

ALFIE EVANS

Bishop Paglia offends the parents of sick children

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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I am the mother of Mele, Emanuele Campostrini, a 9 year old boy suffering from a severe disability due to mitochondrial disease and mitochondrial DNA depletion; I am also known for the public stand I took in Italy over the Charlie Gard case. Recently, deeply struck and indignant, I wrote to Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life after reading his statements on the Alfie Evans case, in the interview published by "Tempi" on March 9th.

I wrote respectfully, but with the intention of filial correction, because I think every believer wants the Church to be more beautiful, more Holy and that a Christian loves fraternal correction as its purpose is to please God and to gain Paradise. I have not received a reply yet. So, I thought to share my reflections, as a mother, which were initially addressed, as is correct, only to Archbishop Paglia. If what is written **in the interview with 'Tempi'** is really true, I think, Monsignor Paglia cannot and should not be at the head of the Pontifical Academy for Life.

The "drama of the parents" who have a sick person to care for is absolutely not comparable to the drama of not being able to defend them from a horde of evil people who attempt to take their life. It is hard to listen to words that are so ignorant and arrogant. The fact that there is neither diagnosis nor therapy for a disease and that is "incurable" for man does not legitimate the killing of anyone. Of course it is "suppression" and the word is more than right, indeed it is the only one to use, because it respects the truth of what takes place. Alfie is not cerebrally dead.

For Alfie there is no diagnosis, nor treatment, so he is not doing any special therapy for his unknown pathology, so there is no "overzealous treatment " because there is no therapy in place. No one knows "what" to propose as a cure because they do not know what illness he has. "Overzealous treatment " occurs when the cure causes uncontrollable suffering and is useless, this is not the case here. There are no "overzealous treatments" in Alfie's case because mechanical ventilation and nutrition by nasogastric tube is totally normal for many people who live in hospital or even at home, (including my son). In fact the parents are not asking for any special or experimental therapy, but simply to allow their son to live the time that naturally remains and die when God calls him

Is it really possible that Monsignor Paglia does not know the documents he cites? Or does he quote them in bad faith? Is it possible that he is so taken up burning incense to the powers of the moment to safeguard his own power and vain glory? Yet, I canu still remember his catechisms at the time of Pope John Paul II which were of a completely different tenor. In those days, Monsignor Paglia wondered whether the scarce number of miraculous cures were due to the lack of faith of Ministers and declared that above all they should obey God's command to lay their hands and heal the sick...that the care of the sick is the centre of the Ministry of Jesus.

Now instead of laying hands on a sick, innocent and defenceless child to implore his healing, alas he justifies their killing with mellifluous accuracy and by distorting the words of the Magisterium and the Pope. "Accepting that you cannot prevent death" is only done after you have given the patient food and drink and you have helped them breathe and they die anyway and nothing more can be done. No one can impede another from dying by force even if they try everything. It needs to be known that it is possible to die even attached to a ventilator, eating and drinking, even ten minutes after the last meal. If I remove these things I do not "accept that death cannot be prevented", but I cause it by omission to cure. This is certainly "euthanasia by omission" let's speak clearly and be honest: death without consensus. Without the parents consensus. This is what it is about and nothing else.

The devil relishes in all this. Relishes to kill an innocent child and sacrifice him on Friday like Christ and like Charlie Gard. But he also enjoys destroying that beautiful and pure image of God the father that Alfie's parents knowingly or not are witnessing to. Alfie's parents, like of those of the other innocents are the most limpid image of what the love and mercy of God means for his creatures: at any cost, to the end, in spite of any illness or defacement by sin, a love so complete, free, male and female, mother and

father; the unconditional love of God. Each one of us wants to receive that love, craves it for themselves, seeks it everywhere and is restless until they find it. These parents show it so well. These children, these parents show the face of God which the enemy can't stand and attempts to destroy. Monsignor Paglia refers to the parents, but it is so difficult, having no experience to really understand the "parents' "drama" and their "emotional involvement." We as parents, as Catholic parents have never suffered any pain because our child is ill, we love God and trust in Him. Our son is a gift from The Lord, a beautiful gift. We have never needed psychological support, it is a diabolical lie that if parents have a sick child at birth, they are sad. The parents are worried and start a formidable struggle for life.

The only "help" we really needed, apart from prayers, was the help of those who taught us how to keep our son alive: how to feed him by nasogastric tube, which we do ourselves now, how to ventilate him for long periods, how to deal with his epileptic fits, how to change him, sit him down, turn him round, how to look after him, how to help him grow with us and his siblings. We needed the help of doctors, operators, teachers, administrators and staff with the courage to sign the papers that allowed us to have what we needed: a wheelchair, guardians, corsets, aids, staff, resources and whatever was needed, without worrying about the "finances" of their company or what their superior could have said if they were spending this money.

We have obviously also fought with inept, unworthy, ignorant people and occasionally (it is very rare) really evil. This is our battle and our cross, certainly not the illness or the life of our child. Alfie's parents, despite their young age, are courageous, strong and know Christ very well because they take care of Him everyday.

At a time like this everyone has a responsibility, even those who remain silent for fear of the consequences: no one will save their life if they are not willing to lose it for the love of God. But how great is the responsibility of the pastors! To have wolves disguised as lambs or confused pastors, who even insinuate subtly and with almost persuasive words, doubts about Catholic doctrine, which is clear and unalterable, is for us parents to feel betrayed by Judas. With the words of the Lord Jesus once again I say: "Whoever offends even one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him to hang a donkey millstones around his neck and to be thrown into the depths of the sea." (Matthew 18.6).

(traduzione di Patricia Gooding Williams)