

# Grief to Grace



## *Healing the Wounds of Abuse* *Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity*

United with the broken Body  
of Christ, we die like the grain  
of wheat. By the power of  
Christ's Passion, we share in  
His Resurrection and are  
transformed into bread for the  
world.

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# Grief to Grace

Created by: Dr. Theresa Burke, Ph.D., NCP, LPC, BCCP, DABFC, DAPA

The *Grief to Grace* program was composed by Dr. Theresa Burke, Ph.D., LCP, NCP. Theresa is the founder of Rachel's Vineyard Ministries for healing after abortion, offered throughout the world, and is recognized as a leader in the field of post-abortion trauma and treatment. Their programs are known and highly regarded for compassionate reverence for each person's dignity and worth. *Grief to Grace* provides a professional therapeutic staff and all treatment is based on a firm Christian foundation as well as sound medical and psychological principles and a perceptive understanding of trauma.

*Grief to Grace* is called to express the healing ministry of Jesus Christ by providing behavioral health services for victims of abuse with professional excellence, Christian integrity, and compassion.

*Grief to Grace: Healing the Wounds of Abuse* is a 5-7 day psychological and spiritual program for anyone who has suffered degradation or violation through physical, emotional, sexual, or spiritual abuse. It is appropriate for those who have endured sexual abuse, rape, incest, neglect, or other forms of traumatic violation in childhood, adolescence, or as an adult. It is also suitable for those who have suffered abuse by a member of the clergy.

The Living Scriptures, together with journaling, group activities, therapeutic facilitation, cognitive restructuring, discussions and grief work, offers an effective healing process grounded in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the Sacraments.

*Grief to Grace* is a powerful psychological and spiritual journey providing safety and hope in the midst of emotional chaos. It provides a model of care that is therapy for the soul.

Dr. Burke's other trauma programs in development include *Genesis After Genocide*, a program for psychological and spiritual reconciliation and healing of trauma due to genocide, terrorism, and civil war (which she hopes to pilot for the first time in Rwanda, Africa) and *Duty to Heal: Finding Peace for a Soldier's Heart*, a healing program for combat veterans. Dr. Burke also hopes to offer a new program entitled *Soul Care to Restore the Foundation of Your Spirit: An Integrated Psychological and Spiritual Sensory Based Treatment for Medical Trauma* associated with cancer, surgical procedures, treatments, and other traumatic illnesses. All of Dr. Burke's treatment models include extensive trauma and facilitation training for retreat teams and professionals.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Is this program approved by the Church?**

Yes. *Grief to Grace – Healing the Wounds of Abuse* was created to end the isolation and secrets of abuse and neglect within a healing process that is fully centered upon the person and the presence of Jesus Christ, the Divine Physician. The *Grief to Grace* model was presented to Cardinal Martino, President of the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice. The program manual has received an *Imprimatur* and *Nihil Obstat* from Justin Cardinal Rigali in Philadelphia.

## **Where and how has the program been implemented to date? What has the response been?**

Dr. Burke began developing materials and conducting feedback groups for this program in 2003. The actual *Grief to Grace* program was first piloted in July 2005 in the Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota. Another Grief to Grace Pilot Program was hosted by The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. *Grief to Grace* continued offering pilot programs over the next five years in Philadelphia as adjustments and revisions were made to the Facilitator Manual and Participant Journals. As a result, there have been hundreds of men and women who have made this remarkable journey for psychological and spiritual healing. The trainings that have followed these events drew Diocesan Victim Assistance coordinators and other psychologists and mental health counselors from throughout the United States, Ireland, England, France, Australia, and Canada. Dr. Theresa Burke presented the model to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Victim Assistance Directors Meeting in San Francisco in 2009. The Diocese of Palm Beach, Florida and the Diocese of Corpus Christi hosted the Grief to Grace Program in the Fall of 2008. The Diocese of Nelson, under Bishop John Corriveau, O.F.M., Cap, British Columbia became a founding partner affiliate in 2009 and now offers *Grief to Grace* as part of their Diocesan outreach. In 2010 The Diocese of Kingston Jamaica became another affiliate site of the *Grief to Grace* program. We have many other locations around the world expressing interest in the program. The French translation of *Grief to Grace* has been completed.

The Diocese of Southwark, England, at the request of Bishop Peter Smith, first hosted the Grief to Grace program under the direction of Fr Dominic Allain in October 2011 in London, England. Since then, Fr Dominic has been appointed the International Pastoral Director of Grief to Grace Ministries. Attendees at his Grief to Grace London retreats represent Ireland, Slovakia, Poland, Austria, and a number of other Eastern European countries. Meanwhile, numerous other Grief to Grace retreats have been conducted in the Philadelphia area over the past seven years. In addition, an affiliate site has been established in the Diocese of Portland, Oregon. Past Grief to Grace programs have drawn participants, clergy, and mental health professionals from Australia, Russia, Ireland, Canada, France, England, New Zealand, and many other countries.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What groups/population does this program serve?**

This program is meant to serve all adults and teens who have suffered from the scourge of abuse or neglect, whether it be physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. This includes, but is not limited to individuals who have been abused by family members, relatives and others. *Grief to Grace* addresses the resulting psychological, emotional and spiritual trauma. This program is an appropriate response to the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.” The *Grief to Grace Model* fulfills the mandate for “healing and reconciliation,” along with “an outreach [that] will include provision[s] [for] counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, and other social services agreed upon by the victim and the diocese/eparchy.”

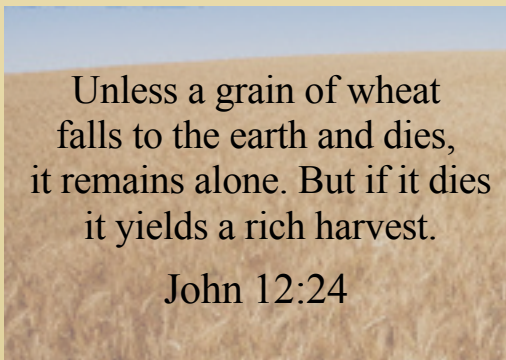
The Grief to Grace treatment model has been applied to a variety of populations with positive outcomes. Those pilot groups have included victims in the sex slave industry, teenagers and populations who have suffered from attachment disorders with backgrounds of abandonment, neglect, and institutional orphanage care in early childhood. We have also experienced beautiful healing with men and women who have endured clergy abuse, as well as those who have been victimized by family members, neighbors, and sex offenders, date rape, and various forms of traumatic sexual assault. Treatment has also proven highly beneficial for those who struggle with homosexuality and same-sex attraction.

