Catholic Teaching on Stem Cell Research
Part III: A Call to Action

This third and final bulletin insert regarding the status of stem cell research and particularly embryonic stem cell research will summarize what has been stated in the two earlier inserts and deal with our Church's teaching on this activity.

In the previous two inserts we have learned about:

1) the science of stem cells and their potential uses and
2) the false claims and myths that have been widely circulated in our information media about stem cell research.

In summary, we have read about what stem cells are and what they do in each of us. We have learned of the two categories of stem cells, adult and embryonic. We now know where each type comes from. We have learned that cloning has many other names, including somatic cell nuclear transfer and that human cloning is an underlying issue tied to embryonic stem cell research. Most importantly, we realize that embryonic stem cells **always are produced from the destruction of an embryo**, whether formed in the laboratory with In Vitro Fertilization or whether formed from an asexual method such as **cloning**.

We have learned of the uses and potential uses for these types of cells and particularly that **all therapies in humans are currently being done with adult stem cells.** We know that there are significant problems with using embryonic stem cells for therapy and that these problems may not be solved for years to come in spite of the hype that is being proclaimed in our media.

At the present time the North Carolina legislature is beginning debate on whether the tax-payers of NC should fund this type of research, particularly embryonic stem cell research. A select committee of the legislature has made a recommendation to the full legislature that the ethics of this research be debated and that funding of this research possibly be done with your taxes.

It is very important at this juncture that all Catholics are aware of our Church's teaching on this topic. Our Church has always held the firm belief and teaching that all human life from the moment of conception until natural death is of inestimable value since we are created out of love by God in his image and likeness.

> Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2274

We know from science that life begins at fertilization and is a **continuum** from the newly fertilized egg through embryonic development, the fetus, infancy, adolescence, adulthood until death. Our Church teaches that **at every point in this continuum, life is precious** and that destruction of this life created by God is never morally permissible at any point. To arbitrarily assign a time in this early continuum when we "become a person" is to deny that we have all come through each of these time-defined stages to become the persons that we are today. It is never permissible for one group of persons to decide when life is not important in another group of persons, particularly when the latter group cannot protect itself and has no "voice." It is the responsibility of all Catholics to be the "voice" that protects these most vulnerable human brothers and sisters of ours, particularly now when they will soon be under assault in our state with our tax dollars funding this activity.

Bishop Jugis of the Diocese of Charlotte and Bishop Burbidge of the Diocese of Raleigh will be making a **call to action** to all Catholics in our state to help defeat this legislation that would destroy innocent human life. Please respond to our Bishops' call when it comes and contact your representatives to voice your concerns and objections to the funding of human embryonic stem cell research. At the same time, reaffirm your support for **adult** stem cell research that is helping people at this moment through clinical trials and established therapies.

> The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2273.

With our efforts and love for human life, we can exert a profound influence on our legislators both now and in the future.

- To contact your legislators by email or phone start here:
  Website: www.ncga.state.nc.us/GIS/Representation/
  Phone for the State Board of Elections : (919) 733-7173
  (They will connect you to your County Board of Elections who will tell you exactly who represents you and how to contact them.)

.