

Life Matters

The Newsletter of the St. Rose of Lima Pro-Life/Pro-Family Committee

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Excerpted from *Evangelium vitae* March 25, 1995

By our Beloved: Pope John Paul II

“The Second Vatican Council, in a passage which retains all its relevance today, forcefully condemned a number of crimes and attacks against human life. Thirty years later, taking up the words of the Council and with the same forcefulness I repeat that condemnation in the name of the whole Church, certain that I am interpreting the genuine sentiment of every upright conscience: “Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary

imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where people are treated as mere instruments of gain rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others like them are infamies indeed. They poison human society, and they do more harm to those who practice them than to those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator”.⁵

4. Unfortunately, this disturbing state of affairs, far from decreasing, is expanding: with the new prospects opened up by scientific and technological progress there arise new forms of attacks on the dignity of the human being. At the same time a new cultural climate is developing and taking hold, which gives crimes against life a new and-if possible-even more sinister character, giving rise to further grave concern: broad sectors of public opinion justify certain crimes against life in the name of the rights of individual freedom, and on this basis they claim not only exemption from punishment but even authorization by the State, so that these things can be done with total freedom and indeed with the free assistance of health-care systems.

All this is causing a profound change in the way in which life and relationships between people are considered. The fact that legislation in many countries, perhaps even departing from basic principles of their Constitutions, has determined

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not to punish these practices against life, and even to make them altogether legal, is both a disturbing symptom and a significant cause of grave moral decline. Choices once unanimously considered criminal and rejected by the common moral sense are gradually becoming socially acceptable. Even certain sectors of the medical profession, which by its calling is directed to the defense and care of human life, are increasingly willing to carry out these acts against the person. In this way the very nature of the medical profession is distorted and contradicted, and the dignity of those who practice it is degraded. In such a cultural and legislative situation, the serious demographic, social and family problems which weigh upon many of the world's peoples and which require responsible and effective attention from national and international bodies, are left open to false and deceptive solutions, opposed to the truth and the good of persons and nations.

The end result of this is tragic: not only is the fact of the destruction of so many human lives still to be born or in their final stage extremely grave and disturbing, but no less grave and disturbing is the fact that conscience itself, darkened as it were by such widespread conditioning, is finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between good and evil in what concerns the basic value of human life.”

⁵ Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 27.

Civil Unions/Same Sex Marriage

A father (Bernhard Roegele) and son (Hans Roegele) express their thoughts in these letters.

Civil Union in CT: Since the Constitution was written in 1786, a civil union (marriage) was always considered between a man and a woman. The Constitution was written with the thought of a common good. The common good of the nation is its future. Its future can be only secured by the generations to come. This can only be done by men and women. For over 200 years we have lived by this rule and prospered, prospered so well that most of the world envies us. Now for the selfish reason of 1 - 2 % of this nation, we are willing to bend the Constitution to serve the purpose of this small percentage of citizens. Not only that, we are also undermining the union of the families who are producing our future. All this is done with the claim of First Amendment and equal rights. I ask you, is it still the majority of this nation that decides what the

law should be? Or can a 2% minority decide? Why not put it to a vote to all of us? Or are we willing to let a small group of liberal lawyers change the laws of this land?

Bernhard Roegele

Civil Union in CT: While one must acknowledge the need for compromise in politics, is there really any doubt that civil unions are the first step towards same-sex marriage? I'm reminded of an anecdote about Lyndon Johnson. While trying to convince some Senators to vote for certain legislation, he presented them with a watered down bill. Don't worry about this bill being weak, he reassured an ally, just like virgins, it'll be easier after the first time. Whatever your opinion on the subject of gay marriage, there should be agreement that this represents a great departure from our common understanding of marriage or union that is as old as western civilization. We know ancient Greek men often had relationships with younger men, but they were expected to give that up once they married a woman. Especially since the Supreme Court believes the Constitution does not adequately define the issue, we must not abdicate our common right to determine the direction of our society. It would be a travesty if we allowed a small group of lawyers, judges, and activists (of all stripes) to make this decision for us. Put it to a vote.

Hans Roegele

How Do Men Think About Women's Dress? A Modesty Proposal

By Father Thomas Morrow
Submitted by Queta Donovan

Christian commitment seems to be catching on with young singles. And the acid test of that commitment is chastity. Are we willing to truly live the Gospel, including its sexual morality?

As people think more this way, they begin to think about the root causes of unchastity. One that comes to the fore is immodesty. The recovery of modesty is a key factor in the effort to return to a decent, biblical sexual ethic.