## **How does this program relate to the New Evangelization spoken by John Paul II?**

The new Evangelization Initiatives mandate that we invite all into the fullness of authentic love so they are free to discover their unique vocations in Christ. But abuse of any sort, given its fundamental nature of betrayal, endangers an individual’s ability to fully accept and embrace this gift. Abuse attacks the heart of our vocation as beloved children of God. Grief to Grace directly responds to this suffering by bringing the wounded soul to the very font of love itself, our Lord Jesus.

## **What are the long-term benefits to the Church?**

Insomuch as the Church is the community of believers, when one of its members is healed, the Church itself is made stronger. So, imagine if many are healed! A stronger, more radiant Church is one that can’t help but engender goodness throughout all of society. Those who experience healing within the context of their faith will, in turn, invest their gifts and resources into the Church. They are inspired to serve and build upon the foundation that has been laid within the context of Church, faith and community.



Unless a grain of wheat  
falls to the earth and dies,  
it remains alone. But if it dies  
it yields a rich harvest.

John 12:24



### **What is the benefit of mixing victims of clergy abuse with other victims who have been abused in family systems or other institutional settings?**

Those who have suffered abuse by members of the clergy have reported that it was extremely helpful for them to hear the many stories of those from the general public who were abused by family members and others. They claim it was very powerful in expanding their notion of who is a “victim” and helped them move from rage and anger into their own grief.

### **How can we offer this program in our diocese?**

You can refer individuals who are suffering to a retreat at any of our currently available Grief to Grace sites. If you would like to sponsor this program in your diocese it helps to seek the support of your bishop. You can license the program for a fee of \$15,000 which gives you the rights to run this program as an outreach of your organization. Your team will be trained and mentored through three phases of a qualification process and trauma training specific to Dr. Burke’s unique sensory based treatment.

The second option is to simply host Grief to Grace by inviting a team of our qualified facilitators to come and offer the program at your organization or faith-based institution. In this case, we would take responsibility for *all aspects* of facilitating the program. We would also provide a comprehensive list of aftercare suggestions and groups, including books, cognitive therapy CD’s, and cyber support groups. For more information on costs, please contact our office at [info@griegtograce.org](mailto:info@griegtograce.org).



# The Numbers are Astounding



74% of female adolescents who had sex before age 14 reported that it was involuntary. (Source: American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Public Education)

In the U.S., at least one woman is raped every minute and 78 women are raped every hour. That's 1.871 per day, or 683,000 per year. (Source: Rape in America: A Report to the Nation; April 23, 1992)

Worldwide, 1 in 3 women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused. (Source: Population Reports: Ending Violence Against Women, December 1999)

75-90 percent of all women in prostitution were sexually abused as children. (Debra Boyer, University of Washington, "Danger for prostitutes increasing, most starting younger" *Beacon Journal*, 21 September 1997)

In 1999, the McCreary Adolescent Health Survey II found that 35% of girls and 16% of boys between grades 7-12 have been sexually and/or physically

The statistics of those abused are astounding.

One study in which 178 [female] college students were interviewed found that of the experiences students called "unwanted intercourse," 78% occurred during a hookup, 8.3% occurred on a date, and 13.9% occurred in an ongoing relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Among one study group of men addicted to pornography, the average length of time between downloading the first child porn and sexually assaulting a child was one year.<sup>2</sup>

## Porn Industry Stats (as of 2004):

- \* The porn industry's annual revenue was \$57 billion worldwide with internet porn taking on \$2.5 billion and child porn \$3 billion.
- \* The U.S. porn revenue exceeded the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC (\$6.2 billion)
- \* There were 4.2 million pornographic websites.
- \* Average age of first exposure to internet porn is 5 years.
- \* Largest consumer of internet porn is 12-17 age group.
- \* 90% of 8-16 year olds have seen pornography on the internet. (Source: <http://www.internetfilterreview.com/internet-pornography-statistics.html>)

<sup>1</sup> Statistic found in: Dines, Gail. *Pornland: How Porn Has Hijacked Our Sexuality*. Boston: Beacon, 2010. Print.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

abused. Countless other incidents go unreported.

Abuse is not confined to any particular race, social or economic demographic.

These numbers represent only the epicenter of a painful reality. The repercussions of physical, verbal, emotional and sexual abuse can be lifelong, affecting the perception of self and others in such a way as to color a person's understanding of his or her own dignity and all subsequent relationships.

Wounded individuals may construct strong fortresses to keep out the light and dim the conscience that is aware of bitter injustice. In this isolation lingers

a concealed root system, where everything bad that has ever happened to them lurks beneath the ground. Although the negative feelings and damage are hidden from view, the psychological and spiritual foundation of the injured soul continues to be pillaged and compromised.

Abuse victims frequently suffer prolonged emotional suffering, including anxiety disorders, addictions, depression, sexual dysfunction, sexual identity conflicts or confusion and even relational problems. In addition, many suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder in which they are held hostage to the past through flashbacks, nightmares, and the need to keep painful memories imprisoned by behaviors and activities designed to escape the hurt.

Beyond the painful symptoms, an even deeper injury occurs to the soul of the abused: a sense of worthlessness, inadequacy, or guilt; feeling defective, dirty or used, unlovable or unwanted—rejected from the very heart of God's tenderness, mercy and love. This can reinforce a sense of insecurity and mistrust toward others. The image of God as a loving Father may seem foreign and unattainable to the victim of abuse and the notion that another would die for them may be considered absurd.





# There is help



*Grief to Grace- Healing the Wounds of Abuse, Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity* is an integrated psychological and spiritual program for anyone who has suffered degradation by neglect or violation through physical, emotional, or sexual abuse. It is appropriate for those who have endured neglect, sexual abuse, rape, incest or other forms of traumatic violation in childhood, adolescence or as an adult. This program was created to end the isolation and secrets of abuse within a retreat process that is fully centered upon the person and presence of Jesus Christ.

*Grief to Grace* is a five to seven day program. The Living Scriptures, together with journaling, group activities, therapeutic facilitation, cognitive restructuring, discussions and grief work offer an effective healing process grounded in Jesus Christ, the Word of God and the Sacraments. It is a pilgrimage to discover the love, tenderness, belonging, safety, joy and peace that are often missing in the experience of abuse victims

Inspired by the knowledge that wounds can be the vehicle for exploring and revealing the deepest textures of our heart and soul when we journey into the grief, open ourselves safely to the pain, and allow ourselves to be taught, without fear, without holding back, without blame, *Grief to Grace* supports and assists its participants in this spiritual journey. It helps participants face the depth and tragedy of abuse while reclaiming their value and dignity as daughters and sons of the Living God.

