



## Converted Hearts

### **Prolife converts share their stories about how prayerful witness pulled them out of the abortion industry**

The following article appeared in the January 2012 issue of *Columbia*, the monthly magazine of the Knights of Columbus. It was written by Carolee McGrath, a freelance writer.

*In the early 1980s, Dr. Anthony Levatino saw abortion as just part of his job as an obstetrician-gynecologist. He estimates that in five years he performed 1,200 abortions. In medical school, he said, doctors quickly learn to compartmentalize aspects of their work.*

*“There’s a corpse on the table,” he said. “You have to take it apart. You don’t think there are emotions involved in that? You learn to shut them out, and you do a job.”*

*But on June 23, 1984, something happened that changed Levatino’s point of view. When his 5-year-old daughter, Heather, ran into the street to protect her younger brother, she was struck and killed by a car.*

*Levatino dealt with his daughter’s death the best he could, taking a few weeks off from work. But this time, the heartbreak over his own loss gave him a new perspective when he saw the aborted remains of an unborn child.*

*“All of a sudden, I didn’t see the patient’s wonderful right to choose,” he recalled. “All I saw was somebody’s son or daughter.”*

*Within eight months of Heather’s death, Levatino stopped doing abortions. “A change had come that I couldn’t take back,” he said. “Once you finally realize that killing a baby at 20 weeks is wrong, then it doesn’t take too long to figure out that killing a baby of any size is wrong.”*

### **LEARNING THE TRUTH**

*In the nearly four decades since *Roe v. Wade*, there have been a number of high-profile conversions of former abortionists and clinic workers—including Dr. Bernard Nathanson, who was instrumental in legalizing abortion throughout the United States in 1973. Witnessing an*

*ultrasound-guided abortion that same year led Nathanson to dramatically reassess his position. He later converted to Catholicism and was a passionate pro-life advocate until his death last February. Abby Johnson, the former director of a Planned Parenthood facility in Bryan/College Station, Texas, has also made headlines since she walked off the job in 2009 during a 40 Days for Life prayer campaign.*

*There are many lesser-known stories as well, including that of Catherine Adair. A former medical assistant at an abortion facility in Boston, Adair said someone must have been praying for her conversion. She admitted that she had strayed far from the Catholic Church in her late teens and had stopped going to Mass after confirmation. When she became pregnant in college, she went to her mother for help.*

*“I was afraid to tell my mom,” Adair recalled. “When I did, she said, ‘Don’t worry about it. We can set up an appointment and terminate.’”*

*And that’s what she did.*

*“In my world, I was expected to finish college and have a career,” Adair said. “I couldn’t support a baby. I thought an abortion would take care of it.”*

*After college, she applied for a job at Planned Parenthood in 1996. “I saw it as a progressive, pro-woman organization. I thought it would fit with who I was,” she said.*

*Adair worked there for a year as an office worker. She was then trained as a counselor and later as a medical assistant. Part of her job, she explained, was to clean the examination and procedure rooms between abortion appointments.*

*One day in particular still haunts her. Adair was sent to clean a room following a second-trimester abortion. In addition to the usual blood spatter on the floor, she saw a table with a jar containing tiny body parts.*

*“I stood there in shock not knowing if I was seeing what I was seeing,” she said. “I remember I backed out of the room and was sick to my stomach.”*

*Adair said she didn’t immediately walk off the job, because she didn’t know what to do. Instead, she went back to work the next day and the day after.*

*But when she became increasingly unhappy, Adair left her position at Planned Parenthood and went to graduate school to become a teacher. In 1998, she married her college boyfriend and started a family. Still, as time went on, she felt that something — or someone — was missing in her life.*

*Adair and her husband started looking for a church, visiting a few different services before walking into a Catholic parish in Fitchburg, Mass., in 2006. She then attended Sunday Mass for three years without receiving the Eucharist.*

*“I finally worked up the nerve to go to confession. When I went, I couldn’t stop crying,” she recalled. The priest, she added, was very kind and nonjudgmental. “As penance, he asked me to pray the rosary.”*

*Adair’s devotion to Mary soon drew her closer to Christ than she thought possible. As she prayed for healing, God revealed to her the truth about the “right to choose” — a right that she had championed for so many years.*

*“God pulled aside that final veil of ignorance about the fact that these are babies,” she said. “I knew he was prodding me.”*

*Last year, Adair began sharing her story publically across the country. She has also worked with the Susan B. Anthony List, a Washington-based political action committee that works to elect pro-life candidates. But most importantly, Adair wants women to know the truth about abortion and give them a glimpse into an industry that claims to help them.*

## **PATIENCE IN PRAYER**

*In his own personal testimony, which he has shared with audiences for two decades, Levatino offers a graphic description of a typical abortion procedure. As difficult as it is for his listeners to hear, the horror has never worn off for Levatino. He believes that it is important for people to know the truth of what the procedure entails.*

*“It is as if people think the doctor waves his hands and the baby disappears. It doesn’t happen like that,” explained Levatino, now a gynecologist in Las Cruces, N.M.*

*Until his daughter’s death, Levatino spent the early part of his career doing first- and second-trimester abortions as part of his obstetrics and gynecology practice in Troy, N.Y.*

*“Charges ranged from \$600 to \$700 for a second-trimester abortion,” he said. “In 15 minutes, I was making 50 percent of what I was making delivering a baby, which took 10 months, hours awake in the middle of the night and almost unlimited liability afterwards.”*

*Levatino said he knows God was working in his life long before he converted to the pro-life position. One of his patients was part of a group that protested abortion in front of his office. He recalled that on one occasion, the woman told him, “Jesus loves you, and this is not what he intended for you.”*

*Levatino politely listened but was very annoyed. “I had this overwhelming thought that I had to hustle this woman out of my office,” he recalled.*

*But the woman, who was always kind and respectful, never gave up on him. She sent him cards from time to time, including one after Levatino’s daughter died. The message eventually got through.*

*Not long after Levatino stopped doing abortions, a local church group invited him and his wife to a pro-life potluck supper. His wife, who had always been opposed to abortion, wanted to go. Until that time, the couple had agreed to disagree on the issue and decided they wouldn’t talk about it. Levatino finally agreed to attend the event, and the kindness of many people there changed his opinion about the pro-life movement. Soon after, he decided to share his story.*

*Levatino said that people need to pray constantly for those who work in the abortion industry and reach out to them if possible. He said that even though people in the pro-life movement may get discouraged or assume that the staunchest supporters of abortion are a lost cause, conversions take time. “You need tremendous patience in prayer,” he said. “You have to develop a relationship and say to them, ‘The Lord loves you.’ That’s how you start.”*

Have a blessed week,

