

ANNEX III

Prenatal life and motherhood – TESTIMONIES

I. REQUEST BY PARENTS TO BURY THE FOETUS

“It is the end of September, I am in the fifteenth week of my fourth pregnancy but, during a gynaecological examination, the doctor cannot hear the baby's beating and sends me to the emergency room of the Sant'Anna hospital in Turin to undergo an ultrasound. There, we wait in despair; we, as parents, have already understood...”

The sonographer, in fact, tells us that the foetus has stopped growing and I have been carrying this lifeless son for more than a month. The thought that comes back to my mind with more insistence is: "I do not want my son to be thrown into the trash!". Hence, we have the urgency to get information on how to bury it. I had read an article on the magazine "Sempre" that talked about this possibility, so I knew it could be done. I ask to be admitted the next day, to have time to organize the house with the other children (who are 6, 5 and 3 years old) and to be informed better. I look for the newspaper article to get useful suggestions and contact Daniela of the "difficult maternity service" of the Comunità Pope John XXIII. All this thinking, calling and gathering information gives us strength and we begin to savour the serenity of making a choice of conscience, we feel that we are on the right path. We are informed about the Presidential Decree 285/90 that allows the burying of embryos in Lombardia but which, in fact, leaves to every hospital the freedom to act independently.

The road to Turin is still to be traced: it is all our battle to consider that a 15 weeks foetus is a human life (and for us, as Catholics, an eternal life that is unique and unrepeatable) with the right to a burial. They advise me to say, as soon as we are admitted, that we want to bury the child so that the procedures can be started. At 7 am, we are already in the hospital for the day-hospital and we immediately point out that we want to bury the foetus. The nurse says she does not know any procedure in this regard and suggests waiting for the head nurse. Finally, the head nurse arrives and gets our unusual request: he makes a few phone calls and then tells us that in thirty years of service he never had such a request and instantly makes it clear that it would be much better for everyone if we would decline it. We do not know what to do, we are confused, and maybe we are doing everything wrong.

A psychological arm wrestling starts: on one hand the scientific, medical and concrete reasons of "there is nothing", of "you will not find yourself in front of a body but a bit of liquid because the intervention involves the aspiration of the embryo that will then be blended "; on the other hand,

the incomprehensible firmness of " look for the way to give us the remains of our child because we do not want him to end up together with special waste destined to the incinerator ". In front of our firm will to proceed, the head nurse decides to involve the Chief Physician and the Health Directorate. Finally, they tell us that they will give us a container with what remains of the scraping.

The Health Department will contact the professor who will perform the operation, then I'll have to ask for him once I go down to the operating theatre, because I'll have to sign a release.

On the operating table, with the arms locked (with holes for the IV infusion...) I can hardly sign the release. Nobody talks about the intervention, the staff jokes, talks about business, nobody says, "I'm sorry". It's the usual routine, it's work. Meanwhile, in the ward, it seems to my husband that everyone is looking at him, that they judge him for such an unusual request... He makes some phone calls. because we still have no idea on how and where we could bury the child. Suddenly, they call him downstairs in the theatre room, without explaining why. A nurse gives to my husband a transparent plastic jar: "Hold it. See, there's only a clot of blood!" This feels like a punch in the stomach... He catches his breath, looks at the jar, and does not know what to do... He looks around, his legs are shaking so he sits on a step. He thinks, "Now where do I take him? Will I be able to get out of the hospital? " He goes down the stairs in a state of confusion and vertigo, and finds himself on the street. He goes to the car that is in the shade and decides to leave the jar there. But, how to warm it a bit? It is a creature... It is still a child that we thought about, waited and loved for four months... Maybe, if we had known the procedure in advance, we would have prepared better for this... In the dashboard there is a clean cloth, my husband wraps the jar with it and "leaves" it there, then he goes back to the hospital.

We decide to immediately contact the parish priest of the mountain village where Matteo has always spent his holidays and where his maternal grandmother already rests. We know this priest for many years. He tells us that he agrees to bury our unborn child in the ground near his grandmother and to give him a blessing with a few close friends. Now we have to tell the children. We tell them that their little brother was not strong enough to grow up and that he went up to heaven near Jesus; he became a little angel to whom they could ask for help and protection. We also tell them what will happen the next day when we will go to the cemetery on the mountain.