By traveling the Paschal Mystery of their own lives and uniting their suffering to Christ's, participants share in the new life and fullness of His Resurrection and thus re-establish the font of love, tenderness, belonging, safety, joy and peace which has often been missing in the lives of abuse victims.



*Grief to Grace* is a Catholic program, which is professionally crafted and doctrinally sound. It provides professional therapeutic staff and all treatment is based on a firm Christian foundation as well as sound medical and psychological principles and a perceptive understanding of trauma. It is open to people of all faiths with plans underway to offer this treatment in interdenominational settings.



# Healing Abuse Within Religious Vocations

## *Church Leadership is Hurting Too*

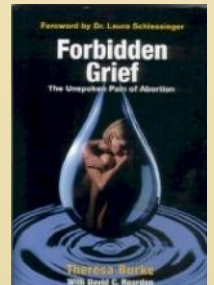
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### Background on Dr. Theresa Burke



Dr. Theresa Burke is the Founder of Rachel's Vineyard Ministries for healing after abortion. The program she composed is solidly Catholic and unique in its approach. The Rachel's Vineyard retreat has also been modified for use by non-Catholics, and is offered by scores of interdenominational groups. The healing journey uses "Living Scriptures" and rituals engaging the mind, body and soul in an integrated sensory based treatment. This provides an exceptionally effective healing process for victims of trauma and those who have spent years in talk therapy, but still struggled to move beyond their trauma. Since 1998 the Rachel's Vineyard model has spread to 35 countries and is the fastest growing post abortion ministry in the world. By 2012, close to 1000 retreats were being offered annually in 15 languages... and the growth continues to be exponential. Rachel's Vineyard is a ministry of Priests for Life.

We know that any history of sexual or physical abuse and neglect makes both men and women vulnerable to accepting abortion and many other kinds of evil in their lives. Dr. Burke writes about the link between abortion and abuse in her groundbreaking book on traumatic reenactment entitled *Forbidden Grief*. In fact, there is rarely a Rachel's Vineyard Retreat where at least 60% of participants do not have histories of abuse. The unhealed wounds from the past can be recreated in the future. What is necessary for healing and reconciliation is permission to grieve and integrate the split off parts of traumatic experience into who we are and who we wish to become, so we can stop repeating the trauma in our lives.



### The context of all the abuse in the church

Tragically, the devastating effects of sexual abuse have manifested themselves in recent years within our Church. Generations of developing vocations in the Catholic Church have been aborted, vocations abruptly terminated by the pillaging destruction of young souls through clergy abuse. There are some parallels between the experience of those who have participated in abortion and the incomprehensible response of some Church leaders when abuse allegations had been brought to their attention. Like a woman in denial about her abortion, many Church leaders resorted to the same dissociated posture toward the horror of the crimes. They constructed a similar fortress of defensiveness that is quite common when we entrench ourselves in the knowledge of deep sin and its cover-up. If only Mother Church from the beginning had allowed her heart to be broken by recognizing the truth revealed in the shattered lives of her victims, and heard the pleas of desperate parents begging the Church to step in and protect the innocent lives of her children.

## Grief to Grace Program

In response to the recognized connection between abortion and abuse, and in particular, to provide the Church with a tool for those who had been abused in the Catholic Church, Theresa felt called to compose another program for those who had suffered neglect or emotional, physical, or psychological abuse. In 2003, Dr. Theresa Burke launched her healing program entitled **Grief to Grace – Healing the Wounds of Abuse – Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity**. Those who come are finally ready to face their grief – the kind of profound grief that opens the soul to the power of Christ in His Passion, because there is nothing else to lean upon except the promise of resurrection.



This is why people come into Rachel's Vineyard and **Grief to Grace**, or any recovery program: they are desperate. Like the woman with the hemorrhage, they have exhausted all avenues for healing. Nothing has been able to repair the bleeding veins of their hearts. This rupture within the self caused by abortion and abuse has polluted their life with toxic shame and betrayal, killing the goodness and virtue that was God's plan for their life... and His plan for the

Church. People seek a healing process that allows them to integrate memory with feeling; that shows them that they are capable of giving and receiving love; and teaches them how to live what they believe in deep humility, trust and freedom.

Those who have been hurt by abuse or abortion in their families, communities and Church leadership desperately need to enter a process for healing. It begins with grief work which helps participants to be willing to stare the damage in the face; to discover that they are capable of tolerating the overwhelming feelings that are attached to deep loss and pain; to release feelings of anger, betrayal, injustice and rage; and to understand the traumatic repetitions that have occurred as they tried to hide the secrets that have felt so defective and shameful.

## Healing Within the Church

In deep recognition of their need, and hearing of a safe place to heal, many religious sisters and priests have begun to make the journey from **Grief to Grace** along with other victims of abuse. After attending the program, one priest who had been abused as a child by another priest wrote:

*"I do not have the words to tell you how grateful I am for all I have been given this week through you and your team, by your heart so full of faith, hope and love... I never believed so powerful a journey could happen so suddenly. Thank you from the depths of my heart, now so overflowing with peace and joy."*

The new Evangelization Initiatives mandate that we invite all into the fullness of authentic love so they are free to discover their unique vocations in Christ. But abuse of any sort, given its fundamental nature of betrayal, endangers an individual's ability to fully accept and embrace this gift. Abuse attacks the heart of our vocations as beloved children of God. **Grief to Grace** directly responds to this suffering by bringing the wounded soul to the very font of love itself, the Lord Jesus.

This program was created to end the isolation and secrets of abuse within a retreat process that is fully centered upon the person and presence of Jesus Christ, who knew exactly what it felt like to be an innocent victim.

One victim of clergy abuse shared these words after completing the **Grief to Grace** program: *"I notice that the sense of helpless vulnerability which seemed ingrained in me has evaporated and I have a new sense of being present to myself and integrated in body, mind and spirit as never before. Now I think, "this must be how we're meant to feel." It helps me understand my lack of accomplishment and direction in life up until now. How could I make goals and follow through with them when so much energy was expended in agonizing then second guessing every decision and choice I was faced with? Now I'm happy to say my greatest accomplishment is my full acceptance of humanity, wounds, scars and all, in myself and in others."*



Because the Church is the community of believers, when one of its members is healed, the Church itself is made stronger. Imagine if many are healed! Imagine if her leadership is healed! A stronger, more radiant Church is one that can't help but engender goodness throughout all of society. Those who experience healing within the context of their faith will, in turn, invest their gifts and resources into the Church. They are inspired to serve and build upon the foundation that has been laid within the context of Church, faith and community.

One priest who suffered abuse as a child shared that **Grief to Grace** provided the missing piece that 22 years of addiction treatment had failed to provide – addressing the spiritual component of his own relationship with God.

