



The Family LifeLine

Bulletin of the Family Life Society, Archdiocese of Singapore

Why I stopped doing Abortions: Interview with a Singaporean Doctor

Conversion stories are always a testament to the reality of God's grace. Nick Chui interviews Dr. Peter Chew a Singaporean Obstetrician and Gynecologist at Gleneagles Medical centre who agreed to share his story.



I understand that you used to do abortions. What made you decide to do this?

In a nutshell, it was for financial considerations. I began my private practice as an Obstetrician and Gynecologist in 1979. You could earn a few hundred dollars just for a 5-10 minute surgical procedure. On average I was doing at least one abortion a day so you can imagine it was good money...

You were a Catholic then. If that is the case, how did you rationalise your actions?

I was no pro-abortion ideologue or anything like that. In fact, I was happy not to confront the issue at all. Indeed, in the 1970s, I was teaching at the medical faculty of the then University of Singapore and was also engaged in research on fertility issues. My superior, figuring I was Catholic, did not even raise the question of abortion with me and hence, I skirted the issue completely. But when I began my private practice as an Obstetrician and Gynecologist in 1979 I realise that I had to confront the issue after all, since there would be people showing up at my clinic requesting for termination of their pregnancies.

I knew clearly the teaching of the Church against abortion but I rationalised. I began to make up reasons why it need not apply to me in my case. "I shouldn't mix my professional occupation with my religious beliefs," I told myself. "Besides, it is not as if I am actively encouraging people to seek abortions. They simply show up at my clinic and I as a doctor am merely fulfilling their request." "Moreover, if I don't perform abortions, there are many other

doctors who would be happy to carry them out and as such, what difference does it make if I decided not to perform abortions?"

I can see today the gaping holes in my rationalisations but at that time, that was what I told myself.

You subsequently experienced a change of heart. What were the factors leading up to this change?

I continued to perform abortions for about 4 years. I told myself not to think about what I was doing as after all, what I was doing was legal to begin with. However, it is difficult to quiet your conscience when you have to deal with, sometimes almost on a daily basis, bloody and dismembered remains of the unborn child which you have just chopped up with your instruments or torn apart with a suction pump. I think it was the grace of God that he did not allow my conscience to be killed.

I still remember the day when I got a phone call from a good friend whom I have not spoken with for some time. He found out that I was performing abortions. He was deadly serious and point blank. "You are committing a grave sin, killing a lot of babies, stop now". Somehow, his words were like a thunderbolt. I can only attribute this to the grace of God. I cried and I cried and I called the nurse to cancel all the abortions scheduled for tomorrow immediately. I

subsequently received the sacrament of reconciliation. Since then, I never looked back. Today I try to attend mass daily and go regularly for confession.

Did you try to influence your colleagues who may be performing abortions?

To be honest, though I saw the horror of what I was doing very clearly, I was nevertheless very afraid of actually approaching colleagues and advising them to stop performing abortions. I was afraid that they may think I was engaging in moral posturing. After all they could always say, "You made enough money already, I haven't. What right do you have to tell me to stop?" But I nevertheless managed to speak to a friend, who was also a Catholic. It

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was just a simple suggestion, "perhaps you shouldn't do this anymore." I thought those words did not mean much. However, about a year or so later, she called me and said that she too has stopped performing abortions because of what I said to her before. Praise God!

How is your relationship with your patients now after you have stopped performing abortions?

My relationship with my patients has improved tremendously as I am now offering them genuine help and not the tragedy of aborting their unborn child. Now not motivated

by financial considerations, I would counsel them on alternatives to abortion. Subsequently, some of them will bring their child to me and say that they are very grateful for my advice. The joy of seeing the newborn child whom I have saved is indescribable. I

remembered one incident where the mother to be came for a second opinion. She was going for abortion based on the ultrasound finding that the baby's intestines were growing outside the body. This condition may not be lethal. I advised the mother accordingly. Months later, I found that the child's particular problem was rectified after childbirth and he is a healthy child today. My patients know that I don't do abortions anymore. In fact, some would go to another doctor for an abortion and come to me for advice

regarding various medical issues. I don't judge them because they live in a culture where abortion is legal. Instead, I help to keep the communication lines open and gently persuade them to choose and treasure life.

Do you have any words of advice for your colleagues in the medical profession who are doing abortions?

As a doctor, we should respect life and not destroy it. We have no right to kill. As for our livelihood, it really depends on our expectations. How much money is enough for you? What I found most important was a clear conscience and peace. And that is something which money cannot buy.

Thank you very much!

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- ◆ Gentle Birth ◆ Biology of a baby ◆ Breastfeeding
- ◆ Breastfeeding & Natural Child Spacing

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Date: Sunday, 28 June 2009
Time: 12.30pm to 5.00pm
Place: St John's Room, CAEC (Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre)

LIMITED SEATS!

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Joyful Parenting is a programme of the Family Life Society