The issue of modest dress seems to rest mostly with women since they have more sexual values to conceal than men. Men, too, must be modest, although they have fewer sexual values about which to be modest. (T-shirts with the arms cut deep into the center of the shirt would be an example of immodest dress for men.)

Since women are more integrated than men, and see the whole person, they are often unaware of how men are looking at them. Yet, at the same time, since the woman does not experience sensuality to the same degree as the man, she who should be more concerned about modesty does not feel the need for modesty. Pope John II, in making this point in his book "Love and Responsibility," concludes that "The evolution of modesty in woman requires some initial insight into the male psychology."

There are other problems in trying to talk about feminine modesty. First, one must be very careful in criticizing the way a woman dresses. Many men have learned this the hard way. Second, women generally dress to impress women, not men. Many women are not as sensitive to immodest dress (in women) as are men. And third, since men are the ones affected, it would seem appropriate that they be asked their thoughts about modest dress in women. Unfortunately, not all men have ever given this a thought.

When I was a young bachelor, living on the beach in California, I believed in chastity, and tried hard to live it, but the idea of modest dress in women never crossed my mind. If I saw a woman dressed in a tight mini-skirt, or a minuscule bikini, my interior response was something like "Ooooooeeh." (Alas, an all too typical male response.) I was perfectly ready to visually exploit her, even though I had no intention to exploit her physically. Only later, when I began to think about the root cause of lust, did I realize that this sort of dress was having a negative effect on me.

Few men take the time to reflect on just what is happening when they face a sexily dressed woman. One who has is Father David Knight. He wrote the following: "In the measure that a particular style of dress is consciously and deliberately provocative – whether the deliberate intent is on the part of the designer, or the wearer, or of both – this way of dressing must be recognized as a mild form of reverse rape by which a person arouses unsolicited sexual desire on another person who may not want to be aroused. Whenever this happens to men (who are more subject to this kind of arousal than women) it always causes some anger, whether recognized or not. This may explain some of the hostility and aggressive behavior that men are guilty of toward women."

After reading Father Knight, I began to observe my own reactions. I noticed that I did feel uncomfortable when I saw a woman walk into a

room provocatively dressed. I noticed, too, that when a woman was modestly dressed, I felt quite comfortable. I can't say I felt anger over immodestly dressed women, but I did feel a certain concern for the woman, whom I feared would perhaps be the object of exploitation by men.

So what are the elements of dress that cause reactions in men? The most common one I hear is short skirts. Several times I have heard from men, who were religious but in no way square, that they could not believe how short some of the dresses were on women coming into Church for Mass. They saw such dress and devotion as somehow contradictory. I had to agree. Dresses or skirts more than a couple of inches above the knee do affect men sexually, at least in a mild way, but perhaps even more psychologically. Their opinion of the woman as a whole is affected more. Women wearing mid-calf dresses often look quite sharp, feminine and appealing to the man looking for a good, solid wife. Many men who have been burned before will shy away from a woman who wears short skirts.

Other things typically stir a certain sexual reaction in men: breasts partially clothed, tight dresses, "sexy hair." Some times women are truly surprised to hear the way men are reacting to them, while at the same time other women are deeply aware of all this.

What it comes down to for a woman is this: Do you want to be remembered for your legs, your chest, or your curves? Or do you want to be remembered for your warmth, your femininity, your personality, your decency, your goodness. If a woman accentuates her physical values, she will surely drown out her other, more personal, more significant and more lasting values.

Some women respond, "Well, what will become of me if I don't wear short skirts? Won't I become a hopelessly outdated old maid?" There are several flaws in this argument. First, the same women will wear longer skirts from time to time and look quite fashionable.

Second, a good Christian woman has so much going for her, that even if short skirts were a benefit (which they aren't), they would be of minimal importance. A woman living in the state of grace has a bit of an aura that far exceeds any fashion statement. As one person put it, "There is nothing more attractive than holiness." Christian women sometimes underestimate their inner beauty, perhaps because the fashion designers have such a strong influence, placing so much stress on the exterior.

Now some may argue. “Well, we’ve come a long way (baby). Styles are much more revealing today than 60 years ago. It used to be risqué for a woman to show her legs at the beach. The things that are called immodest today may seem quite commonplace 30 years from now.” True, but generally those who are committed to the Lord are not at the cutting edge of revealing styles. That sort of groundbreaking could be left to the pagans.

Other may argue, “Well, it’s too hot out.” Hot as it may be, there are modest clothes that allow you to be cool (those from India wear them). And, furthermore, which is more important, being comfortable or helping people avoid sin (and being treated better)?

When I see a woman modestly dressed, I think, “There’s a woman who doesn’t play up to the media, to the designers or to any man. She’s her own woman, or, better yet, she’s God’s woman.”

