

Dear brothers,

I'd like to take the opportunity to share with you something I've recently discovered in terms of healing for women and men who suffer from the effects of abortion. I know this is something we encounter more often than we want to admit, either in the confessional or other pastoral situations. I have recently been introduced to Rachel's Vineyard, which is a weekend retreat written by Dr. Theresa Burke, a licensed psychologist, for the purpose of helping those affected by abortion to acknowledge and work-through the very complex web of misery that abortion nearly always brings.

I have had the opportunity to participate in a Rachel's Vineyard retreat--each retreat has a particular role for priests. I had never done anything like this before, and was a little apprehensive about what might take place. At the end of the retreat, I was amazed. In only three days, these retreatants, who at first had difficulty even making eye contact with each other and the retreat team, were laughing and conversing, sharing about the relief they felt to have finally started moving through their pain. It was a joy.

The retreat itself was reminiscent to me of the various TEC retreats I made in high school, not adhering strictly to the Paschal-Mystery-in-three-days format, but certainly focusing on the bitter reality of abortion first, and moving organically to the peace that comes from the mercy of God. The retreat is unabashedly Catholic, making good use of the Sacrament of Penance, as well as Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, making it an excellent tool for evangelization as well as for post-abortion healing.

So, I would just simply like to share this resource with you. I know sometimes I find myself in the confessional wondering what to do or how to help. Rachel's Vineyard is something I have taken to recommending to all my penitents who are plagued by the fallout of abortion. I have full confidence in the ability of this retreat to facilitate the retreatants' encounter with the reality of the tragedy that is abortion, but more importantly with the overwhelming love and goodness of the God that never stopped loving them.

If you have any question about Rachel's Vineyard, feel free to call me any time.

Fraternally,

***Jack Fitzpatrick***

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