The next day, in the afternoon, we leave with the jar and a great pain in the heart... We participate the mass of the village during which our little Frederick (we decided to call him like that) is remembered, and afterwards we go to the cemetery accompanied by some family members and some friends. It's a very strong moment: around me, I feel everyone's emotions and especially some mothers feelings, who have gone through the same bad experience and who thanked us, because in that moment they felt that they could say goodbye to their own children too... Even the priest thanked us, most probably because it was the first time for him to officiate such a ritual. What did we receive from this experience? Surely the serene awareness, which has been revealed little by little, to have chosen the right path. To put Federico in a physical place where we could pray, where we could return with his brothers to greet him, where it is possible to remember that he walked beside us in this life, and that, even if for a very little time, he gave us all peace and serenity and the possibility to consider him as a Person. >>

C. and M. F. (Parents)

II. FORMS OF INDUCTION TO ABORTION

From the book *Indesiderate*, Publisher: Sempre Comunicazione ,Year of edition: 2017. Publishing House of the Comunità Associazione Papa Giovanni XXIII, Author: Andrea Mazzi - Member and

volunteer of the APG23 and other testimonies of APG23 operators.

LILJANA- Mistreatment in the family and violent pressure

"My name is Liljana Saraci, I'm 37 years old, I come from Albania but I've been living in the province of Modena, Italy for 15 years. I arrived in Italy with my husband whom I married in 1992. Our marriage went well for several years, and in 2001 our first daughter, Elisabetta, was born. At the end of 2005, I discovered that I was pregnant again. In the fifth month of my pregnancy I had an ultrasound, which showed that I was pregnant with a girl child. But my husband did not accept this and told me that I had to have an abortion (...).

We started arguing, and he beat me. He had never put his hands on me until then. "You will have an abortion with my blows!" He told me; but I replied: "You can beat me as long as you want, but if God wants it to be born, it will be born!" He also started to beat our daughter, Elisabetta, 5 years old. He was so angry that he stopped working (he was a bricklayer) and told me: "If you want to keep your daughters and do not want to abort, go to work to keep them, since you can only have girls."

In June 2006 Sara was born. He did not recognize her and did not even come to the hospital to see her (...). To a neighbour who invited him to go, he replied: "I do not care, she can even die for me." The social services of the Municipality were aware of the mistreatment, and had already invited me to leave my husband, but without offering me an alternative. But when he left, they gave me a house, a humid house, several miles away from the town centre.

After a little more than a year, my husband came back; I welcomed him because he told me he had changed.

In short, however, I was pregnant again, and he started again. "If she is a girl, you must have an abortion (...)". Later, we discovered that the third daughter was also a female, and at that point he started beating the two girls and me again. One evening, the neighbour, hearing the screams, called the Police (...). At that point, he left definitively.

When the social services knew I was pregnant again, they invited me to give the baby up for adoption once he was born, but I always refused (...); the only help I got was from the Comunità Pope John XXIII, which I met during my third pregnancy, and a little from others too. In April 2008, Ionida was born. Since then, I live alone with my three daughters; periodically I can find suitable jobs that allow me to move forward.

I have never regretted my choice, despite the sacrifices I am making. Even if I had to get to eat bread and salt tomorrow, I will never regret it!"

ROSANNA (written testimony from a friend) –Rights of persons with disabilities

"I know Rosanna, a girl who suffers from mental disorders. She is young, but with a sad story behind her: due to her mental problems, her husband left her and obtained the custody of the two children. Rosanna can see the children weekly. On the occasion of a hospitalization, she meets a guy hospitalized like her. They start a relationship and after a while she goes living with him. She wants to have a child with him and soon becomes pregnant. As soon as the families of origin learn about this pregnancy, they decide that this child is too much.

In a few days his family plagiarizes him by convincing him that this relationship is not good, and so he sends Rosanna away. She then returns to her family, but even there it is no better. She goes to the counselling centre; the employee puts mother and daughter in contact with the Pope John XXIII of Don Oreste Benzi. "I would like to continue the pregnancy, but I need someone by my side, because I cannot do it alone!" she begged in the first meeting. She is also afraid that the social services will take the child away once he is born (...). One day, she calls me; she wants to talk

because she has too much pressure to stop the pregnancy. It strikes me because I feel her pain due to the attachment to the creature she carries. We meet and, unfortunately, learn that the greatest pressure comes from her family (...). At the end, Rosanna is confronted with the firmness of her mother, yields and convinces herself that an abortion is the right solution, and that's what happens. "

ANNA- Pregnancy and the right to work

"When I got married I was very young and I soon had two children. In 2003, I discovered I was pregnant again. At that time, I was working in a small artisan business. When I told my employers that I was pregnant, they replied: "We hired you because you had older children, we did not expect this pregnancy; now that you are pregnant, we leave you at home! " Then, they showed me a letter of resignation where my signature was already there. Evidently, I had made that signature at the time of recruitment: in fact, on that occasion they had given me many papers to sign, and I did not notice what was written on each of the sheets.

