

## APPENDIX 2

### Sanctity of Life Issues

The below statements concisely summarize the Catholic Church position on several key life issues. They are taken directly from the most authoritative Church sources, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church, papal encyclicals and instructions, and published documents of the USCCB.

#### Abortion

**Abortion, the direct killing of an innocent human being, is *always* gravely immoral (*Evangelium vitae*).**

Scientific and medical evidence has long confirmed that what grows in a mother's womb is a new and distinct human life. Each human being, without discrimination, merits respect. Respecting human life excludes the deliberate destruction of life, which is what abortion is. Its victims are the most vulnerable and defenseless members of the human family and it is imperative for those called to serve the least among us give urgent attention and priority to this foundational social justice issue. Abortion was rejected in the *Didache*, the earliest known Christian manual of discipline which is a compendium of Church teachings written in the first century. The first right of the human person is the right to life. It does not belong to society nor does it belong to any public authority to recognize this right for some and not for others. It is not recognition that creates this right; it is antecedent to its recognition.

It is true that the decision to have an abortion is often tragic and painful for the mother, insofar as the decision to rid herself of her child is not made for purely selfish reasons or out of convenience, but out of a desire to protect certain important values such as her own health or a decent standard of living for other members of the family. Sometimes it is feared that the child to be born would live in such conditions that it would be better if the birth did not take place. Nevertheless, these reasons and others like them, however serious and tragic, can never justify the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. Laws which legitimize the direct killing of innocent human beings through abortion or euthanasia are in complete opposition to the inviolable right to life proper to every individual; they thus deny the equality of everyone before the law (*Evangelium vitae*).

[Source: USCCB statement, "The Catholic Church is a Pro-Life Church"; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration on Procured Abortion" (1974); *Evangelium Vitae* (1995)]

#### Contraception and Marriage

**The Church teaches that every act of intercourse must remain open to life and that contraception is objectively immoral.** In the 1969 Rite of Marriage, a man and woman are asked if they will love one another faithfully and totally—in short, if they will love as God loves. "Have you come here freely and without reservation to give yourselves to each other in marriage? Will you love and honor each other as man and wife for the rest of your lives? Will you accept children lovingly from God and bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church?" These are different ways of asking the same question: Will you accept this person and all that may come from your union completely and forever?

A husband and wife express their committed love not only with words but with the language of their bodies. What a husband and wife say to one another through the intimacy of sexual relations speaks of total commitment and openness to a future together. Sexual intercourse using contraception does not faithfully affirm this committed love, but introduces a false note into the conversation. Married love differs from any other love in the world. By its nature, the love of husband and wife is so complete, so ordered to a lifetime of communion with God and each other, that it is open to creating a new human

being they will love and care for together. Part of God's gift to husband and wife is this ability to cooperate with God's creative power.

Suppressing fertility by using contraception denies part of the inherent meaning of married sexuality and harms the couple's unity. When married couples act to suppress fertility, sexual intercourse is no longer fully marital intercourse. It is something less powerful and intimate and more casual. The Church's teaching is not only about observing a rule but about preserving, in its integrity, that total mutual gift of two persons. This is a teaching that many couples today have not heard or not heard in a way they could appreciate and understand. But many couples who turned away from contraception confirm that living this teaching can contribute to the honesty, openness and intimacy of marriage.

Why does saying "yes" to children at the altar mean never using contraception to close the act of intercourse to new life? Some argue that if a husband and wife remain open to children throughout their marriage, they need not worry about using contraception occasionally. But practicing what is good most of the time does not justify doing what is wrong some of the time. A couple need not desire or seek to have a child in each and every act of intercourse. Nor is it wrong for couples to have intercourse even when they know the wife is naturally infertile. But they should never act to suppress or curtail the life-giving power given by God. This is an integral part of what they pledged in their marriage vows.

[Source: *USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities*, "Married Love and the Gift of Life" (2006)]

### **Natural Family Planning (NFP)**

**Natural family planning involves accepting dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility and self-control" (*Familiaris consortio* #32).** Natural Family Planning or NFP is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve or avoid pregnancy. These methods are based on observation of the naturally-occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse during the fertile phase of the woman's cycle. No drugs, devices or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife.

