



Transformations

An HSCC Youth Newsletter

June, 2006

Did you know the Catholic Church strongly supports stem cell research? Not what you've heard on television? Well, read on.

What are stem cells, anyway?

Stem cells are just blank cells which can become any type of specialized cell in the body. They can heal or replace cells that are sick or damaged.

How many types of stem cells are there?

There are only two basic types of stem cells, embryonic and adult.

Stem cells are NOT created equal

Embryonic stem cells come from embryos discarded from fertility clinics and aborted or miscarried fetuses. Technically, stem cells from fetuses are called embryonic germ cells.

Adult stem cells come from the umbilical cord, amniotic fluid and placenta after a live birth; bone marrow, fat, muscles, intestines, brain, and other tissues from live donors; and even from cadavers within a day of death.

How do embryonic stem cells work?

Scientists have hoped that embryonic stem cells could become any other type of cell. Unfortunately, no one has been able to make the embryonic cells consistently become the specific cell needed for a cure. The embryonic cells do live on indefinitely, but their growth is not well controlled, and they often become cancerous.

Since the embryonic cells don't come from the sick person, they are often rejected by the recipient. So far no human disease has ever

been successfully treated by embryonic stem cells.

Do adult stem cells work differently?

Adult stem cells have been used for decades in the treatment of people suffering from spinal cord injuries, leukemia, Parkinson's disease, and many other conditions. Adult stem cells from bone marrow and umbilical cords are the most versatile, and can be used to develop other types of cells. They are easy to harvest, with no harm to the donor. They may not live as long as the embryonic stem cells, and may be more difficult to program to form other types of tissues, but they do not readily become cancerous. Sick people can often donate their own stem cells, so there is little chance of rejection.

So what does the Catholic Church say?

The Catholic Church fully supports any stem cell research which does not intentionally destroy the life of another human being, whether embryo, infant, child or adult. That means that all adult stem cells, whether from adult tissues, pregnancy-related tissues or cadavers, are considered perfectly ethical and the Catholic Church supports their use. Embryonic germ cells from the fetuses of natural miscarriage are also morally acceptable with parental consent. Only stem cells from "discarded" fetuses and germ cells from aborted fetuses are considered morally objectionable.

Love is our doctrine

The Catholic Church is very consistent – all life is precious and should be respected and treated with dignity. No life should ever be "discarded." We are called to truly love our neighbors at all stages of life.

CHURCH HISTORY

Has your faith ever been challenged? Try being one of the Knights Templars. They lived hundreds of years ago, and their faith is *still* being challenged!

The full name of the Knights Templars was Poor Knights of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon. They were organized around 1200 AD by Crusaders who wanted to protect people who made pilgrimages to the Holy Land. They did such a great job that grateful people rewarded them with gifts of money and property which extended from Europe to the Middle East. They became the great bankers of the time, answered only to the Pope, and defended Christianity to the death.

All their money and power were a temptation to Philip IV of France (aka Philip the Fair). He wanted what the Knights had, so he tried to get them excommunicated. When that plot failed Philip accused the Knights of heresies and went through legal channels to have the Knights in

Anti-Catholicism may be the only acceptable American prejudice

France arrested. Not surprisingly, under extreme medieval torture many of the Knights admitted to being heretics. Rather late in the game Pope Clement used his influence to prevent tortures and executions of Knights throughout the rest of Europe. However, he also disbanded the order. Later a papal council found the Knights Templar innocent of Philip's charges. Individual Knights who had admitted to heresies were punished with imprisonment or execution.

Ever since this terrible time the Knights have been accused of all sorts of heresies, and have been used as an example to discredit the Catholic Church. Today novels like *The da Vinci Code* exploit the sad story of the Knights Templar. One scholar even suggested that anti-Catholicism is the only acceptable prejudice left in the United States.

Challenges usually help us grow. How will you respond to challenges of your faith? With new questions of your own, by giving in, or by standing firm? Never fear - no matter what the challenge, you have an incredible world-wide faith community supporting you. It's one of the gifts from your Baptism. If you trust in God and seek reliable sources to answer your questions, you will undoubtedly find the Church to be the true path to God.

Catholic Matching

The weather is beautiful, the days are sunny, Easter is over and Christmas is a long way off. All the Church celebrations are over and it's time to relax for the summer. **NOT!**

There are lots of popular celebrations throughout the summer. Can you match the June celebrations with their correct date?

- A. June 11, 2006
- B. June 13, 2006
- C. June 18, 2006
- D. June 23, 2006
- E. June 24, 2006

1. ____ Immaculate Heart of Mary is celebrated one day after the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It shows just how close the two were – Spirit and mother molded the Heart of Jesus, and she became His ardent disciple.
2. ____ Trinity Sunday is celebrated one week after Pentecost (big hint) and recalls the sacred mystery of the One True God in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. ____ Feast of St. Anthony of Padua celebrates the patron of lost things, the poor, and travelers. No wonder we celebrate his feast during summer vacation!
4. ____ Sacred Heart of Jesus celebrates the infinite divine love as well as the perfect human love of Jesus. There are many devotions to the Sacred Heart; they all focus on the true conversion of heart and dedication to Christ, and can continue throughout the year.
5. ____ Corpus Christi celebrates the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. It is often commemorated with prayerful processions and Eucharistic adoration.

Answers: 1-E, 2-A, 3-B, 4-D, 5-C