



# Vine & Branches

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

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## UNSUBSCRIBE

Autumn 2025

## Rachel's Vineyard Team Updates & Announcements

An exciting reminder that our new and improved online appendix is LIVE!! If you need help accessing your username and password, please email Kate at [Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org](mailto:Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org), or Kelly at [2Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org](mailto:2Assistant@RachelsVineyard.org).

We wanted to share that we have uploaded private YouTube links of Dear Children, Beyond Regret, Harvest of Hope, and Dear Children (Spanish).

This way, you can utilize the closed captioning option for different languages or for anyone hearing impaired. These links should also help if anyone is having issues in downloading the videos from the appendix.

The YouTube links are located in the appendix at: Retreat Documents>Retreat Weekend Materials>Retreat Videos>Retreat Videos on Youtube

Please reach out to our main office at 610-354-0555 if you have any questions. Thank you!!

Kevin Burke is working on a story on women and men coming to terms with a past abortion later in life, perhaps when facing illness, while in hospice care – those that after raising families, retiring, etc., and coming to terms with the finite nature of their lives, decide to address this area of loss.

If you have any insights, anecdotes, stories that might be helpful, please send them to [k.burke@rachelsvineyard.org](mailto:k.burke@rachelsvineyard.org).



Autumn is a second spring  
when every leaf is a flower.  
- Albert Camus



## Meet the Leaders

**Back in July, we had the great pleasure of meeting with Marta Soto-Rojas from our Bogota, Colombia, team. She was travelling to North Carolina for a conference and arranged a side trip to Pennsylvania. It was our joy to spend some time with her! And, of course, we asked if she would mind sharing her story with us—and all of you!**

I am the oldest of six siblings. Although my parents tried to raise us in faith in God (including receiving the sacraments of Baptism, Communion, and Confirmation), their faith example wasn't strong. They took us to Mass on Sundays, but when I reached my teens, I didn't go back.

When I entered university, I met the father of my children. I became pregnant, and although he proposed marriage, I declined; I felt we were too young to take that step.

We had our first daughter, and after her birth, I had health complications. The doctor diagnosed thrombosis in my right leg and told me I couldn't have any more children. But when my oldest daughter was 6 years old, I became pregnant with my second daughter. And when she was almost a year old, I didn't realize I was pregnant because I was bleeding (I thought I was menstruating). The bleeding stopped and I took a pregnancy test; indeed, I was pregnant. The doctor told me I had to have an abortion. He ordered me to go to a clinic to have the abortion, and, with great pain, I went through this very difficult experience. Later, I had a second abortion.

After miscarrying my third child, I experienced the trauma, or aftereffects, of the abortion, unaware that what I was experiencing were the consequences of this poor decision. The first thing that happened was the separation from the father of my children; for almost 10 years, I suffered from various symptoms such as alcoholism, promiscuity, depression, crying, and low self-esteem, among others.

Then, on a radio program broadcast by the Right to Be Born Foundation, I heard the testimony of a woman who had had an abortion, and she shared the same symptoms I was experiencing. This happened in February 1997. That day, I realized I needed help. I turned to the Foundation, and they listened to me and offered me spiritual guidance (they weren't yet familiar with Rachel's Vineyard). They asked me to receive the sacrament of Confession. This helped a lot, but I couldn't forgive myself.

In October 2013, I became the director of the Foundation, and in 2015, I had the opportunity to experience Rachel's Vineyard. It helped me regain my dignity as a daughter of God. It was wonderful. That's how I realized that many women (and men), who have gone through the bitterness of abortion, needed to experience Rachel's Vineyard. Since November 2015, I have served on the Rachel's Vineyard team of the Right to Be Born Foundation.

Our Rachel's Vineyard team fully understands the pain that abortion causes. Through prayer and a fraternal bond, we remain a united team, and we strive to maintain communication with each of our team members. They see that we are united in helping each other and feel they are part of a family. We also continue to educate ourselves in the culture of life and learn how to explain the culture of death.

