



April 7, 2009

Dear Representative:

The Roman Catholic Bishops of Texas urge the 81<sup>st</sup> Texas legislature to support funding of adult stem cell research and reject funding of stem cell research that encourages the destruction of human embryos.

The Catholic Church teaches that each and every human being, at every moment of biological development from conception to natural death, has an inherent and fundamental right to life. The Church “appreciates and encourages the progress of the biomedical sciences which open up unprecedented therapeutic prospects” (Pope Benedict XVI, Address of January 31, 2008). At the same time, it affirms that true service to humanity begins with respect for each and every human life. Because life is our first and most basic gift from an infinitely loving God, it deserves our utmost respect and protection. Direct attacks on innocent human life are always gravely wrong. Yet some researchers, ethicists, and policy makers claim that we may directly kill innocent embryonic human beings as if they were mere objects of research—and even that we should make taxpayers complicit in such killing through use of public funds.

First, there is a false assumption promoted by some that any harm done in this case is outweighed by the potential benefits; history teaches that a good end to justify direct killing has been the source of much evil in our world. This utilitarian ethic has had especially disastrous consequences when used to justify lethal experiments on fellow human beings in the name of progress. No commitment to a hoped-for “greater good” can erase or diminish the wrong of directly taking innocent human lives here and now. In fact, policies undermining our respect for human life can only endanger the vulnerable patients that stem cell research offers to help. The same ethic that justifies taking some lives to help the patient with Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s disease today can be used to sacrifice that very patient tomorrow, if his or her survival is viewed as disadvantaging other human beings considered more deserving or productive.

Second, there are those who claim that the embryo in his or her first week of development is too small, immature, or undeveloped to be considered a “human life.” Yet the human embryo, from conception onward, is as much a living member of the human species as any of us. As a matter of biological fact, this new living organism has the full complement of human genes and is actively expressing those genes to live and develop in a way that is unique to human beings, setting the essential foundation for further development. All later stages of life are steps in the history of a human being already in existence. Just as each of us was once an adolescent, a child, a newborn infant, and a child in the womb, each of us was once an embryo.

Third, some claim that scientists who kill embryos for their stem cells are not actually depriving anyone of life, because they are using “spare” or unwanted embryos who will die anyway. This argument is simply invalid. Ultimately each of us will die, but that gives no one a right to kill us. Our society does not permit lethal experiments on terminally ill patients or condemned prisoners on the pretext that they will soon die anyway. Likewise, the fact that an embryonic human being is at risk of being abandoned by his or her parents gives no individual or government a right to directly kill that human being first.

Finally, funding embryonic stem cell research diverts funds away from other avenues that are not only morally sound but also more immediately promising for helping patients and saving lives. All the safe and beneficial treatments emerging from stem cell research, now and in the foreseeable future, are coming from adult and cord blood stem cells. Hence it is not a matter of choosing between respect for embryonic human life and respect for born patients -- it is a matter of respecting BOTH by promoting cures and treatments that we can all live with.

We hope you will consider these comments in the spirit in which they are intended, as an invitation to set aside political pressures and ideologies and focus on the priorities and challenges that will unite us as Texans. May God bless your efforts in fostering justice, peace and compassion for all.

God Bless,

Daniel Cardinal DiNardo  
Archbishop of Galveston-Houston

José H. Gomez  
Archbishop of San Antonio

Gregory M. Aymond  
Bishop of Austin

Edmond Carmody  
Bishop of Corpus Christi

Álvaro Corrada del Rio, S.J.  
Bishop of Tyler

Kevin J. Farrell  
Bishop of Dallas

David E. Fellhauer  
Bishop of Victoria

Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D.  
Bishop of Beaumont

Armando X. Ochoa  
Bishop of El Paso

Raymundo J. Peña  
Bishop of Brownsville

Michael D. Pfeifer, O.M.I.  
Bishop of San Angelo

Plácido Rodríguez, C.M.F.  
Bishop of Lubbock

James A. Tamayo  
Bishop of Laredo

Kevin W. Vann  
Bishop of Fort Worth

Patrick J. Zurek  
Bishop of Amarillo