

Pope's hospital offers to take Charlie Gard

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Promise of sanctuary in Rome for baby after Pontiff and Donald Trump send parents their support

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THE "Pope's Hospital" has offered to take Charlie Gard into its care.

Rome's Pediatric Hospital Bambino Gesù, which is close to the Vatican's walls, has pledged to give the 11-month-

old sanctuary in order to prevent Great Ormond Street Hospital from turning off his life support.

Mariella Enoc, the president of the hospital, said: "I have asked the health director to check with Great Ormond Street Hospital if there are sanitary conditions for an eventual transfer of Charlie to our hospital. We know that the case is desperate."

Last week Pope Francis tweeted: "To defend human life, above all when it is wounded by illness, is a duty of love that God entrusts to all." A statement released by the Vatican last week

indicated that the Pontiff supported Charlie's parents.

The Pope's spokesman, Greg Burke, said: "The Holy Father follows with affection and emotion the story of Charlie Gard and expresses his own closeness to his parents. He prays for them, wishing that their desire to accompany and care for their own child to the end will be respected."

Charlie is suffering from mitochondrial DNA depletion syndrome, an extremely rare congenital disorder which is incurable and usually fatal in infancy or childhood. He is suffering from

brain damage and is on life support. The infant was at the centre of a lengthy legal battle as his parents, Chris Gard and Connie Yates, fought for him to be allowed to undergo a therapy trial in the US. Mr Gard and Ms Yates raised more than £1.3million to pay for the experimental treatment, called nucleoside bypass therapy.

On April 11, the High Court ruled that Charlie's life-support machine could be switched off. Doctors said it would be cruel to continue keeping him alive.

Appeals to the Court of Appeal and Supreme Court failed, with the most

senior court in the country ruling on June 8 that Charlie's life support could be ended. The European Court of Human Rights declined to intervene, meaning the machine was due to be switched off last week.

However, Great Ormond Street Hospital agreed to allow Charlie's parents more time with him.

The papal offer comes after the US President Donald Trump made an eleventh-hour intervention offering to help. "If we can help little #CharlieGard, as per our friends in the UK and the Pope, we would be delighted to

do so," he wrote on Twitter on Monday. A White House spokesman said: "Although the President himself has not spoken to the family - he does not want to pressure them in any way - members of the administration have spoken to the family in calls facilitated by the British government."

It is understood that a doctor and a hospital have been lined up to help if an agreement is reached.

Theresa May's spokesman said the Prime Minister's thoughts were with Charlie and his family but declined to comment on Mr Trump's tweet.