

Our Academy's statement on Archbishop Paglia's position on Law 194 on abortion in Italy

Last Friday 26 August, Monsignor Vincenzo Paglia, President of the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV), was a guest on the RAI 3 programme *Agorà - Summer*. At one point (1), the presenter Giorgia Rombolà asked Msgr. Paglia for an opinion on law 194/1978, which legalised procured abortion in Italy. Msgr. Paglia replied: "I think that law 194 is now a pillar of our social life". It should be made clear immediately that the President of the PAV, in expressing himself in this way, did not intend to merely report a judgement present in the community on the 194 law, a judgement that he did not share - as Dr Fabrizio Mastrofini, Monsignor Paglia's spokesman, attempted to claim a few days later in an official note - but rather was it not that he wanted to express his own personal judgement, a judgement of appreciation?

Indeed that it was a judgement of appreciation is proved by the fact that to a subsequent question from the interviewer who asked Archbishop Paglia whether he intended to question this law, the latter replied: "No, absolutely, absolutely!".

So Archbishop Paglia explicitly defended a law that has caused more than 6 million abortions in Italy since 1978. The Catechism of the Catholic Church recalls that since the dawn of its history, the Church has condemned abortion and "this teaching has not changed. It remains invariable. Direct abortion, that is, abortion sought as an end or as a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law" (No. 2271).

It would then be contradictory to declare oneself against abortion, but in favour of a law legitimising abortion, as is the case with the 194.

In fact, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's Instruction *Donum Vitae* recalls: "In various States some laws have authorised the direct suppression of the innocent: the moment a positive law deprives a category of human beings of the protection which civil legislation should accord them, the State comes to deny the equality of all before the law. When the state does not place its force at the service of the rights of each citizen, and in particular of those who are weaker, the very foundations of a constitutional state are undermined. [...] As a consequence of the respect and protection that must be assured to the unborn child from the moment of conception, the law must provide appropriate penal sanctions for any deliberate violation of its rights" (Part III). In the same vein is St. John Paul II, who in the Encyclical *Evangelium vitae* expressed himself as follows: "Laws which, by means of abortion and euthanasia, legitimise the direct suppression of innocent human beings are in total and irremediable contradiction with the inviolable right to life proper to all men. [...] Laws authorising and favouring abortion and euthanasia are therefore radically opposed not only to the good of the individual but also to the common good and are therefore completely devoid of genuine legal validity. [...] Abortion and euthanasia are therefore crimes that no human law can claim to legitimise" (nos. 72-73).

Thus, Bishop Paglia's words are in clear contradiction with the Church's doctrine.

It therefore creates a deep scandal among the faithful and people of good will to learn that he who presides over the body which, in the Catholic Church, is called upon to defend human life at the international level in all its phases, considers a law that directly threatens life itself to be a pillar of Italian society: it is life and not death that should be one of the pillars of civil coexistence.

This disconcerting statement by Archbishop Paglia, together with his other similar less recent ones, particularly in his interview with Vatican News on the PAV'S recent book on *The Theology of Life* which he describes as "an attempt, and certainly not a perfect one, to accept the invitation contained in *Veritatis Gaudium* (par. 3) for a radical paradigm shift in theological reflection" (2) place the PAV in clear discontinuity not only with its past, but with its very nature, with its very

identity, with that project of protecting the human person from conception to natural death that was the foundation of the Pontifical Academy itself when it was erected in 2004 by St John Paul II.

In conclusion. The damage done to the teaching of the Church on the inviolability of innocent human life and the credibility of the PAV must be acknowledged and immediately undone. Archbishop Paglia must now in person publish a clear and unequivocal statement committing the Pontifical Academy for Life to the unconditional defence of the inviolability of innocent human life from conception until its natural end. If he does not he should be dismissed forthwith and replaced by a new head of the Pontifical Academy faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ and the teachings of His Church.

(1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=psj8fnte-Dw>

** <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2022-06/archbishop-vincenzo-paglia-pope-francis-interview-theological-et.html>

(2) <http://www.vaticannews.cn/en/vatican-city/news/2022-06/archbishop-vincenzo-paglia-pope-francis-interview-theological-et.htmls>