One religious sister who had been sexually abused as a child expressed the following:

*"Things are so much better in terms of house dynamics with my superior. I have come to see that I not only saw God as a perpetrator but also the Sisters I live with. When I began to take off the lens of my abuse, I saw that I really am very loved by God and my Sisters. It's funny...at any given moment, when I stop to think, I know exactly what I am feeling and why and what to do about it. In prayer, I've been asking Jesus to touch my heart and to hold me close. I am trying to make a habit of visualizing this in prayer. Our Lord is telling me to be not afraid."*

Cardinal Renato Raffael Martino from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace spoke these words of encouragement for **Grief to Grace**: *"Please be assured of my prayers as you continue to serve God's people with such dedication and love. The ministry of healing that you provide to so many women and men will no doubt bring hope, strength, and a renewed faith to those who suffer the traumatic effects of abortion and sexual abuse. May the Lord who has begun this good work in you, bring it to fulfillment."*

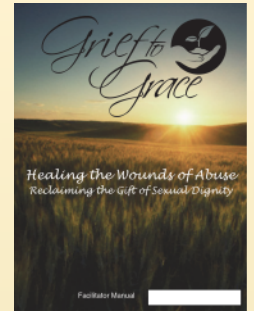
**Grief to Grace** supports and assists its participants in this spiritual journey. It helps participants face the depth and tragedy of abuse while reclaiming their value and dignity as daughters and sons of the Living God. By traveling the Paschal Mystery of their own lives and uniting their suffering to Christ's, participants share in the new life and fullness of His Resurrection and thus re-establish the font of love, tenderness, belonging, safety, joy and peace which are often missing from the stories of abuse victims.

One victim of clergy abuse shared: *"I have been delivered from a great burden as a result of Grief to Grace. Resurrection has occurred in my life as a result of this experience! I can share very frankly about my experience as well as opening myself up to others about who I really am. I know the tender loving care of God in a new and refreshing way and I look forward to my life and what the possibilities are that lie ahead."*



## History of the Program

**Grief to Grace – Healing the Wounds of Abuse** was first piloted in July 2005 in the Diocese of Fargo, North Dakota. Another **Grief to Grace** Pilot Program was hosted by The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. Dr. Theresa Burke continued offering pilot programs as adjustments and revisions were made to the Facilitator Manual and Participant Journals. The retreats and training seminars drew Victim Assistance Coordinators and participants from throughout the United States, Ireland, England, Russia, France, Australia, and Canada.



The Diocese of Nelson, British Columbia, led by Bishop John Corriveau, OFM Cap., became the first founding partner for the work of **Grief to Grace**. He states:

*“We wish to contribute to the healing of those who have suffered the trauma of sexual abuse in our society. The Diocese of Nelson sponsors the program, Grief to Grace. Grief to Grace brings the healing power of the Cross of Christ coupled with approved counseling methods to those who have suffered sexual abuse either by a priest or anyone else. The priests of our diocese wish to be worthy of your respect and trust. For this reason, they wholeheartedly accept and support these measures. I ask your prayers for all victims of sexual abuse...and for each other as we strive to move once again from the Cross to new life.”*

In addition to our home site in Philadelphia, retreats have been offered in the Diocese of Palm Beach; Corpus Christi; Oklahoma City; and Kingston, Jamaica. Archbishop Eusebius Beltran declared *“I strongly approve and recommend this new group model for healing.”* The ministry continues to grow rapidly with established sites not only in Philadelphia, but also in Kelowna, BC, Portland, OR, and London, England, with more retreats occurring each year.

## Victim Assistance



Dr. Theresa Burke presented an overview of the **Grief to Grace** Program at the National Victim Assistance Conference in San Francisco, CA in August 2009. Attending was Diane M. Knight, the Chair of the USCCB National Review Board, which was created to be a consultative body for the Bishops Committee for the Protection of Children and Young People. Diane, visibly moved, came up to Dr. Burke after her presentation. She shared that **Grief to Grace** gave her incredible hope for the church.

Barbara Elordi, the Victim Assistance coordinator for the Archdiocese of San Francisco, expressed her own gratitude: *“Thank you for all the work you do in giving people who are hurting the opportunity to move towards healing and reconciliation.”* After hearing about the **Grief to Grace** program, Suzanne Healy, the Victim Assistance coordinator for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, was so convinced of the power of the program that she sent the information to a client and offered to sponsor his attendance.

One Victim Assistance director who attended the retreat stated: *“Grief to Grace is an amazingly spiritual experience. A journey involving safety, bonds, connection, merging of hearts, grieving together towards transformation. A wonderful instrument for healing of those with sexual abuse wounds! This is an extraordinary opportunity to live through Christ's redemptive work.”*

Another acknowledged that *“Grief to Grace is a gift to the church.”*

## A Letter From a Victim of Clergy Abuse who Became a Priest

I am just so full of the grace and healing. For me the retreat was an experience of grace as palpable and as powerful as my ordination. I have never been more sure or aware of the effects of the Holy Spirit in my life. The healing was immense, the joy is so wonderful. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

God continues to pile grace upon grace. What a grace and a sign to arrive back on the last day of the Year for Priests so full of joy and healing and love. I have so strong a sense of God's presence, filling me with joy. Several people have commented on how different I am and even that I look different. I feel it already unlocking things in others, making my ministry more fruitful.

What amazes me is a sense that I have been allowed to reclaim something that was always there, but was somehow so deeply hidden and protected that it was not able to be accessed in any conscious way. In other ways I was very in touch with it - it amazes me thinking about my devotions all these years were pointing me in exactly the right direction. It is as if someone has switched the lights on and I can see that in some depth of my soul all was kept safe but also somehow sealed, to be freed after so long by the wonderful work of last week, like the woman in the Gospel breaking her jar of ointment and releasing its fragrance. It is as if instead of looking at the back, the worked side of a tapestry, I can see the perfect picture on the other side which God's Providence has been skillfully crafting through the circumstances and trials of those years.

I am overwhelmed by the exquisite kindness of His love which out of so much that seemed so chaotic and wasted can bring such a feeling of joy and purpose and connection. Even something as apparently insignificant as kissing the altar at the beginning of Mass has suddenly acquired a whole new beauty and meaning. The whole idea of the reverence for the liturgy which some people seem to think is rather like a kind of outmoded Victorian formality, now strikes me as being intimately connected to a more fundamental attitude of reverence for the mystery of what it means to approach the personhood of any other person, let alone our Divine Lord, and that the liturgy must make such an attitude visible. In other words I am more in my body, even when celebrating Mass.

