkiewicz** (RV Trenton). Judy recently received news regarding a bone biopsy, with the test results showing that Judy has plasma cell neoplasm. We pray that her doctors and others in the oncology field are able to prescribe effective treatments that diminish, if not rid the body of this cancer, and we pray for healing and strength for Judy.

Please pray for the **family of one of our Rachel's Vineyard leaders who are stuck in Haiti**—and for all **the Haitian people**. The country "is in the thick of horrendous violence and a political situation which is past any reason; inhuman and beyond belief what men can do to other human beings. For the past two weeks Haiti has seen a violent surge with the gangs taking over the capital Port-au-Prince, closing off the harbor and airports, killing anybody standing in the way. They have killed numerous people, including police officer. They opened several prisons and some four-five thousand thugs (including notorious gang bosses) fled to freedom.

In turn, this caused thousands of Ghetto people to flee their homes with nowhere to go. An estimated 300.000 people are seeking refuge in other city areas or outside the city but keep running into gangs again and again. Hunger is the problem number one because all ONG who could help have left the country.

Since the beginning of 2024 the gangs killed far over 1.200 people (which are known, not counting all those who were burnt or buried without anyone seeing it). After attacking the airport and even shooting at airplanes, Haiti is locked in. No airline flying. Everything is closed, no way out, no way in.

This weekend, the US army flew out all diplomats and essential embassy personnel of the USA, Europe, and all other countries by helicopter during the night. So, you can see, Haiti needs a lot of prayers. We have seen so much crisis and revolutions in Haiti already, and came out of it, that I can only hope and pray that this too will pass. Whenever and however that will be.

Thanks for all of you praying for us. It helps tremendously to know we are supported with your intercessions. May Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help, and all the heavenly hosts keep the Haitian people safe."

The following is shared with us by Sandy Crews (RV Tulsa)--Sandy felt this prayer as a message from God during the retreat Adoration 2/19/23.

I delight in you, in everything you do, I delight in you!
You are not far away, but in the heart of Me, a vital part of Me,
for I created you for love, not selfishly, but generously, love poured out for
others.

Why do you fritter away the gift of each day on things that don't last.
Move past the selfish desires, for My ways are much superior.
My ways bring life and hope and holiness, ever blessed, to those who do
My will.

Turn away from the evil of the day and do what is right and pure in My sight.
Be not concerned by the lies of the Evil One. His day is coming to an end.

The people are tiring of hearing from him
for they have recognized his lies in broken lives and loss through abortions.

Their pain and suffering is coming to an end,
for My Sacred Heart prevails and washes all who mourn
with living water blessed by Me to make them pure and holy in My sight,
to restore them to be a delight to Me again, to turn away from sin and return
to Me.

For I alone can heal the broken-hearted.
I alone can restore what I first imparted to them when I created them,
a heart as pure and clean as their dream of a life restored in Me.

Proclaim this truth that I delight in them!
Make amends for sin and then return to Me
confident that nothing is impossible for Me.
I restore, I adore, and I forgive them forevermore.
Amen



**"Even the smallest one can change the world."
~ Peter Rabbit**

Follow us on Social Media!!



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)


"Here comes the sun,
and I say,
it's alright."
~ The Beatles

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 Soldier's Heart.

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

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



"All we have to decide is what to do
with the time that is given us."
~ J.R.R. Tolkien



Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Weekends

We have **over 100** retreats happening around the world throughout March
& April.

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.