There are plenty of modest, chic women, who dress sharply, but not sexily, women who are in control of their own styles, to the extent that they are decent. These women are also in control of their social lives, and get less pressure for sexual favors.

Let’s face it, our world has virtually lost any sense of decency. Granted, it’s time for men to step forward and take part in the moral renewal of our culture.

But women have their part to play as well, not only for the sake of the men who are trying to do the right thing, but for their own sakes as well. Women have the most to gain from chastity, and modesty is a good way to begin.

Fashion Show: <http://www.purefashionshow.org>

Adult Stem Cells V. Embryonic Stem Cells: Winning the Debate

By Lani K. Candelora and Kathleen M. Gallagher as printed in the New York State Pro-Life Reporter, Sept/Oct 2004

Submitted by Helga Rogeler

Are there different kinds of stem cell research?

There are two kinds of stem cell research:

embryonic stem cell research and adult stem cell research.

Embryonic stem cell research involves Embryonic stem cells that are obtained by deliberately destroying living human embryos at about 5 days old. Advocates of embryonic stem cell research promote the cloning of human beings as a source of these embryos, as well as the use of the "leftover" embryos in fertility clinic freezers. This type of research always involves the destruction of human life by using live human embryos as disposable biological material.

Embryonic stem cell research has not been successful to date. In fact, embryonic stem cell research has produced troubling and disastrous results, causing uncontrollable tumor growth. Embryonic stem cells are unpredictable and unstable because of their immaturity. Promotion of embryonic stem cells as "the best hope" for a cure to human suffering is dishonest, irresponsible, and cruel to suffering individuals and their families who are searching for hope.

In comparison adult stem cell research is both ethical and highly successful. It utilizes stem cells taken from born human beings without harm to humans instead of preying upon stem cells from cloned human embryos. Adult stem cells are commonly extracted from the circulating blood of an adult, bone marrow, and umbilical cord blood. They are present within all human tissues including liver, skeletal muscle, dental pulp, even our fat.

The ethical practice of adult stem cell research has produced countless medical advancements benefiting thousands of human beings. Researchers in the U.S. have been successfully using adult stem cells to treat genetic disease in children, including rare diseases affecting the heart, liver and brain. Adult stem cells from umbilical cord blood can successfully turn into healthy heart cells and repair damaged tissue. Groundbreaking research shows that adult stem cells extracted from the nasal cavity have been successfully used to stimulate feeling and movement in the legs of paraplegics.

How does embryonic stem cell research involve human cloning?

Embryonic stem cells are extracted from live human embryos. There are three places where scientists can obtain human embryos: 1) from the tissues of aborted babies; 2) from "leftover" embryos at fertility clinics; and 3) from cloned human embryos. Embryonic stem cell research cannot proceed without obtaining human embryos through one of these means. As a consequence, legislation to promote embryonic stem cell research commonly includes provisions to: 1) legalize the sale of aborted babies for research; 2) direct the donation of unused embryos at fertility clinics to research; and 3) legalize human cloning to mass-produce human embryos for research. Proponents of embryonic stem cell research seek to statutorily legalize human cloning in order to obtain the large supply of human embryos desired by researchers.

However, human cloning for research purposes involves much more than reproduction of human embryos. Research on animals to date indicates that scientifically useful stem cells do not develop until several weeks into the fetal stage. It is currently impossible for researchers to grow an embryo outside of a woman's womb to the stage where useful stem cells develop. Therefore, for human cloning to benefit research, cloned human embryos would have to be implanted into a woman's womb and be allowed to develop before becoming scientifically viable. The cloned humans would then later be aborted in order to secure these cells for research.

Is there a difference between "therapeutic cloning and "reproductive cloning"?"

Human cloning for the purpose of scientific research has been deceitfully dubbed "therapeutic cloning" by scientists and advocates. This misleading term implies that this form of cloning is less harmful than "reproductive cloning" and somehow provides a "therapeutic benefit." This is not true. A more accurate term would be "research cloning."

In fact, the scientific process of cloning for

therapeutic and reproductive purposes is exactly the same. Legislation that allows "therapeutic cloning" allows much more than the reproduction of embryos. It requires the destruction of those embryos or implanting them into a woman's womb where the human clone can develop into the fetal stage, as long as he/she is aborted for stem cell use sometime before his/her birth. This represents the only difference between "therapeutic" and "reproductive" cloning: In "reproductive" cloning the human clones are allowed to be born, while in "therapeutic" cloning human clones must be killed and used for research at some point prior to birth.

Does the current federal administration oppose stem cell research?