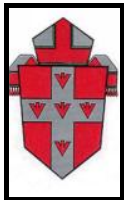
***There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the work of Grief to Grace is a charism for the Church which She desperately needs right now.***

Jean Vanier wrote somewhere that the Word became Flesh that the flesh might become word, and that I think is what feels different. I feel the message I believed so strongly and the priesthood I believe to have been the saving of me, the best of me and the real expression of my deepest aspirations, can now be more "incarnated," more real at every level of my being. I feel my flesh is no longer something of shame and hindrance to the "holy" part of me that was somehow my ideas, my mind.

There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the work of Grief to Grace is a charism for the church which she desperately needs right now. I will close with renewed thanks. Your great skill, care and kindness in Faith to the work of the Holy Spirit have been the means of miraculous healing and immeasurable grace to me. For this you have my heartfelt prayers and love in Jesus.

# Letter of Recommendation

## Letter of Recommendation from the Archbishop of Oklahoma City



Archdiocese of Oklahoma City - Post Office Box 32180 - Oklahoma City, OK 73123

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June 9, 2006

Dr. Theresa Karminski Burke, PhD  
743 Roy Road  
King of Prussia, PA 19406

Dear Dr. Burke:

I am very pleased, once again, to express my gratitude to you for your continuing outstanding service to the Church and to God's people. Your Rachel's Vineyard Ministries has touched, healed and helped many people here in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

I have just read the detailed information on "*From Grief to Grace*," healing the wounds of abuse and reclaiming the gift of sexuality. I concur totally with the content and the approach. I am authorizing our Family Life Department to proceed with the training and implementation of "*From Grief to Grace*." I strongly approve and recommend this new group model for healing.

Thank you for the opportunity to evaluate and endorse "*From Grief to Grace*." May Almighty God bless you and this good work.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

*Eusebius J. Beltran*

Most Reverend Eusebius J. Beltran  
Archbishop of Oklahoma City

# Letter of Endorsement

## Letter of Endorsement from the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

00120 Citta del Vaticano Tel. 06 698.79911 Fax 06 698.87205 E-mail: pcjustpax@justpeace.va

6 June 2007



Dear Mr. & Mrs. Burke,

I received your letter dated 19 May 2007, kindly delivered to my office, wherein you informed me of your expanded outreach ministry called Grief to Grace, aimed at assisting victims of sexual abuse. I appreciate your consideration in this regard.

Please be assured of my prayers as you continue to serve God's people with such dedication and love. The ministry of healing that you provide to so many women and men will no doubt bring hope, strength, and a renewed faith to those who suffer the traumatic effects of abortion and sexual abuse. May the Lord who has begun this good work in you, bring it to fulfillment.

Invoking the powerful intercession of Our Lady upon your service, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Renato Raffael/ Cardinal Martino

Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Burke  
Grief to Grace Ministries  
743 Roy Road  
King of Prussia, P A 19406 U.S.A.



# Letter of Endorsement



## ARCHDIOCESE OF KINGSTON CHANCERY OFFICE

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July 14, 2010

Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Burke  
Grief to Grace Ministries  
743 Roy Road  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Burke,

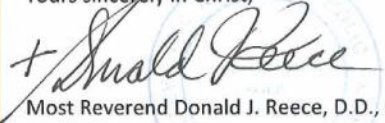
Having had a most fruitful result from your Rachel's Vineyard Ministries conducted in the Archdiocese of Kingston earlier this year, I am delighted that you will be returning to launch the Grief to Grace Ministries.

In our Jamaican society there is no dearth of grieving victims, be they of a sexual or domestic nature. The need is there to accompany them in their grief and to facilitate the transition that results in human transformation that will ultimately cause a wholesome ripple effect in homes, Church and the society.

Given the dire need for this healing which participates in the ministry of a compassionate Christ, I warmly and readily endorse your God-given ministries "From Grief to Grace."

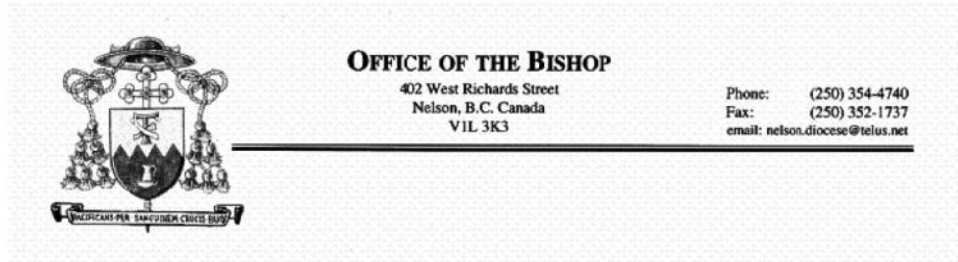
God bless!

Yours sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend Donald J. Reece, D.D., GCM  
Archbishop of Kingston

# Letter of Endorsement



December 7, 2009

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

May the Lord give you peace!

.... We also wish to contribute to the healing of those who have suffered the trauma of sexual abuse in our society. The Diocese of Nelson sponsors the program, Grief to Grace. Grief to Grace brings the healing power of the Cross of Christ coupled with approved counselling methods to those who have suffered sexual abuse either by a priest or anyone else. Information about Grief to Grace can be obtained from your local parish office.

Fraternally in Christ,

*† John, OFMCap.*

John Corriveau, OFMCap.

Bishop of Nelson

# *A Sampling of Retreat Exercises & Activities*

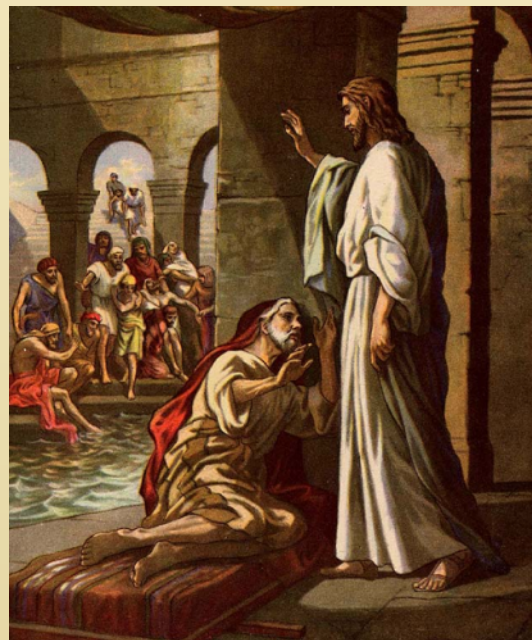


## Child of God

The purpose of this exercise is to create a pictorial representation of how the experience of abuse has injured one's self-image. It may be difficult to communicate the damage done to the human spirit or body through words, therefore, it is helpful to express the hurt with pictures and symbols.