At that point, however, I went to the CGIL trade union to denounce the fact. They told me that by law it is not possible for a woman to resign or be fired during the period between the beginning of pregnancy and the first year of life of the child without the consent of the Labour Inspectorate; this is to prevent pressure on the woman to quit the job. We went to the Labour Inspectorate, which convened the employers (mother and son), and there they had to take note that they could not leave me at home (...).

ANNALISA AND PAOLO - Prenatal diagnosis of a disease and right to life

«We are Annalisa and Paolo. We got married in 2005. In 2007, our first child was born. In September 2009, we discovered that I was pregnant again. We were very happy because we wanted another child and we had been unsuccessfully looking for it for a few months.

Unfortunately, our joy was interrupted at the eleventh week, on Saturday, October 24 when the gynaecologist made me an ultrasound during a routine visit. It turned out that the contours of the baby's head were not well defined. Alarmed by this fact, the doctor invited me to a closer inspection two days later at the Polyclinic hospital. Honestly, I immediately got scared. That weekend, Paolo and I checked on the Internet what that problem could be... and we realized that our son had anencephaly. On the day of the appointment, we went to the hospital to see the doctor who was supposed to perform the new ultrasound. She performed the ultrasound examination and then said to us abruptly, in a cold way: "I confirm the doubts of the colleague; there is no possibility of life for your son. I advise you to stop the pregnancy immediately!" Those words left us breathless: we did not want an abortion, but we were shaken and stunned, and we only managed to answer: "So what?". She added: "In these cases, we recommend ending the pregnancy! If you want, we can plan for the intervention." She did not tell us what illness our son was suffering from, nor how he was, she did not ask us what our intentions and convictions were, she did not tell us about the chance of continuing the pregnancy. She did not tell us what problems we could possibly meet if we continued with the pregnancy. Nothing, except this repeated invitation to abort, this clear indication on her part that the proposal of medical science to us was abortion, and, therefore, if we decided otherwise, we were implicitly outside the canons of medicine. A little as if we had refused to follow the treatment prescribed for a disease (...).

We were shocked by the lack of humanity of this doctor and even now when we think about this, it is still an open wound (...). Annalisa did not abort. We always say that with Matteo we have lived a unique and special experience of parenting, for the days that have been given to us to live with him, which has increased our mutual love and has certainly introduced us into the never-ending

love. "

SARA – Economic difficulties and support to parenthood

"I got married when I was 19 years old and my desire, but also my husband's, was to crown our love with a son; so, we had our first child. There were all the conditions for having a baby: love, home, work and money. My husband and I both worked but one day my husband lost his job, my job contract expired and I discovered I was pregnant with my second child. This scared me; it frightened me to know that there were no longer the same conditions as before, this time there was a lack of work and money. So, I decided to ask for help from the social workers and what I found made me even more afraid. Let me explain: I told my story and without too many words they made me realize that it would be better not to keep the baby; they explained to me that I was in a very serious situation, that I had to think about my eldest daughter and that, in case I was keeping the child, their little help would have been wasted because it would be insufficient for me and the two children. I decide to abort, I go to the clinic to book the surgery, but my gynaecologist understands immediately that I'm not convinced about the choice; in fact I felt almost obliged to do so because I saw everything black. She gave me the number of an association called "Pope John XXIII" and told me that they would help me. I decided to meet them and immediately I felt good. The thing that made me feel good is that they listened to me, they let me speak, and I felt really heard. They understood right away that I wanted that baby, but I needed help and they helped me morally and even financially with a monthly contribution that allowed me to get on with my pregnancy. They were my guardian angels, even those of my son who now is one year old. Thanks to them, my son is here now and is well. Thanks to God, things have changed, now my husband works, and we can live. My angels (those of Pope John XXIII) have always been there throughout my pregnancy and even now things are going well. I thank you with all my heart and I hope that my message or testimony will serve other mothers who feel compelled to give up the birth of a child and become mothers. I want to tell them that every day I look at my son, when he smiles at me and looks at me small and helpless and I thank God and say: "Sara, thank goodness you made the right choice, otherwise you would have had a great remorse"».

ENRICA- Family's pressure to abortion

<< I am E., I am 19 years old. A year ago, I got pregnant with my boyfriend. I attended the last year of high school and none of us worked. After doing the pregnancy test, I had to tell the news. My boyfriend took it very well, because after all we had looked for this child but my mother... I've waited two weeks before telling my mother, I could not find the words, until one day, when I got home and found out that my mother already knew. Only she knew it - my father did not. She told me that if he had known it would feel like hell.