The Right to Be Born Foundation was founded in 1975. Its Founder, Astrid Tamayo de Bayer, felt called to defend life from conception to natural death. The first *work center* of the foundation was MAFE (Happy Mom). This Center welcomes mothers struggling with their pregnancies (to date, the Foundation has helped more than 2,000 women).

Later, the Post-Abortion Support Center was created (which includes Rachel's Vineyard and Proyecto Esperanza<sup>[1]</sup>). Through this Center, we have treated more than 500 men and women and have recognized more than 1,000 aborted babies. For the past ten years, the Center has held approximately 40 retreats. It also offers support for post-abuse healing through the Grief to Grace<sup>[2]</sup> retreat. We started Grief to Grace in 2022 and have held six retreats, with the next one scheduled for November 14-17, 2025.

The Foundation's newest Center is the Fertility Care Center (Spera Fertility Care Center), where the Creighton Model System is taught. This center offers services to couples and women who want to use natural fertility methods; it also organizes an Educational Program to train Fertility Care Professionals. The first training was held in 2024, and the second will begin in September 2025. Since 2013, more than 700 people have been helped.

What keeps me going in this ministry is seeing the healing results of men and women and their happy faces after their experience. I am inspired knowing that I continue to heal from my own abortions. Offering the Rachel's Vineyard retreat through the Right to Be Born Foundation reaffirms our mission to defend life from conception.

To relax, I like to exercise, go to the pool, visit the countryside or beach, and, though most people wouldn't know this, I like to dance, too. But one of my most enjoyable moments is having a good cup of coffee with dessert.



Left: Dr. Burke and Marta at RV Headquarters  
Right: Dr. Burke, Kelly Dunne, and Marta at RV Headquarters



Fundacion Derecho a Nacer Team



Fundacion Derecho a Nacer Team

[1] *Proyecto Esperanza is an organization that helps women and men who are in pain from voluntarily terminating a pregnancy. Helping them work through their pain, Proyecto Esperanza strives to be a light of hope in their paths, helping them face the pain and giving them a new meaning to life.*

[2] *Grief to Grace: Healing the Wounds of Abuse™ is a ministry started by Dr. Theresa Burke to assist women and men who have suffered from emotional, sexual, or spiritual abuse. Like Rachel's Vineyard™, this program helps people reclaim their dignity and discover healing.*

“

**Delicious autumn!  
My very soul is wedded to it,  
and if I were a bird  
I would fly above the earth  
seeking the successive autumns.  
- George Eliot**



## Pregnancy Loss Study

In an effort to better understand the psychological impact of pregnancy loss, online surveys are being used to collect data concerning both women and men's experiences of abortion and miscarriage. Research participants will remain anonymous as no personal identification is requested. Surveys may be accessed at [www.mypregnancyloss.info](http://www.mypregnancyloss.info).

Your voice can help to increase our understanding of how these pregnancy losses may impact women and men's lives and intimate relationships. Please consider visiting our research website ([www.mypregnancyloss.info](http://www.mypregnancyloss.info)) and participating in this confidential and anonymous study. Thank you very much.

Information can be found in the link above. For More Information, please contact Martha Shuping MD at [martha.shuping@gmail.com](mailto:martha.shuping@gmail.com).



Winter is an etching,  
spring a watercolor,  
summer an oil painting,  
and autumn a mosaic of them all.  
- Stanley Horowitz



### Interdenominational Site Leader and Facilitator, Chris MacKay, Retires from RV Winnipeg, MB. Canada

It has been an honour and privilege to be a part of the RV team in Winnipeg for the past 20 years. I have received many blessings over the years, from the team and the men & women who participated on retreats.

