

# Rachel's Vineyard

Christmas 2024





## DIRECTOR

Jeanette Kristensen  
Rev. Michael Barry, SS.CC., Spiritual Advisor

Rachel's Vineyard/A Time for Mercy  
PO Box 891896  
Temecula, CA 92589  
951-325-7702  
Email: RVTemecula@verizon.net  
www.atimeformercy.org  
www.youtube.com/Rachel's Vineyard

You can help bring God's mercy, hope and healing to someone who has experienced an abortion by sponsoring him or her on a Rachel's Vineyard Retreat for \$360 or by contributing any amount to keep the retreats going. A Time for Mercy/Rachel's Vineyard is a non-profit 501(c)3 public benefit organization, and your gift is tax deductible.

Thank you and may God bless you.

## DID YOU KNOW

Did you know that the chopping down of the Christmas tree represents the death of Christ? Did you know that the wreaths we hang are never ending circles that represent eternity? Candy canes were made to look like shepherd hooks and the colors, red Jesus's blood, white purity. the gifts, represent the three gifts the wise men brought for baby Jesus. So when you are running around trying to find the "perfect gift", stop yourself, take a deep breath and remember, we have been given the perfect gift, Jesus Christ was given to us to remove all our sins.



## FATHER BARRY'S CORNER

It's that time of year again when Rachel's Vineyard Retreat makes its annual appeal for support. Abortion is an issue that has divided the Nation over the past half-century. People have adjusted the whole issue of abortion to their liking and wants. Nowadays, we hear the chant "My body, my choice". What people don't understand is that it is God's choice of life from the beginning to the end. The unborn child is not merely a mass of tissue. The life that is formed in the womb can never develop outside the womb. According to the prophet Jeremiah 22, one should not shed innocent blood. Without question, abortion is the shedding of innocent blood. God has given us the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Our constitution promises us "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," sadly, with abortion there can be no life.

It has been my experience after doing several Rachel's Vineyard Retreats that those who have had abortions wait several years, to several decades before coming to the retreat. They have excuses like "I did nothing wrong, besides God is patient and He awaits the sinner's return". It has also been my experience that when retreatants complete the retreat they are overcome with forgiveness, love, and faith. They experience a whole new relationship with Jesus Christ our Savior. So please, I pray in the Christmas slogan that "there was no room in the Inn" that now you can help to provide room for God's forgotten little ones. One of the reasons we have the custom of giving and receiving presents at Christmas is to remind us of the presents given to Jesus by the Wise Men. Romans 12:6 reminds us that God, through Christ, has given each of us gifts to use for his glory. Christmas can be a great time to use your gifts for that purpose so any contribution to our ministry will be greatly appreciated.

Have a Happy and Blessed Christmas,  
*Father Michael Barry, SS.CC.*

Wishing you  
the spirit of Christmas  
which is Peace  
the blessing of Christmas  
which is Hope  
the heart of Christmas  
which is Love

Rachel's Vineyard  
Priests and Staff

Rachael's Vineyard Retreat Date  
March 28th-30th, 2025  
In English



## NO SIN IS TOO BIG FOR GOD'S MERCY

I will never forget the call I got to make on my way home from jail. I called my parents to tell them that I got arrested and spent the day in jail with Norma McCorvey, the "Jane Roe" in the Supreme Court case known as *Roe v. Wade*. On one wall there were four young adults, on the other wall there were four not-as-young adults. The eight of us were sitting in the county jail for one reason: being pro-life. "I think it's safe to say that the entire abortion industry is based on a lie. ... I am dedicated to spending the rest of my life undoing the law that bears my name," McCorvey once said.

### Some actions appear to be unforgivable

"God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy" (Pope Francis). Sometimes it feels like a sin is too big, too public, too harmful, or too unacceptable to be forgiven. If you are the seeker or giver of forgiveness, it is not an easy road, but a road that requires trust and faith in the cross. Norma McCorvey is one of many of us who has tried to walk back things we have said and done, only to find that our actions have already had an impact. The story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) reminds us that God will always welcome us back home, no matter how much of His inheritance we have squandered.

### Seeking forgiveness

When seeking forgiveness, one of my favorite reminders of God's invitation to confession is by St. John Chrysostom, "Be ashamed when you sin; don't be ashamed when you repent. Sin is the wound; repentance is the medicine. Sin is followed by shame; repentance is followed by boldness. Satan has overturned this order and given boldness to sin and shame to repentance." If you believe that there is something, anything, you can do or have done that God will not forgive, then you do not know God's love and mercy. Satan is a master of manipulating truth in a way that keeps you from God, oftentimes by reminding us of the reality of the gravity of our sins or the opposite: desensitizing us to sin itself. We are more susceptible to those lies than we realize, but God's law is clear. Venerable Fulton Sheen encourages us to seek forgiveness rather than to justify our sins: "I know a thousand psychoanalysts who will explain sins away, but that is not what we want. We want forgiveness."