No, the federal National Institutes of Health (NIH) under the current federal administration spends millions of dollars funding research developments using adult stem cells. NIH is currently a sponsor of at least 622 ongoing adult stem cell studies.

In August 2001, the President announced a policy position on embryonic stem cell research that allows federal funds to be used for research on human embryonic stem cell lines existing prior to that announcement. The National Institutes of Health maintains a Human Embryonic Stem Cell Registry, which lists the twenty-two human embryonic stem cell lines available for federal funding and has spent \$25 million on embryonic stem cell research in the past year

"Why We Don't Starve Humans:"

Excerpts from an Interview with

Dr. Chris Kahlenborn

By Tim Drake

Submitted by Ron Leddy

Dr. Chris Kahlenborn is an internist in Altoona, Pennsylvania. He serves as president of the Polycarp Research Institute (www.polycarp.org). He spoke with Tim Drake about the dynamics and ethics of denying a person nutrition and hydration.

TD: Is the denial of nutrition and hydration a standard practice in health care?

CK: It's happening daily in hospitals, in hospices, in homes. It happens most often with patients who have

Alzheimer's or who have suffered bad strokes. It's happening, yet no one is doing anything about it. Patients are often being denied stomach tubes per the family's request. Medical professionals are using the term "artificial nutrition and hydration" to say it's not natural. They are arbitrarily calling it artificial partly because the means of getting food into you require assistance. Yet, if you use that definition, babies should be starving too, because every baby needs our help in order to be fed.

TD: Are Catholic medical professionals condoning this?

CK: They are split. The Catholic Medical Association (www.cathmed.org) has an excellent statement currently on their web site: it reads: In March 2004, Pope John Paul II addressed an international congress of health care professionals convened in Rome to discuss the scientific advances and ethical dilemmas in the vegetative state. In the statement by the Vicar of Christ, "Life Sustaining Treatments and Vegetative State," he declares clearly and unequivocally that *"the sick person in a vegetative state still has the right to basic health care...the administration of water and food, even when provided by artificial means, always represents a natural means of preserving life, not a medical act...Its use furthermore, should be considered in principle, ordinary and proportionate, and as such morally obligatory...Death by starvation or dehydration is, in fact, the only possible outcome as a result of their withdrawal. In this sense it ends up becoming, if done knowingly and willingly, true and proper euthanasia by omission."* This papal statement makes it absolutely clear that the withdrawal of food and water from Mrs. Schindler-Schiavo constitutes euthanasia, a gravely immoral act. We would add furthermore, that it represents a violation of her constitutionally protected right to life and a violation of her religious freedom as a Catholic

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TD: What is the Catholic Church's position with regard to nutrition and hydration?

CK: Nutrition and hydration should always be given, unless it's directly harmful to the patient as noted by Pope John Paul II above.

TD: Advance directives and living wills have become quite common. What do you see as the danger of such directives?

CK: They are greatly misunderstood and greatly abused. My feeling is that the legal profession takes

advantage of people's fears to rack up the money. Most lay Catholics have no clue what the Church's teaching is. They sign living wills all the time. Such directives often go against Catholic Church teaching. When you have a 30-year-old's directive saying he or she doesn't want food or water, or antibiotics, or blood products, that usually represents a gross misunderstanding of Church teaching. Most of the time, you should be getting those things. So many times people are signing something that is against Church teaching. I'm not saying they are always wrong. You could have a carefully thought out "loving will" that focuses on the things that you do want, rather than the things that you don't want. It's better not to get into specifics, or there is the potential to be taken advantage of by lawyers. I helped one gentleman who was slowly dying to create a positive "loving will." It said that he did want food and hydration and consultation with someone before he died.

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TD: What of someone in a "persistent vegetative state" (PVS)?

CK: Even in the case of someone in a persistent vegetative state, the Pope has said that the person should get food and water. The definition of the persistent vegetative state is basically a person whose brain has been affected so that they make or perform no conscious or purposeful action. You can't make them follow a command, in theory. They do not talk. My problem is that you don't know what is happening inside a person, or if they will be changing. Some people in a vegetative state have progressed to higher levels. The Pope has said that you should receive food and hydration, even in that state. There is a real black and white there.

TD: Do you know whether it's permissible to starve an animal in the state of Florida?

CK: That would be considered cruelty to animals. The Nazis tortured St. Maximilian Kolbe by trying to starve him. I think he lived for about 12 days. In the end, they gave him an injection of carbolic acid. Most people would say that you wouldn't do that to an animal.

Tim Drake is a staff writer with the National Catholic Register, and author of the book "Young and Catholic: The Face of Tomorrow's Church" (Sophia Institute Press, 2004). He writes from Saint Joseph, Minnesota.