

UNITED KINGDOM

Yes, Indi Gregory's life is worth fighting for

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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On 24 April 2018, the Council of Ministers, led by President Paolo Gentiloni, granted Italian citizenship to Alfie Evans, in an extreme attempt to save the life of the seriously ill child whose English doctors and judges had decided to remove life support. The week before, on April 18, Alfie's father, Thomas, was received in a private audience by Pope Francis who then launched an appeal for the baby boy and, as a consequence, the

Vatican Bambin Gesù Children's Hospital offered to take Alfie. The availability of the hospital and the move by the Italian government were however ignored by the British authorities and Alfie died without even being able to leave the hospital on the following 28 April.

In these days - and after other sensational British cases of lives cut short

because they were deemed not worthy of value - something similar is happening again. No visit to the Pope this time, but the Italian government - now led by Giorgia Meloni - yesterday, 6 November, urgently granted citizenship to Indi Gregory, an eight-month-old baby girl suffering from a rare genetic disease and who requires life support to live. The decision came after Bambin Gesù once again expressed his willingness to admit the little patient to its hospital.

Her father, Dean, spoke exclusively to the *Daily Compass* yesterday about Indi's and her parents' ordeal in hospital and in court to defend the little girl's right to live until her natural death.

While hoping and fighting to the end for a different epilogue, there is realistically little chance that Indi's story will not end like Alfie's. The availability of the Bambin Gesù and the Italian citizenship - obtained thanks to the mediation of the lawyer and former senator Simone Pillon who was asked by Indi's British lawyers to look after her interests in Italy - are only the first step of a difficult process full of pitfalls. And, even if Italy's generosity has given new courage and strength to Indi's father - as he himself testified in the message he gave the *Daily Compass* - he himself realises that the ongoing race against time favours the Nottingham hospital doctors who yesterday were ready to disconnect Indi's life support exactly on the dot at 2pm.

While in Italy the next step involves the ruling of a judge who deems it in Indi's "best interests" to be admitted to Bambin Gesù, in England a battle is being fought in court, with the final hearing this morning at 10:30 UK time between parents and doctors over the place where Indi will die. In fact, her parents Dean and Claire would like to take Indi home, thanks to a previous ruling by the judge which left open the possibility of taking her to die at home or in a hospice. However, the doctors strongly oppose the home solution, who consider it inadequate and want Indi to leave only the hospital in a coffin. Yesterday afternoon, the two sides clashed again in front of the judge and the sentence is expected this morning, November 7th.

If the judge rules in favour of the doctors, it will become even more complicated for Italy to convince the British health and political authorities in time to let Indi leave for Rome. In this regard, it must be remembered that the United Kingdom not only opposed

Alfie's transfer, but also in the 2021 case of RS, a Polish citizen also held hostage in a British hospital, it was the London government that said no to the Warsaw one. Question of sovereignty and national pride.

Given the precedents and the little time available, one could therefore ask whether it is worth engaging in this succession of appeals on appeals to snatch a few days from this infernal machine which nevertheless in the end reaches the pre-established objective of death.

The answer is certainly yes, and for several reasons. The first and fundamental is that the battle for truth, and therefore for life, must always be fought regardless of the outcome. True victory is the affirmation of the dignity of man, which has a sacred, irreducible value, dependent only on God; and whose life and death therefore cannot be delegated to the State. And it is striking that the majority of those who engage in this melee against the System are simple people, often far from religion, but capable of recognising and living the natural law; courageous in fighting for justice. When instead even many "educated" Catholics hide behind sophisms and distinctions to pander to Power.

A second reason is that thanks to these battles more and more people become aware of what is happening and how the State tends to take control of the lives of all citizens. It's not just a problem in the United Kingdom, in different ways there is a totalitarian tendency that runs through the entire West. And on the end-of-life front, there is almost reason to rejoice at the fact that in the United Kingdom there is at least the possibility of a public clash with the health authorities: one wonders whether in Italy, for example, action is not being taken without external protocols, discreetly, or through casual use of palliative care.

Third reason: we have seen how battles of this kind force many people to ask themselves questions about the meaning of life and to discover the Christian faith, also through the testimony of the lawyers whose activity is dedicated to these cases. Dean Gregory's words to the Daily Compass are exemplary from this point of view: Indi was baptised because her father had the perception of the existence of hell in court and therefore wanted to guarantee paradise to his daughter. And now he wants to do it for his other daughter. Perhaps it will not be possible to save Indi's body, but the salvation of her soul is an even more important goal.