

PAV AND GP2 INSTITUTE

Satisfaction without enthusiasm. The post-Paglia era is an unknown quantity

ECCLESIA

28_05_2025



**Riccardo
Cascioli**



Yesterday's announcement of his replacement as president of the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV) finally brought the curtain down on Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia, the “hit man” chosen by Pope Francis to overturn St John Paul II's teachings on life and the

family. Over the past nine years, Paglia has dedicated himself to this task with great effectiveness, holding not only the role of president of the PAV, but also that of Grand Chancellor of the John Paul II Institute on Marriage and Family, having previously served for four years as president of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

Today the PAV and the John Paul II Institute are distant relatives of the institutions originally created by John Paul II, who believed that life and family were the greatest challenges facing the Church in the modern world. Therefore, Monsignor Paglia's departure can only be a source of satisfaction.

However, we must not be overly enthusiastic, as his departure does not indicate a revolution, a return to the origins or a clear turning point. Firstly, because it was expected and inevitable: Monsignor Paglia turned 80 on 21 April, the day of Pope Francis's death, and would therefore have left even if he were still alive. In fact, it was the death of the Pope and all the obvious formalities marking the start of the new pontificate that delayed this transition. Indeed, it is likely that Paglia's succession had already been arranged.

It is also worth noting that the decision on the PAV came a week after that of the John Paul II Institute, which suggests that Pope Leo XIV may have had doubts about the solution proposed by his predecessor or wanted more time to consider it.

Another factor to consider for the future is the low profile of the two men chosen to succeed Monsignor Paglia: Cardinal Baldassare Reina (Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome, *pictured by LaPresse*) at the John Paul II Institute, and Monsignor Renzo Pegoraro at the PAV. In the first case, this is more of a return to administrative normality if it is true that, prior to Paglia, the role of Grand Chancellor of the Institute belonged to the Vicar of Rome. Moreover, Cardinal Reina is not known to have taken any significant action or position on issues central to the Institute. Conversely, the president, Monsignor Philippe Bordeyne, has played a fundamental role, and his appointment in March 2021 completed the transformation of the institute in the name of *Amoris Laetitia*, overturning Catholic morality in the process. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine anything changing for the better here without replacing the president and changing the 2017 Statutes, which sought to rebuild the Institute on the ashes of the one founded in 1982 by St. John Paul II.

Caution is also needed regarding the change of guard at the PAV, where an internal solution was chosen: Monsignor Pegoraro had already been chancellor of the Academy since September 2011, having been appointed to the role by Benedict XVI. This

alone highlights a key characteristic of the new president: given the revolution that took place with the arrival of Monsignor Paglia, he must be capable of adapting to very different 'political' agendas. In recent years, he has distinguished himself from Paglia only through his greater expertise (he has a medical degree and was a professor of bioethics), but he has in fact supported Paglia's agenda. We should certainly not expect to hear the kind of reckless statements and assertions typical of his predecessor, made simply to show off. However, as he has no authority in this area, unlike the first president, Jérôme Lejeune, or Elio Sgreccia, for example, it is likely that he will follow the path set out for him by his superiors.

Therefore, the future of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute and the Pontifical Academy for Life remains to be seen. For now, the men chosen to replace Monsignor Paglia suggest Pope Leo XIV's intention to avoid traumatic ruptures and make gradual changes. Whether there will be real changes remains to be seen.