

UK

Archie Battersbee, conversion also changes the fight for life

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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Patricia
Gooding-
Williams



The story of Archie Battersbee, the 12-year-old whose destiny will be decided in a final hearing on 6th and 7th June, is similar to all the other harrowing end of life cases which made the headlines and the *Daily Compass* recounted. Yet, there is a peculiarity in

Archie's story which makes it also unique. It's diversity stems from the fact, his tragic accident prompted the entire family's conversion to the Christian faith. This is the novelty which convinced Hollie the only way to fight Archie's cause and obtain legal victory was through prayer not public protests.

Anyone who has suffered the traumatic experience of having a seriously ill child or one who's life is in grave danger, can testify how complicated and agonisingly difficult it is to consider that child from the perspective of eternal life. Yet, this is the decision Archie's family took last Easter Monday. Exactly one day after Archie's baptism on Easter Sunday, each member of the family was baptised a Catholic. This is the key to the radical way Hollie Dance judges the harsh events of her daily life. Numerous times in television interviews, torn with emotion and in tears, she repeatedly tells viewers, "God is the only one who should take my son's life".

Since Archie's recovery in hospital, Hollie and her children use social media to keep friends and family informed of Archie's progress and to invite anyone who reads their posts to pray for Archie. In less than two weeks, prayer groups from numerous countries around the world responded to Hollie Dance's request. Ella, Archie's sister-in-law told the Daily Compass, "they never imagined they would receive a response like this, there's countless posts carrying the symbol of praying hands from people in Italy, Spain, America, England, Australia and Ukraine". "All these loving messages give Hollie and the family strength, it's overwhelming".

As the number of followers praying for Archie increased, Hollie decided to invite everyone to pray together once a week. Every Sunday evening at 19:00 in the UK, a prayer service takes place beside Archie's bed on Hollie's Facebook page. While the camera remains focused on a small table of soft toys below a bulletin board pinned full of get-well cards and letters, the hospital chaplain's peaceful voice can be heard offering prayers of healing for Archie. And as Archie lies in his hospital bed, he too has become an instrument of evangelisation and hope for the world. While Hollie has become a point of reference for thousands.

Still, the situation is so fraught with tension that recently Hollie posted a reminder: we want your support and prayers not protests. She was referring to the posts on her Facebook page that follow every High Court hearing. Please don't write "messages of anger and hate against the hospital and staff", she wrote. "What would we have done if we lived somewhere else like America where we would have had to pay millions for a case like Archie?" It's a privilege to live in "a country with a welfare state". She praised the nurses who take care of Archie everyday, who exceed their professional duty. They

regularly chat to Archie and joke to keep the atmosphere as relaxed as possible. Hollie often expresses her gratitude for all the goodness she and her family have received in and out of the hospital. Two days ago she reinforced her message by posting a phrase from the Bible: Colossians 3:12. "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."

It is also Hollie's newly found faith that led her into to a legal battle against the Hospital Trust. In fact, all the most notorious end of life legal battles in the UK, were fought by religious people who believe living in accord with the truth means defending that Truth and if needed by radical action. It requires the gift of fortitude to challenge a system created to such perfection, the chances of escaping a death sentence is near to impossible.

Apart from the heavy psychological and emotional costs of such battles there are legal costs to contend with. Hollie has had to turn to Archie's army also for financial support to pay her lawyers. A [crowd funding page](#) was set up for this purpose. She aims to raise £20,000 and with the last hearing taking place on June 6 and 7, she needs the money urgently. The future of Archie's life depends on the outcome of the judge's decision at that hearing.

Ironically, Archie who had dreams of becoming a champion boxer, has thrust his mum into the limelight. Hollie has stated she will not stop fighting for her son's right to life and her right to love her son. That also means if Archie remains seriously disabled from his injuries, if that's his destiny.