I was invited by Scott Miller (a pastor) that wanted to start an interdenominational retreat site in Winnipeg in spring 2005. He approached me because I was currently missionary staff at the Crisis Pregnancy Centre doing infant loss counselling including post abortion. It was a perfect pairing. Many of my one-on-one clients attended retreats and former retreat participants would come for follow up counselling at the CPC. (Currently named the Family Support Centre of Winnipeg). My healing began in 1987 when I began volunteering at the CPC. I was date raped as a teenager and discovered I was pregnant at 14 weeks gestation. It was decided that the best solution for me was to have an abortion. Unfortunately, what was intended for my good did not work out that way. The CPC helped me to understand what post abortion stress was and supported me in numerous ways. There were not a lot of resources in the 1980's or acknowledgement of the effects abortions were having on men and women's overall health. The first Bible study I did with was with 2 other women that were also post abortive, called "Women in Ramah". Later we did "Forgiven and Set Free" in larger groups. This helped me to become "A Wounded Healer" as Henri Nouwen would phrase it.

One of the scriptures I treasure from the Bible study is:

**Genesis 50:20** “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring out this present result, to keep many people alive.”

Once we recruited enough team members, we all flew to Kelowna B.C. to attend our first retreat and get mentored by the lovely Janet Kormish and her team. We facilitated our first retreat that fall.

How can I describe to you my experience over a 20-year span? One word comes to mind INCREDIBLE. Incredibly challenging from raising money to managing many different challenges at times. There were also times of Incredible blessings watching how God would provide financially and how He would work in all our lives. The Holy Spirit would move throughout the weekend in gentle and powerful ways, bringing everyone closer to the truth and light of Christ. It was incredible to watch God use the retreat weekends to bring many women and men to faith in Christ or renew their faith. I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to witness their eternal life beginning or being renewed. I Loved working in my Father’s Vineyard. To God be the Glory great things He has done!

“

As for you, you meant evil against me,  
but God meant it for good  
in order to bring out this present result,  
to keep many people alive.  
- Genesis 50:20



## Can Pope Leo Bridge the Divide Between Social Justice and Prolife Catholics? By Kevin and Dr. Theresa Burke

"Prolifers see the issue of protecting human life in the womb as the foundation of all social justice. This leads them to support conservative candidates and policies that limit abortion and reject the public funding of abortion services.

Sadly, viewing these two valid Catholic perspectives as opposed to one other has led us to esteem our political affiliations more than the profound communion we share as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Is there a way to embrace a third perspective—one that sees the issue of abortion from *both* a social justice *and* a prolife perspective?"

\*\*To read the full article published by the Catholic Exchange, [click here!](#)

“

Every leaf speaks bliss to me,  
fluttering from the autumn tree.

## Raquel's House: A Sanctuary of Peace and Healing in Boyacá



In the heart of the beautiful Vereda de Susacá, in Aquitania, Boyacá, Colombia, an extraordinary project is taking shape: **Raquel's House**. More than just a construction, this place promises to be a haven of peace, love, and warmth of home in one of Colombia's most stunning landscapes.

Strategically located in front of the majestic Lake Tota, one of the most important water surfaces in the country, Raquel's House will offer participants and teams an unparalleled environment. Here, fresh air and direct contact with nature become the perfect allies to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

This space is designed to host Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreats, focused on healing and forgiveness. The goal is to provide participants with a welcoming and serene environment, where they can fully focus on an inner journey to receive the grace of forgiveness and find deep healing and personal encounter with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **A Haven of Warmth and Nature**

Rachel's House is much more than a house; it is an extension of the landscape that surrounds it. Its architectural design has been conceived to merge with the natural beauty of the region, using local and sustainable materials that reflect the warmth of a Boyacá home. Large windows and wide open spaces will allow guests to enjoy uninterrupted panoramic views of the stunning Lake Tota and the surrounding mountains, inviting the landscape to become part of the experience.

Every corner of the house has been planned to encourage tranquility and introspection. The cozy and bright rooms will offer a private retreat for rest, while the common areas will be the ideal meeting point for reflection and connection between participants and servers. These spaces will be equipped with everything necessary for the servers to perform each exercise properly and with the materials for each session, guaranteeing a fluid and meaningful experience.