With proper instruction married couples can readily understand the cycle of fertility. They become able to plan and space births in a way that is both consistent with God's law and supportive of their own intimacy and unity. Paul VI noted in *Humanae vitae* the many benefits of NFP to married couples. It demands continual effort, yet thanks to its beneficent influence, husband and wife fully develop their personalities and are enriched with spiritual values. Such discipline bestows upon family life the fruits of serenity and peace, and facilitates the solution of other problems. It favors attention to one's partner, helps both parties to drive out selfishness--the enemy of true love--and deepens their sense of responsibility (*Humanae Vitae*).

[Source: *USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities*, "Human Sexuality from God's Perspective: *Humanae Vitae* 25 Years Later"; *Humanae vitae* (1968); *Familiaris consortio* (1981)]

### **Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide**

**Euthanasia is defined as an action or omission, which of itself or by intention, causes death in order that all suffering may in this way be eliminated (Declaration on Euthanasia).** Euthanasia is distinguishable from assisted suicide. In the case of euthanasia, death is caused by the action of another; in assisted suicide, the action is performed by the individual himself, typically with the help of another.

Life is the most basic gift of a loving God--a gift over which we have stewardship but not absolute dominion. Catholic tradition, declaring a moral obligation to care for our own life and health and to seek such care from others, recognizes that we are not morally obligated to use all available medical procedures in every set of circumstances. But that tradition clearly and strongly affirms that as a responsible steward of life one must never directly intend to cause one's own death or the death of an innocent victim by action or omission. The Second Vatican Council declared, "euthanasia and willful suicide" are "offenses against life itself" which "poison civilization"; they "debase the perpetrators more than the victims and militate against the honor of the creator." (*Gaudium et Spes*, # 27).

As the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith states, "nothing and no one can in any way permit the killing of an innocent human being, whether a fetus or an embryo, an infant or an adult, an old person, or one suffering from an incurable disease, or a person who is dying." Moreover, we have no right "to ask for this act of killing" for ourselves or for those entrusted to our care; "nor can any authority legitimately recommend or permit such an action." We are dealing here with "a violation of the divine law, an offense against the dignity of the human person, a crime against life and an attack on humanity." (*Declaration on Euthanasia*)

In 2004 Saint John Paul II affirmed that the provision of water and food, even by artificial means, to a patient diagnosed as being in a so-called "vegetative" state is "morally obligatory, insofar as and until it is seen to have attained its proper finality, which in the present case consists in providing nourishment to the patient and alleviation of his suffering." He also stated that food and water should be considered an "ordinary and proportionate" means for sustaining patients' lives and not a medical intervention. The *USCCB Committee for Pro-Life Activities* has consistently urged a strong presumption in favor of assisted feeding for these patients.

[Source: Administrative Committee, National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1991); *Gaudium et Spes* (1965); *Declaration on Euthanasia* (1980); John Paul II address to the International Congress "Life-Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State: Scientific Advances and Ethical Dilemmas"(March 2004)]

## **Stem Cell Research**

**The Catholic Church strongly supports ethically responsible stem cell research while opposing any research that exploits or destroys a human embryo.** The Church supports adult stem cell research because such research and treatment does not require the destruction of human life. Alternatively, embryonic stem cell research does result in the death of the embryo from which stem cells are taken. Deliberately destroying innocent human life at any stage for research or any other purpose is morally wrong. In embryonic stem cell research cells are taken from human embryos, often produced during *in-vitro fertilization*, at the five-day stage when the cells have not yet differentiated into specific tissues.

Adult stem cells are taken from such varied sources as bone marrow, blood, amniotic fluid, placental tissue and umbilical cord blood. Recent research has found these cells to be far more flexible than was previously thought. There are over 72 reported treatments or cures in humans using adult stems cells, as reported in peer-reviewed scientific journals. There are more than 600 ongoing FDA-approved clinical trials using adult stem cells for diabetes, Parkinson's Disease, spinal cord injury and sickle cell anemia, among others. Embryonic stem cell research to date has little to show as far as beneficial therapeutic results in humans. The Church opposes destroying some human lives now on the pretext of possibly saving lives in the future. We must respect life at all times especially when our goal is to save lives. In 2005 Saint John Paul II stated, "The Church's position, supported by reason and science, is clear: the human embryo is a subject identical to the human being which will be born at the term of its

development. Consequently whatever violates the integrity and the dignity of the embryo is ethically inadmissible. Similarly, any form of scientific research which treats the embryo merely as a laboratory specimen is unworthy of man. Scientific research in the field of genetics needs to be encouraged and promoted, but, like every other human activity, it can never be exempt from moral imperatives; research using adult stem cells, moreover, offers the promise of considerable success.”