## Pool of Bethesda

A Living Scripture that will help participants focus on areas of their own lives where they might feel paralyzed. It will help participants take active steps to confront the issues and personal difficulties that besiege them. It is an invitation and a challenge to conversion.



## Memories Journal

The Memories Journal goes through a process of recalling specific memories and identifying the message or lesson learned through the experience; remembering your response to that situation for self-protection, and finally identifying any sin that grew out of the hurt.

# *More Activities and Exercises*

## The Agony in the Garden

As we unite our suffering with Christ, we recall the abandonment and betrayal of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Each person will have the opportunity to explore and relate their own betrayals, with an understanding of the loneliness and isolation that Christ endured.



## The Scouring at the Pillar

The purpose of this exercise is to meditate upon the physical abuse that Jesus suffered as we recall the physical and sexual violations in our own lives. We will also explore feelings of helplessness that many victims faced when they were unable to stop the abuse from happening.

## The Crucifixion

No event is so central to our Christian faith as the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. We traveled with Jesus through bitter betrayal, false accusations, humiliating mockery and abuse. This Living Scripture invites us to see that something incredible has been done for all the depravity and violence in the world. The path to the Cross tells us exactly how far God will go to call us back to Himself and restore us to wholeness.





# More Activities and Exercises

## The Resurrection

In the Living Scripture of the Resurrection, participants will find themselves in the tomb of Jesus as the first rays of sunlight are cast upon the Cross of Christ still standing on the hill of Calvary.

*“He humbled Himself  
and became obedient unto death,  
even death on a cross.  
Therefore, God has highly exalted Him.”*

Ph. 2:8-9

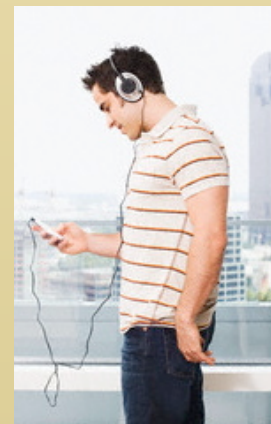


## Affirmation Exercise

An affirmation means to assert or declare that something is true. In this exercise we are affirming the dignity of each person on the weekend. We are also proclaiming the truth of the risen Christ we have witnessed in each other.

## Cognitive Therapy Aftercare

The cognitive therapy CD developed by Dr. Theresa Burke, is a special form of aftercare that will aid participants in reinforcing positive messages that will build a healthy self-concept. This is a “take home” session that can be played at any time following the retreat to reinforce important cognitive beliefs that will empower the victim, and greatly assist them in replacing negative thinking with messages about their value, and the gift of their human dignity.





# Testimonials

"This weekend was specific to my personal needs in woundedness -- which nothing has ever touched so completely -- even though I have worked for 18 years on inner issues through therapy, Al-Anon, Life in the Spirit Seminars, contemplative prayer, and journaling."

*"Totally awesome! So Christ-centered and spiritual! It has been an incredible gift to go on this healing journey. There was so much love and acceptance radiated to each hurting man and woman."*

"Up-lifting! A true learning experience. A place I could be completely open and be accepted by others."

*"Everything was so deep and meaningful. God was truly present!"*

"It was powerful in every respect. The multi-dimensional aspects of this retreat provided so many ways in which God could touch our lives and speak His truth to us. As difficult as it was to hear some of the stories of participants it was a necessary and important part of the process."

**"I will, and forever, reap the blessings of what I received on the Grief to Grace weekend."**

"My heart is a muscle. *Grief to Grace* was like a deep tissue massage on my heart. It felt sore and worked all over. As this soreness subsided, then my heart felt more free. Free to love and be loved. Free to be loved by God and others. Free to love those that God has entrusted to my care and free to love those who cross my path. Thank you for this massage. Thanks be to God."

*"This weekend was very loving. Very hard but in a good way. The way it was done made it easy to get in touch with your pain."*

"It was more than I could imagine. The exercises made it so real."

## Reflections on Grief to Grace

### A Letter From Rev. John

In my deacon year, 2003, word of the Boston priest sexual abuse scandal spread across the country and the world. The seminary I attended talked about this, taught about this, gave conferences and seminars about this ad nauseam. I had never revealed my own abuse at the hands of a priest that started with the "grooming" process in 1980 and culminated with the first physical, sexual contact in August 1982. (We were on a co-ed parish youth group camping trip when he put his hand down my sleeping bag and down my underwear. I think that he thought that I was asleep.) At that point I was paralyzed with fear and confusion. And of course, which is typical, I blamed myself.

Because of all the 'educational' activity that was being offered/forced on us at the seminary I became very, very depressed, barely able to function. For the first time since the molestation happened I told someone about it. The therapist on staff was the first person I ever told about my experience. It was not a relief to finally say it. My depression and apathy because of the depression cost me ordination to the priesthood in 2003.

Even though I had finally taken the very first, tentative step needed for healing I was not ready to deal with the abuse yet. There was a period in my life that going to Mass was so difficult because I hated the men representing Christ on the altar. (This is part of a longer story that involved being a seminarian and turning in a priest for inappropriate behavior toward me, then being treated like a pariah by the seminary priests on the formation board. The priest I turned in was later defrocked for abusing a teenage boy.)

In 2004 I was ordained. In 2005 there was a District Attorney Grand Jury Report on sexual abuse by priests in my home diocese. I did not feel relief or vindication that my abuser and the priest I turned in to the seminary were named. It made me more angry. Both have since been laicized by Rome. I started to deal with my abuse in earnest.

The abuse I experienced made me an angry person for a very long time. The abuse I experienced made me a fearful person for a very long time. The abuse I experienced made me a paranoid and untrusting person for a very long time. I made great strides, if painful ones, in therapy and spiritual direction.

*Grief to Grace* really helped me to focus and bring all the strides I made in therapy together. (My eloquence in expressing this is lacking.) The fear that I lived with for so long was gone. And I have come to the point in my healing that I don't feel shame any longer. That coming into my own and not accepting manipulation from others has given me a freedom that I don't ever remember having. I can establish boundaries with others and say and follow through when I need to say NO.

Uniquely, I think, I never blamed God for my abuse. I never hated God. I have witnessed people on this retreat who did blame God and hate God. Because of the retreat, the way it is designed and executed, I have witnessed these same people understand and welcome that God still, and has always, loved them. The answer that God let this happen is seen not as an uncaring God but someone else's free will choice. That makes a huge difference in the lives of the faithful.

Personally I still go to therapy. Things sometimes pop up unexpectedly that surprise me and catch me off guard. But I am well enough to know I need to deal with these things and can't do it on my own. I attribute that to my *Grief to Grace* experience.

