

Madeline Watkins joined our board of directors in June 2016. She holds an M.T.S. in Marriage and Family Studies from the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Washington, D.C. Madeline has worked in national marriage and family ministry for the past 5 years with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and has volunteered and served in leadership positions in grassroots pro-life work in Texas and Pennsylvania. Her academic and professional interests include theological anthropology, personalism, natural family planning and chastity education, and Hispanic ministry. In 2016, she served as a volunteer staffer with the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations for the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Gabriel Network: *What was your first impression of Gabriel Network?*

Madeline Watkins: When I was a child in Texas, my mother was an Angel Friend for Gabriel Project. Since then I've thought it is a beautiful part of the pro-life movement. **Often people say we just care about the child, but Gabriel Network shows that we truly believe every life is precious: life is precious in the womb and life is precious in the mother.**

GN: *What would you say to somebody who is thinking about joining Gabriel Network?*

MW: I have met the mothers and children and I have seen the fruit in their lives. These women and children experience God's love and mercy through Gabriel Network. You know in your heart when you see them that this is the Lord's work. Pope Francis, in particular, is big on *encounters*: you see exactly that in this ministry. Gabriel Network is the incarnate expression of God's love.

GN: *What is your personal philosophy of how to best solve the problem of abortion and other life issues?*

MW: We must learn, live, and share the culture of life. I'm filled with a lot of hope about the younger generation: society is starting to see the value and beauty of human life. We have to run with that momentum; we are different parts of one body, and each of us has a role to play. We each have different gifts and can use our gifts to build the culture of life. The human heart is made for truth.

GN: *How did you come to believe so strongly in the pro-life movement?*

MW: My belief in the inviolability of every human life stems from catholic social teaching. It is largely thanks to my catholic education. As a little girl in Texas, I was raised in public school. But then I attended an all-girls catholic school in Louisiana. There, I saw the pure joy of the church. I experienced the gospel firsthand through the sisters and my classmates. The sisters led me on a life-changing mission trip to Mexico 10 years ago, where I saw international poverty for the first time in my life. And I volunteered to do sidewalk counseling ministry at a Planned Parenthood facility. I loved the sidewalk counseling ministry's approach: it was absolutely based in mercy.

GN: *Which historical person do you respect the most?*

MW: I most admire Pope John Paul II, Plato, and Aristotle. John Paul II's life, legacy, and work spread the culture of life and challenged the prevailing culture of death. The classical philosophers were men who sought truth and contributed so much to Western civilization. Today, we need to recover the search for truth instead of trying to make it up ourselves on our own.

GN: *What are your hobbies?*

MW: I love Latin dancing: salsa and merengue! I get it from my grandfather. He and I have danced since I was a little girl. He and my grandmother have been married for 65 years. But, even to this day, he still gets on the dance floor with me whenever we're at a family gathering!

GN: *If you could meet your childhood self, what would you tell her?*

MW: Children in middle school and high school just want to fit in. I would tell my childhood self that she should not be afraid to be herself, and especially that she should not be afraid to be who God made her to be.