### The grace to forgive

C.S. Lewis points out, "Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive." Forgiving others is hard. You did not deserve to experience the pain you endured as a result of another person's choice. The cross affirms that God knows that, even better than we do. If you want to have what God promises, which is peace,

forgiveness and eternal life, you must do what He calls us to do. Forgiveness is not a suggestion in Scripture, "But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:15). Forgiving allows us to see each other for more than harmful actions, whether it be against us or against another. Forgiving others opens our hearts to love like God calls us to do, without ceasing. "Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends" (Proverbs 7:19).

### Representations of Christ

We cannot undo what we have already done. There are, however, things we can do as we continue to walk in faith. We can work to repair any damage we have caused by our sins, we can forgive those who have sinned against us, and we can go and sin no more. "Avoid slander because it is difficult to retract. Avoid offending anyone for asking forgiveness is not delightful" (St. John Cantius). If done with the right disposition, forgiving others and asking for forgiveness can bring great peace, restoration and hope.

### My encounter

Norma McCorvey's name, Jane Roe, carries so much weight in the conversation of abortion that a jail cell from a pro-life event was the last place I would expect to meet her. In humility, we must work toward repairing the image of Christ that we have damaged by our actions or unforgiveness. "If God can work through me, he can work through anyone" (St. Francis of Assisi).

*Mary Morasso*





### WELCOME MEN

We express a warm welcome to those men who have been involved in any way with abortion.

We hope the information in this section will help you to begin to make sense of your experience and assist you in your journey to healing.

- Your Role in the Abortion-Symptoms of Male Post Abortion Grief and more.
- Rachel's Vineyard Retreats-For Men Too?
- Suffering Because of an Abortion You Could Not Stop
- Can I Attend the Rachel's Vineyard Weekend Retreat with My Spouse?
- Married to A Post Abortive Woman?
- Stuck in a Cycle of Repeating Self Destructive Behaviors?
- Perhaps sexual dysfunction was part of your suffering after abortion
- Resources For Healing

### MEN ARE WELCOME ON RACHAEL'S VINEYARD RETREATS.

The Retreats are for any woman or man suffering after abortion. Here's feedback from a woman retreat participant revealing the special blessing that men bring to the retreat:

*"I used to consider post abortion healing only a woman's issue. As you know, men grieve too.... but I never knew that. I can't tell you how much the presence of men on the Rachel's Vineyard Retreats has helped me to heal. Abortion divides us. It divides mother from child and severs the love in many relationships. Through journeying with men in Rachel's Vineyard, I finally realized that I can forgive the many men in my past who had let me down. I have been able to accomplish this because of the strength and courage I have witnessed in men who come and share what they went through. I never realized that men suffer deep grief from this. I think we need each other to fully reconcile what this pain has done in our lives and to our relationships. The men who attended my retreat helped to restore my faith in men.... And that is a miracle!*

*-- Jennifer*

### SUFFERING BECAUSE OF AN ABORTION YOU COULD NOT STOP?

Perhaps your girlfriend or wife had an abortion against your will. You may have been powerless to stop her decision and protect your child. Fathers do not have any rights when their partner is making a decision to abort. Rachel's Vineyard will help you to grieve your loss and deal with the powerful feelings of anger and depression you are struggling with. You will need the help of others to heal of this loss. Please go to our Weekend Retreat locations for confidential email and phone contacts. You can also go to our Men's Email Buddies section. Here you will find the

any questions and to share about your loss.

### CAN I ATTEND A RETREAT WITH MY WIFE?

Yes! Couples who attend a retreat with their spouse report an increase in communication, intimacy, and trust in their relationship-areas negatively impacted by abortion. We understand that each couple is different, there are situations where attending as a couple is not possible or desirable, and sometimes each person can be at different stages of their healing journey. However don't be afraid to ask your spouse to accompany you on the retreat, especially if you are both parents of the aborted child. Even if your spouse was not involved in the abortion(s), there is still a great benefit to attending the retreat together.

### MARRIED TO A POST ABORTIVE WOMAN?

If you love a woman who experienced abortion before you met her, you might find your current relationship with her is being impacted by some of her symptoms. These can include fear of pregnancy and parenting, trouble with intimacy, inability to enjoy sex, rejection of the love you try to give her because she does not feel worthy of your tenderness and affection. We invite you to explore offering the retreat to your wife as a gift and assure her that you would like to accompany her as she goes to deal with this painful event in her history.

*"I never knew my wife had suffered so much pain over an abortion she had before I met her. It was a real eye opener to attend the Rachel's Vineyard Retreat with her and offer my support in an area of her life where there was so much secret grief. Our marriage has truly been blessed. We are closer now than we have ever been and I had the privilege of being able to spiritually adopt her child during the Memorial Service."*

*-- Mike*

### STUCK IN A CYCLE OF REPEATING SELF DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS?

Theresa Burke is the author of Forbidden Grief, and developed the Rachel's Vineyard Retreat Process. This section from Forbidden Grief on "Traumatic Re-enactment" may shed some light on some of the ways we can act out on our unresolved abortion pain, or to help us understand a loved one who is suffering from abortion trauma.

*Faith is seeing  
light with  
your heart  
when all your  
eyes sees  
is darkness*