## Reflections of a *Grief to Grace* Participant

I want to take a moment to write some thoughts and reflections from my participation in the *Grief to Grace* Retreat I attended in November of 2008.

First of all, a little background about me. I am a 55 year-old man, married for 33 years, and the father of 5 children. I was born, raised, and a practicing Roman Catholic my whole life.

My wife and I have been very involved with the Church through music ministry before and throughout our married life. We have tried to keep Christ at the center of our lives, marriage, family and work. He has sustained us through many years of joy, sadness, good times and bad, lean and full, trials and blessings.

Through this journey there has always been a deep struggle within me regarding a feeling of shame and unworthiness. It was never the kind of thing that was overt but rather always an undercurrent running through my life. It created in me a deep sense of loneliness and isolation. I found it extremely difficult to develop deep and meaningful relationships with others, to share feelings or be myself around others. I was not socially uncomfortable to be in groups of people because I did enjoy having fun, laughing, hearing and telling stories, making others laugh and having a good time.

When it came to intimacy, I was painfully challenged. It was as if I was trying to walk with no legs! I knew where I wanted to go but wasn't capable of getting myself there. It would always be a huge effort to crawl just a short distance. I was in a quandary over this because I am a person who feels things very deeply yet when it came to expressing what was inside I had such a hard time getting it out.

I'm an intelligent person who can discuss many topics on a variety of subjects with ease and often chose to exist in the realm of the mind because it was much easier to exist in that realm than matters of the heart.

After receiving counseling both individually and as a married couple over the course of several years, I learned a lot of things about myself, about good communications, developing intimacy and other tools. Even though my relationship with my wife had grown immensely, it was still a challenge to continue to nurture the relationship on a consistent basis and outside friendships were still hard to cultivate as well.

The most important thing that happened through the counseling was the realization that I had been raped as a 7 year-old and multiple times afterwards as well as suffering clergy abuse as an adolescent. Even though I received professional counseling for it, I continued to suffer from the feelings of shame, isolation and loneliness. It seemed that these things were never going to change.

Over the next 10-12 years the struggle had continued until I finally heard about *Grief to Grace*. My wife attended the retreat within the past year and returned a changed person.

As she shared with me about the retreat and what she experienced while attending it I knew that I should attend it as well. The manner in which the retreat was conducted resonated with something in me that said "this is what I need to complete the healing process."

I was not disappointed! What happened at the retreat was truly amazing! I knew that Jesus would have to meet me at the point of injury in my life and lead me through His own suffering and death to bring healing for me and that is exactly what happened through the retreat. The exercises and Living Scriptures were powerful vehicles to impart



the grace necessary to bring healing. The retreat provided the environment for me to feel the hurt like I never did before. I could talk about the hurt and explain how it had affected my life before but never was I able to allow myself the ability to feel it to the depth that I did over the course of the retreat.

Giving voice to the pain and grief was so important because then it could be coupled together with Christ's own suffering and death. Until this time in my life I was unable to make this connection due to the guilt and shame I felt as a result of the abuse because I felt somehow that it was my fault. I doubted that the pain would ever end and that I was trapped in feelings of loneliness, despair, hopelessness and continuing to feel exploited, unable to trust, or wondering if I would ever experience happiness.

I have been delivered from a great burden as a result of this retreat. Resurrection has occurred in my life as a result of this experience! I can share very frankly about my experience as well as opening myself up to others about who I really am. I know the tender loving care of God in a new and refreshing way and I look forward to my life and what the possibilities are that lie ahead.

### Testimony of a *Grief to Grace* Participant

I am a 48 year old mother with three grown children and three aborted children in Heaven. I am divorced from the father of these children and the marriage has been annulled since 1999. I have been an extraordinary minister of communion and am currently on the parish Council.

I attended a *Grief to Grace* retreat this past summer. I went at the invitation of Dr. Burke (who I knew and respected through *Rachel's Vineyard*) to fill out a small retreat to make the group dynamic effective for someone who was desperately seeking help. I didn't think I needed it. In the ten years since the resurfacing of sexual abuse by a priest that I experienced as an 8 year old, I've had much healing through spiritual and psychological counseling and *Rachel's Vineyard* and felt I was doing well. As soon as I was certain I would attend this retreat, however, I was surprised by how reluctant I was to open up that past abuse. I had come so far, I attend daily Mass, work in a religious articles store where most of our customers are clergy, and volunteer with *Rachel's Vineyard* ministries, but the truth was I felt anxious and ambivalent. There-in lies the reality of the residual lack of confidence in myself and in God. Once I arrived, with much fear and trepidation, and began to enter into the process I cried tears from depths I didn't know I possessed. Hearing the stories from others helped me to access deep emotions I was burying or trying to deny. The exercise of drawing a picture of ourselves as God created us, then depicting the damage from the abuse onto our image was very powerful. I didn't realize how that distorted image of who I was had sent my life on a trajectory and formed patterns that were not God's plans for me. Only by realizing that, could I begin to change my expectations and allow Him to rebuild my self image. Similarly, the re-dedication of the temple ritual was extremely healing for me. I had always felt that I had been desecrated but didn't know how to articulate that or how to recover from it. The Living Scripture and action were meaningful and I still occasionally revisit that when I need reminding. The letters written to myself and God helped me explore the difficult question of why me and work out my feelings of anger towards God over my perceived abandonment by Him and my disdain and contempt for the needy little girl who still lived inside me.

In the past six months I've been evolving into a new, whole person. I've gained better control over my appetite, feel healthier physically, don't grind my teeth or have jaw problems, I'm learning to confidently make choices that are good for me and allow for changes as needed. Just this month I find within myself the strength to courageously help a young lady who has experienced a similar situation with a clergy member. God's providence has put her in my path and prompted her to share the trauma with me. I'm able to relate to her pain and confusion and offer reassurance that she's not crazy, our God cries with her and is sending his ambassadors to bind her wounds and we can look for them together. I'm able to act as an advocate for her truth to be told to proper authorities. I hope to be a light in her darkness and help her to find a safe person and place to correct the distortions and help her to rebuild a healthy relationship with Jesus and His Church. At the very least I am able to love her and accept her emotions in the midst of her woundedness and doubt. I am grateful that the retreat has healed my heart enough to allow this fearless shining of light into a dark ugly place. It is a sacred gift to both of us and also the Church. I hope and pray that this young woman can experience the healing and correction offered through the *Grief to Grace* retreat soon and not have to live in shame and sad isolation for as long as I did.