According to my mother, I had to abort, to get rid of this lump of cells, which at my age would have been just a burden; I had to think about having fun; I was still in time to get rid of it. I could understand my mother's fear since none of us worked, we still had to complete the secondary school and my boyfriend did not even have a driver's license. Every afternoon, when I got back from school, I tried to study despite the tiredness, but my mother continually interrupted me to try to make me change my mind. I could no longer concentrate on studying; my mother blamed me for her sleepless nights spent on crying. She told me that she would accompany me to the Polyclinic to have an abortion (evidently, she did not know the procedure of an abortion in the slightest). I remember telling her that I would go there alone and that day I told her I would not be back because I was going to the hospital. Instead, together with my partner, we went to the Consultorio for the opening of the medical record. When I got home, she asked me if everything

went well and I simply answered yes. I continued my way until she really discovered where I had gone that day. That afternoon, she began to "haunt me", sending me blaming messages; she did not let me study and did not speak to me; when she was seeing me, she always had tears in her eyes. I admit that the situation had become so heavy to the point that I really thought about abortion, although I was firmly convinced that I wanted to keep MY baby, that lump of cells.

One morning we met a member of Pope John XXIII to ask what we could do (...) I went to my boyfriend's house. but I did not tell anyone where I was, I only informed the police, so that, if someone had made a complaint for disappearance, they would already know. I stayed only one night to my boyfriend's home. The next morning, we answered one of the many phone calls that my mother made us and, speaking very quietly, she convinced us to go back to my house and talk about the issue also with my father. Dad's reaction was totally different from what everyone had imagined. He only gave us a speech about responsibility. My grandparents told us that they would have given us the apartment they owned immediately.

From then on, everything fits perfectly in such a way that no human would have been able to. We completed the secondary school, and both got a great score. My boyfriend took the driving license and after a few days a company contacted him to pick up fruits up to September when he would start working in another company. During summer, we started to fix our house. My parents always helped us with the work that had to be done at the apartment.

Anyhow, every occasion was good to blame us for the hard work they were doing. The pregnancy was physiological, a tiring period, long but very emotional. On December 31, Simone was born and today there is nothing more important in my life. My parents love him. Now that I'm writing my testimony, I think about how I could even have thought of killing my son. It was the evillest temptation that could ever be presented to us (...). After my experience, I would not want any girl to let her be influenced by relatives, friends, and companions who force her to abort. You must carry on your pregnancies, because we are talking about killing your child, that new-born child who sees only you, who calms down with your voice and your smell. He is yours. It's the most important thing you can have in your life. There are so many associations ready to help you, to support you if you give this creature to the world. Do not be influenced by a materialistic society, because you are giving LIFE.>>

III. CONSTRICTION TO ABORTION OF GIRLS ENSLAVED INTO PROSTITUTION ON THE ROAD

<< In the last two years (2016-2017) we have witnessed so many horrors and violence on the road and specifically we have given assistance to:

- 3 girls, 17 years old, all forced into prostitution on the street since they were 15 and 16 years old and forced to abort by using a haemorrhagic by mouth, after being forced to have unprotected relationships with customers.
- F., 13 years old, forced to abort with a haemorrhagic by mouth at 2 months of pregnancy.
- L., 18 years old, who is still on the road but with whom we are continuously in contact; she was forced to abort between the 6th and 7th month of pregnancy with 12 tablets of Cytotec by mouth. This drug causes contractions that induce an abortion. She had a haemorrhage but did not dilate. She, then, went to the hospital to complete the expulsion of the foetus.
- 10 girls, 19-20 years old, welcomed in our project in the last 2 years (some just concluded the project), have been forced to abort without any help.
- E. 18 years old, forced to abort at home with 24 tablets of Cytotec by mouth dissolved in one litre of alcohol + 4 tablets introduced in the vagina. This happened in front of the other girls at home with her and other victims of another exploiter (the one who procured the Cytotec), as an

exemplary punishment so that no one else could dare to carry on a pregnancy without the consent of the exploiters. After taking the drug, E. went into a coma and ended up in the hospital. Her maman is in jail.

- J., 24 years old, refugee. She was already 7 months pregnant and was forced to abort at home with vaginal pessaries that induce birth; she had a haemorrhage and dilated with strong contractions. At that point, the exploiters accompanied her to the hospital where she gave birth to a baby who died 5 days later because of prematurity.
- B. 24 years forced to abort at home at 2-months of pregnancy with fists, kicks and strokes made with the heels of the shoes, in the lower abdomen.

Except from J. all the girls reported their exploiters to the police. >>

K.V. (APG23 anti-trafficking street unit operator)