## **Rachel's Grotto: A Memorial for the Innocents**

A central element that distinguishes this project is the chapel of prayer and reparation called **Rachel's Grotto**. This sacred space was born from a deep inspiration and a clear purpose: to be a memorial for thousands of unborn children. Here they are granted a kind of "spiritual burial" and their names, given to them by their mothers, fathers or relatives, are inscribed on small white marble plaques.

The original Grotto is located in the Frauenberg monastery (Bodman, Germany), right next to the crypt where perpetual adoration has been held for more than forty years, among other reasons, to ask God's forgiveness for the slaughter of unborn children. We wanted to integrate this same purpose, at the invitation of our friends from Harpa Dei, into the construction of Rachel's House. With its privileged view of Lake Tota, the Grotto becomes for Colombia a sanctuary of repair and healing.

With this touching gesture, it is sought:

- **To give thanks to God**, who created each of these children and called them by name, the heavenly Father who especially loves the weak and the little ones.
- **Honor the innocent child** who was deprived of the right to live.
- **To help the mother in her process of reconciliation** with God and with her child. Often, women who have had abortions fail to forgive themselves. In these cases, giving the child a name can be an important step in healing, as it allows for a personal relationship to be established with them.
- **Testify to the world** that an unborn child is a human being from the beginning.

If you yourself have been involved in an abortion or know of a case in your own family or circle of acquaintances, **name the child and write to us!** with your donation we will make a plaque with her name and thus she will have a place of honor forever in Rachel's Grotto.



## **How to Support Rachel's House**

The construction of Raquel's House is a dream that is coming true thanks to the generosity of supportive hearts. If you want to be part of this project of love and healing, you can contribute with your donation. Your support is essential to finish the work and open the doors of this refuge of peace.

**Make your donation to the Pro-Life Foundation Regina Angelórum Colombia.**

- NIT: 901955054
- Savings Account: 26200008024
- Swift code: COLOCOBMMD1
- Email: [reginaangelorumcolombiafundaci@gmail.com](mailto:reginaangelorumcolombiafundaci@gmail.com)

Each contribution brings us one step closer to the goal of healing and serving. Rachel's House is not just a destination; it is an experience. It is the opportunity to disconnect to reconnect with God, to find calm in the midst of natural beauty, and to open the heart to heal in a place that breathes tranquility and purpose.



Life starts all over again  
when it gets crisp in the fall.  
- F. Scott Fitzgerald



## What Cancer and Grief Have Taught Me

*The following message was shared with us from AJ (Chef, blogger, podcaster).  
After Chef AJ shared her beautiful story with us,  
Dr. Burke was a guest on her podcast.  
[Check out the episode here!!](#)*

Hi Friends,

What happens when a nice Jewish girl walks into a Catholic church? You're probably expecting a punchline—but instead, it marked the beginning of one of the most profound healing experiences of my life.

This past weekend, I spent three days in a breathtaking setting in Auburn, California, participating in Rachel's Vineyard—a retreat for people grieving the loss of children through miscarriage or abortion. Until now, I had carried that unspoken grief for over 25 years, because society doesn't often make room for the kind of mourning that lacks a memorial. It's called disenfranchised grief, and it's very real.

I believe that this deep, unresolved grief contributed to my diagnosis of lung cancer. Both metaphysical teachings and traditional Chinese medicine associate the lungs with grief—and mine had held too much for too long.

I've never believed that healing would come from Keytruda or kale alone. I've always known that true healing would also need to come from within—from the emotional and spiritual layers we rarely give ourselves time to explore.

The hardest part of losing four children—two of them very late in pregnancy and under horrific circumstances—was that no one acknowledged my loss. Back then, there were no therapists, no support groups. I was told, "You can always try again," or "Just adopt." Others dismissed it entirely, saying, "It wasn't a real baby." Even the medical community often reduces these losses to clinical terms: fetus, tissue, cells. But anyone who has ever been pregnant knows the moment you learn you're expecting, that child becomes your baby. You are a mother.