I also notice that the sense of helpless vulnerability which seemed ingrained in me has evaporated and I have a new sense of being present to myself and integrated in body, mind and spirit as never before. Now I think, this must be how we're meant to feel. It helps me understand my lack of accomplishment and direction in life up til now. How could I make goals and follow through with them when so much energy was expended in agonizing then second guessing every decision and choice I was faced with? Now I'm happy to say my greatest accomplishment is my full acceptance of humanity, wounds, scars and all, in myself and in others.

Through the anointed work of Dr. Burke's retreat I can say with conviction that God knows all our pain and died to deliver the balm for our wounds. Carrying that loving presence of compassion, hope and light of Jesus Christ into the darkness of the myriad of sufferings of our world is a calling I am honored to accept. God is fully present in reality, no matter how messy, uncomfortable or shameful we think it, and He waits there with humility for us to join Him as He leads us to a better place.

"To have a right to do a thing is not at all the same as to be right in doing it." ~ G.K Chesterton

# The Founder

**Theresa Burke, Ph.D., NCP, LPC, BCCP, DABFC, DAPA**



Dr. Theresa Burke is the Founder of Rachel's Vineyard – the largest post abortion ministry in the world.

Her healing programs offer a unique sensory based

treatment which integrates emotional, psychological and spiritual dimensions. The healing journey uses creative "Living Scripture Exercises," and rituals which engage the mind body and soul. The Living Scriptures coupled with group activities, prayer, therapeutic facilitation, cognitive restructuring and discussions offer an effective process for grief work grounded in Jesus Christ and the word of God. This distinct program provides an exceptional and effective recovery process for victims of trauma and those who have spent years in talk therapy, but still struggle to move beyond their traumatic experience. In the past 12 years, the Rachel's Vineyard model has spread to 49 states and to over 70 countries. The Rachel's Vineyard retreat is currently offered in 22 languages, with other translations in progress. Rachel's Vineyard is a ministry of Priests for Life/Gospel of Life Ministries.

Theresa has facilitated the Rachel's Vineyard weekend for women and men throughout the country, training retreat teams in the method and process. She has lectured and trained professionals internationally on the subject of post-abortion trauma and healing. Her books include Forbidden Grief - The Unspoken Pain of Abortion with David C. Reardon (Acorn Books), The Contraception of Grief – The Genesis of Anguish Conceived by Abortifacients and Sterilization, and Sharing the Heart of Christ, with Kevin Burke. Forbidden Grief is also available in Spanish, Duelo Prohibido: El dolor no expresado del Aborto and Russian, Запрещенные слезы. О чем не рассказывают женщины после аборта.

Theresa also developed a five day program for healing sexual abuse entitled – Grief to Grace – Reclaiming the Gift of Human Dignity. This program has been used to address all forms of abuse, including sexual abuse from clergy and religious. Professionally crafted and doctrinally sound, Grief to Grace provides professional therapeutic staff and all treatment is based on a firm Christian foundation as well as sound medical and psychological principles and a perceptive understanding of trauma. Her treatment programs are considered an intensive and uninterrupted "therapy for the soul." Theresa's latest treatment model addresses the spiritual and psychological trauma suffered by combat veterans. The program is entitled Duty To Heal – Finding Peace for a Soldier's Heart. Future plans are also on way for two additional healing programs: Genesis After Genocide, a program for psychological and spiritual reconciliation and healing of the trauma due to genocide, terrorism, and civil war; and Soul Care to Restore the Foundation of Your Spirit: An Integrated Psychological and Spiritual Sensory Based Treatment for Medical Trauma.

Theresa serves as a Pastoral Associate of Priests for Life and for the newly formed Apostolic Society - Missionaries of the Gospel of Life. Theresa recently presented as an expert for the 2011 Pontifical Academy of Life's General Assembly. Her topic was The Aftermath of Abortion: Data from Scientific Literature. She is a frequent guest on EWTN and served as host of the television series Making Abortion Rare. She has appeared on PBS, the Religion and Ethics News Weekly, Focus on the Family, EWTN's Defending Life with Fr. Frank Pavone and has been interviewed for numerous radio, television, print magazine and news stories.

Theresa's counseling work has focused on women's issues, bereavement, pregnancy loss, sexual abuse, eating disorders and anxiety management. She is the co-administrator and founder of Covenant Family Resources, a licensed Children and Youth Agency which supports couples as they build families through adoption. Theresa and her husband ran Mother's Home, a crisis pregnancy residence, which provided housing and computer job training for women in crisis pregnancy and their children.

Theresa holds an undergraduate degree in English Communications with a concentration in social work. Theresa went on to Immaculata University to earn a master's degree and doctoral degree in Counseling Psychology. She is a Nationally Certified Psychologist, a Certified Diplomat of the American Psychotherapy Association, a Licensed Professional Counselor; a Board Certified Clinical Psychotherapist and a Diplomat of the American Board of Forensic Counselors. She holds membership in the Society for Catholic Social Scientists and the American Association of Christian Counselors. Theresa is the proud mother of five children.



# Growing Our Ministry

We invite you to join in our efforts to launch *Grief to Grace*. We greatly appreciate your consideration of our program, and hope to begin a relationship with you as we work together to help bring healing to victims of abuse.

## Training

One of the greatest needs anticipated as *Grief to Grace* spreads across the nation, and in the future across the globe, is that of training qualified individuals to begin offering this program themselves. Associated with the base costs of putting on such events (renting the space, developing materials, etc.), there are also the costs of travel for representatives of the ministry. We would also like to offer scholarships to groups and individuals who are interested and qualified to offer *Grief to Grace*, but may have limited resources.

## Seed Money

As *Grief to Grace* begins its initial launch as a ministry, seed money will be necessary to defray many of the costs related to starting such a program from scratch. This general fund would help to cover the expenses of not only physically running weekends (cost of renting a retreat center, materials for the retreat, etc.), but would also help with a variety of other needs, such as publishing manuals and participant journals and allowing the weekends to run smoothly and effectively.

## Staff Development

While we anticipate that many of our affiliate sites will be run by volunteers, it is important for us to attract and retain competent, trained individuals to help us in the national office of *Grief to Grace Ministries*. Currently we have no staff solely dedicated to helping develop the *Grief to Grace* program, and in order for the ministry to grow both in scope and in resources, we will need development personnel as well as individuals trained specifically to teach others how to run the *Grief to Grace* program.

## Publicity - Getting the Word Out

One of the most essential areas in which we need development is publicity and advertising. As we move forward, we want anyone who finds themselves in need of our healing program to be able to access it. Helping fund our publicity campaign would allow us to develop our website, advertise in a variety of media, and allow for representatives of our ministry to travel to a variety of groups (mental health professionals, other interested ministries, etc.) to inform them about the availability & effectiveness of our program.