[Source: *USCCB Pro-Life Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities* article, “Catholic Support for Ethically Acceptable Stem Cell Research”; “Statement of Pope John Paul II on the New Year” January, 2005.]

### **Human Cloning**

**As the Second Vatican Council affirms, moral judgments about procreation must be based on "the nature of the human person and his acts" (*Gaudium et Spes* #51).** To understand the nature of the act of human procreation is to realize why cloning does not respect this nature. Human cloning is the final step down the path of depersonalized procreation. It involves no meeting of male and female. A child produced in this way has no mother or father in the ordinary sense, but only a template or model. Instead of openness to life, it involves domination over life. A technician manufactures the new embryo in a laboratory and controls his or her genetic makeup, rendering it identical to that of someone else. This act has the nature of a manufacturing process, suited to a commodity rather than a human being. It dehumanizes in the act of creation.

When we manufacture offspring according to particular specifications, we are violating a fundamental aspect of human procreation. We are treating our children as inferior beings, as our "creatures." The other abuses of human cloning---a selfish fixation on producing a child "just like me," the willingness to subject cloned humans to high risks of death and disability, and scientists' willingness to clone embryos solely to exploit and destroy them---flow from this first fundamental error. Human cloning would create a human being who deserves to be treated as our equal, but would do so in a way that undermines this equal dignity. It is not a worthy way for humans to bring other humans into the world.

[Source: “Human Cloning vs. Human Dignity” by Richard Doerflinger, Deputy Director, *USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities*]

### **In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)**

**The catholic Church teaches that if a given medical intervention helps or assists the marriage act to achieve pregnancy, it may be considered moral; if the intervention replaces the marriage act in order to engender life it is not (*Donum vitae*).** In 1987 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued *Donum vitae* or Gift of Life, which addresses the morality of many modern fertility procedures. *Dignitas personae*, the Vatican's 2008 Instruction on the dignity of the human person on certain bioethical questions by Cardinal William Levada, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, affirmed and updated *Donum vitae*. It discussed the application of the moral and ethical principles of *Donum vitae* to bioethical and scientific knowledge developed over the past 20 years.

The best known of the artificial reproductive technologies, all of which the Church has clearly and unequivocally judged to be immoral, is in vitro fertilization or IVF. In vitro fertilization brings about new life in a Petri dish. Several eggs are aspirated from the woman's ovary after she has taken a series of fertility drugs, which causes a number of eggs to mature at the same time. Semen is collected from the man, usually through masturbation. The egg and sperm are ultimately joined in a glass dish (*in vitro* as opposed to *in vivo*, Latin for "within the living") where conception takes place. The new life is allowed to

develop for several days. In the simplest case, embryos are then transferred to the mother's womb in the hope that one will survive to term.

In IVF, children are engendered through a technical process, subjected to quality control and eliminated if found "defective." In their coming into being, these children are thoroughly subjected to the arbitrary choices of those bringing them into being. In the words of *Donum vitae*, "The connection between in vitro fertilization and the voluntary destruction of human embryos occurs too often. Through these procedures, life and death are subjected to the decisions of man, who sets himself up as the giver of life and death by decree." The document speaks of "the right of every person to be conceived and to be born within marriage and from marriage." To be within and from marriage, conception should occur from the marriage act which by its nature is ordered toward loving openness to life, not from the manipulations of technicians.

[Source: *Donum vitae* (1987); *Dignitas personae* (2008); *USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities* article "Begotten Not Made: A Catholic View of Reproductive Technology" by John M. Haas, PhD, National Catholic Bioethics Center]

### **Death Penalty**

**The U.S. Catholic bishops have been calling for an end to the use of the death penalty for decades believing that our nation should forego the use of capital punishment because the sanction of death, when not necessary to protect society, violates respect for human life and dignity.** State-sanctioned killing in our name diminishes all of us. Its application is deeply flawed and can be irreversibly wrong. It is prone to errors and is biased by such factors as race, quality of legal representation and the place where the crime was committed. Given our prison system, there are other ways to punish criminals and protect society, like a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 2267) states, "Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against an unjust aggressor. If, however, non-lethal means are sufficient to defend and protect people's safety from the aggressor, authority will limit itself to such means, as these are more in conformity with the dignity of the human person. Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm—without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself—the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity are very rare, if not practically nonexistent."

[Source: *USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities* article, "A Culture of Life and the Penalty of Death" (December 2005); *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, first revision]