Without a body, there is no funeral. Without a funeral, there is no closure. Death may end a life, but it does not end the relationship. That bond continues, unresolved, quietly aching in the heart.

That is—until I found Rachel's Vineyard.

For the first time, I was able to grieve openly, to honor each of my babies with a true memorial service. I wrote each of them a letter. I sang to them. I cried more than I ever have in my life. And for the first time, someone said to me, "Yes. They were real. They mattered." I only wish I could've recorded the beauty of that ceremony to share with you.

Because this retreat is led by the Catholic Church, I also experienced many of its sacred traditions—confession, communion, adoration, reconciliation. And while I'm not Catholic, I felt deeply welcomed and spiritually moved.

A priest there said something that struck me to my core:

**“Instead of asking why you got cancer, ask what it is here to teach you.”**

That same weekend was also the funeral for my dear friend and colleague, Dr. Baxter Montgomery. I thought of him often. After my diagnosis, he invited me to his clinic as his guest. The last thing he said to me was:

**“Don't see this as a death sentence. See it as a gift from God. Now you'll do your greatest work.”**

And I believe that.

My calling isn't necessarily to help people with cancer—it's to help people wake up before they get cancer. I believe that cancer, like many chronic illnesses, comes bearing an urgent message:

**Live your life fully. Right now.**

Grieving the loss of a friend, a beloved dog, and four unborn children all at once felt nearly unbearable. I didn't know it was possible to cry that much. But then I realized something:

I could only grieve this deeply because I had loved that deeply.

So now, when I cry—or as Dr. Alan Goldhamer would say, “desalinate” 😊—I remind myself of that truth. I'm lucky to have loved so much. That love is still with me.

So here's this week's message, in just four words:

**LIVE FULLY. LOVE DEEPLY.**

“

**The grass withers  
and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God  
endures forever.**

**- Isaiah 40:8**



**"My children are not alone,  
the Virgin watches over them"**

After many years, thanks to the guidance of a priest, Yesica found the right space to allow Jesus to heal the wounds left by abortion. She now works actively in pro-life ministry, sharing her testimony and collaborating with Rachel's Vineyard.

"Each retreat is a miracle; an experience that unites retreat and pilgrimage, healing and contemplation, in the heart of the sanctuary where Mary, Queen of Peace, continues to touch souls every day."

\*\*To read Yesica's full store, [click here](#).

\*\*To read Yesica's story in Spanish, [click here](#).

“

He found himself wondering at times,  
especially in the autumn,  
about the wild lands,  
and strange visions of mountains  
that he had never seen came into his dreams.

- J.R.R. Tolkien



## A Testimony of Healing

"I never considered abortion a wound, but He knew it was, and He was the first to send me to heal. It's no coincidence that I ended up at Rachel's Vineyards...

...And if you've already gone through an abortion, seek help to heal that wound, so that you can carry that heavy cross with love, making it light. With God's help, all things are possible."

\*\*To read this testimony in English, [click here](#).

\*\*To read this testimony in Spanish, [click here](#).

“

As long as autumn lasts,  
I shall not have hands, canvas and colors  
enough to paint the beautiful things I see."

- Vincent Van Gogh



## Listen Up!!

Karen (coordinator/facilitator), Mickie (counselor), and Judith (Spanish facilitator) from our Rachel's Vineyard Phoenix team were recently guests on The God Show podcast with Pat McMahon.

Listen to them share about their personal experiences and their work with Rachel's Vineyard [here!](#)



"I am writing to share my pro-life testimony with Rachel's Vineyard - a ministry that changed my life. I attended my first retreat in Minnesota in August 2019, and

have served on the Thunder Bay team since 2021.

God has written a beautiful story for me and I feel called to tell it. Truly God works through all, I am amazed by who He is. And I feel called to do more more more."

\*\*To listen to Jessica's beautiful testimony (starting at the 30:30 mark) [click here!!](#)

“

How beautifully leaves grow old!  
How full of light and color  
are their last days!  
- John Burroughs



## Event of Interest: Pilgrimage to Medjugorje

**PILGRIMAGE TO  
MEDJUGORJE**

**FOR RACHEL'S VINEYARD  
SERVICE TEAMS IN SPANISH**

**FROM NOVEMBER 1 TO 8, 2026**

**INCLUDES:**

- Accommodation in double or triple rooms.
- Half board (breakfast and lunch or dinner)
- Airport transfers:
  - Split/Medjugorje/Split
  - Transportation to the places we will visit outside and inside the town
- Visits to important places in Medjugorje.
- Testimonials
- Climbs to Mount Podbrdo and Krizevac
- Teachings
- Accompaniment at all times
- Local guide
- "Super Pilgrim" Kit (String bag)

**DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- Airfare

**Registration open!**

**LIMITED SPACE**  
• 48 spaces available

**INFORMATION**

Emily Babilonia  
+1 (561) 254 1728

ORGANIZED BY:  
Pilgrimage with Mary  
www.pilgrimagewithmary.com

# PEREGRINACIÓN A MEDJUGORJE

PARA EQUIPOS DE SERVICIO DE VIÑEDO DE RAQUEL EN ESPAÑOL

DEL 1 AL 8 DE NOVIEMBRE 2026

**INCLUYE:**

- Alojamiento en habitaciones dobles o triples.
- Media pensión (desayuno y almuerzo o cena)
- Transportes aeropuerto: Split/Medjugorje/Split
- Transporte a los lugares que visitaremos fuera y dentro del pueblo
- Visitas a lugares importantes de Medjugorje.
- Testimonios
- Subida a los Montes Podbrdo y Krizevac
- Enseñanzas
- Acompañamiento todo el tiempo
- Guía local
- Kit "Super peregrino" (String bag)

**NO INCLUYE:**

- Pasaje Aéreo

*Inscripciones abiertas!*

**CUPOS LIMITADOS**

- 48 espacios disponibles

**ORGANIZA:**

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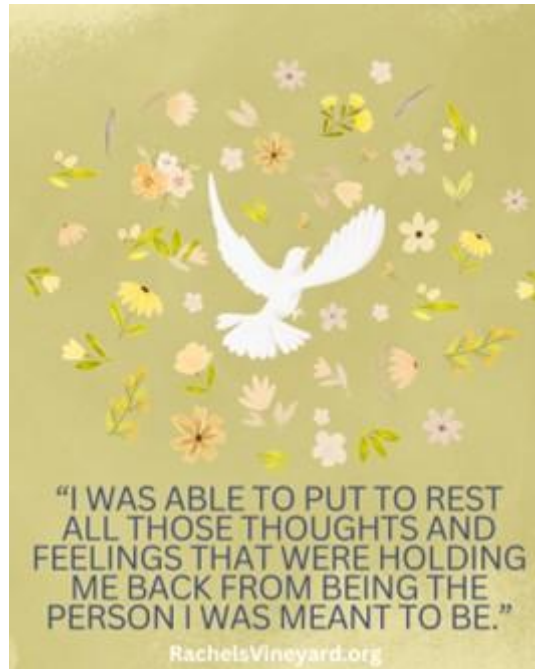
\*\*[Click here](#) for more information.

“

Wild is the music of the autumnal winds  
amongst the faded woods.  
- William Wordsworth



## Connect with us!! RV Social Media



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

Please follow us 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/X [@RVHealing](https://twitter.com/RVHealing)

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

“

I'm so glad I live in a world  
where there are Octobers  
- L.M. Montgomery

### Additional Healing Programs 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
- 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!](#)

“

Pale amber sunlight falls across  
The reddening October trees,  
That hardly sway before a breeze  
As soft as summer: summer's loss  
Seems little, dear! on days like these.  
- Ernest Dowson



## Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Weekends

There are **96+** retreats happening around the world throughout October, November, and December.

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

“

And all at once,  
summer collapsed into fall.  
- Oscar Wilde

