



For Life

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Revolutionary stem cell therapy boosts body's ability to heal itself

(this article was recommended by the USCCB Pro Life Office; some excerpts used)

A groundbreaking medical treatment that could dramatically enhance the body's ability to repair itself has been developed by a team of British researchers.

The therapy, which makes the body release a flood of stem cells into the bloodstream, is designed to heal serious tissue damage caused by heart attacks and even repair broken bones. When the body is injured, bone marrow releases stem cells that home in on the damaged area. When they arrive, they start to grow into new tissues, such as heart cells, blood vessels, bone and cartilage.



Scientists already know how to make bone marrow release a type of stem cell that can only make fresh blood cells. The technique is used to collect cells from bone marrow donors to treat people with the blood cancer leukemia.

Now a team led by Sara Rankin at Imperial College London has discovered a way to stimulate bone marrow to release two other types of stem cell, which between them can repair bone, blood vessels and cartilage. A possible danger with some other stem cell therapies in the pipeline is their use of embryonic stem cells. Because these can turn into any type of tissue, there is a risk they could grow into cancer cells when injected into patients. The Imperial group's treatment uses stem cells that can only grow into blood vessels, bone and cartilage, so the risk of causing cancer is removed.

Paul Fairchild, director of the Oxford Stem Cell Institute at the James Martin 21st Century School, said: "This study brings closer to reality the prospect of tapping into the body's own resources of

stem cells in order to repair diseased or injured tissues.

*--Guardian.co.uk, Thursday 8 January 2009
15.59 GMT*

Highlights from Cleveland Diocese FOCA Postcard Campaign

- Almost 585,000 postcards have been ordered in our diocese.
- Tens of millions of postcards were received by Congress, the largest Catholic postcard campaign ever.
- A college pro life ministry leader offered to use his own [very limited] money to purchase the postcards for such an important cause.
- Many pastors dedicated portions of the Sunday liturgy to raise awareness and inspire parishioners.
- Many parishes found ways to pay for postage to ensure the postcards were received by Congress; sacrificing budgets or collecting donations.
- Several parishes collected donations beyond the cost and now have increased their pro life ministry budget for the year or made donations to pro life organizations.
- New individuals are interested in becoming active in the pro life ministry of the Church.
- New parish pro life ministries are starting in the diocese.
- Several churches of other denominations joined the diocese campaign.
- Garfield Heights City Council passed a FOCA proclamation (see insert).
- Men's and women's religious communities joined the parishes in the campaign.
- I wish to thank the people of the diocese for their overwhelming participation in the postcard campaign opposing FOCA.



Tell me more if I haven't heard from you yet!

pmgerovac@clevelandcatholiccharities.org

Please copy and distribute freely.

From the Director

I never thought I would be looking at the state of Montana for a reflection on life issues. After attempting to compose this letter several times, I found an interesting example of the way life issues can get parceled out in society. The Church's consistent and constant respect for life always says life is the most important consideration. Being consistent gives us the clear message that can apply in any instance. For Catholics, the taking of life is never accepted. When life issues get evaluated using a compass other than the gift of life given by God, it seems complicated and convoluted.

First, I began to write this letter about a horrific situation that appears to be human trafficking here in the United States involving food labor and some mentally challenged men. I had a strong feeling that I wanted not to focus on one issue but many, so I considered the multiplicity of issues that I seem to be addressing on a daily basis. As I continued the letter, it seemed all doom and gloom; so I wanted to find good news, and I found it in Montana related to capital punishment. Next, physician assisted suicide is an issue that I don't find much focus in the Catholic media or Church writings but it is gaining acceptance. There again, I found Montana—only this time, bad news. And finally, I thought there was some legislation recently that was good in Montana related to abortion, so I looked for that, too. The legislation is good but not too strong. So what's the deal with Montana? I find Montana's current legislative process to be a good example of what Catholics might call a contradiction of life issues.

As you will see in this issue, Montana recently repealed its death penalty. Yes, this state has found that this penalty is not appropriate for their people even those who have committed horrible crimes. These convicted persons will serve a sentence of life in prison without parole. This is exactly the position

the Church has asked for time and again here in the United States. The human dignity given to a person, even criminals, will not be diminished in Montana by killing people for their crimes.

Next, there is a growing trend against the dignity of the human person here in the United States and abroad related to the increased acceptance of physician assisted suicide. Without much attention during the last election, a second state, Washington, approved this medical procedure of killing people who are sick. Then just weeks later the Supreme Court of Montana upheld a decision that allows for a physician to intentionally end the life of terminally ill individual. Several more states are now working towards ballot initiatives to sanction assisted suicide in their upcoming elections.

Finally, on February 26, 2009, the Montana Senate passed the Personhood Amendment, also known as Senate Bill 406. The bill defines a person as "a human being at all stages of human development of life, including the state of fertilization or conception, regardless of age, health, level of functioning, or condition of dependency." This of course upholds the dignity and personhood of the unborn. Montana is the first state to receive a favorable vote in their senate for a personhood bill. The bill goes to their house of representatives next and is being highly challenged.

So there you have it, Montana is against killing in the first case, is for killing in the second case and is still undetermined in the third case but, hopefully, will continue a positive course. As Catholics, these issues are all related one to the other; and we can be very clear on the teaching and Christian love we have for all of God's people. When human life is not always defended, the laws of any state or country can seem to hold the dignity of some human life above other human life. Aren't we all created in love from God?

—by Peggy Gerovac

Confidence in Science Cannot Forget the Primacy of Ethics

—VATICAN CITY, FEB. 22, 2009 (Zenit.org)

It is necessary to reemphasize that every discrimination exercised by any power in regard to persons, peoples or ethnic groups on the basis of differences that stem from real or presumed genetic factors is an act of violence against all of humanity. What must be forcefully reemphasized is the equal dignity of every human being according to the fact itself of having life. Biological, psychological or cultural development or state of health can never become an element of discrimination. It is necessary, on the contrary, to consolidate a culture of hospitality and love that concretely testifies to solidarity with those who suffer, razing the barriers that society often erects, discriminating against those who are disabled and affected by pathologies, or worse—selecting and rejecting in the name of an abstract ideal of health and physical perfection. If man is reduced to an object of experimental manipulation from the first stage of development, that would mean that biotechnologies would surrender to the will of the stronger. Confidence in science cannot forget the primacy of ethics when human life is at stake.

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PRENATAL TESTING: WORTHWHILE OR WRONG?

Neonatal Therapist Considers Ethical Pros and Cons

ROME, DEC. 19, 2008 (Zenit.org)- Though prenatal testing is increasingly more routine, it does not get an ethical green light in all cases and circumstances, clarified a member of the Pontifical Academy for Life. Carlo Bellieni, director of the department of intensive neonatal therapy at Le Scotte University Polyclinic of Siena first clarified that prenatal testing can be broadly divided into genetic and non-genetic types. Bellieni noted that genetic testing does not currently have the aim of curing the child. Testing for certain non-genetic conditions, meanwhile—things such as growth delay, malformations, fetal suffering—can lead to treatments and cures, either before birth or shortly afterward. "Research in itself," Bellieni said, "is always something good." But he cautioned against routine testing that can create a mentality in which parents feel pressured to seek and verify that they are carrying a "perfect child."

The professor offered some principles for families faced with the possibility of prenatal testing. First, he affirmed, "Prenatal diagnosis should have a positive intention for the health of the child and the mother." Statistics show that this "positive intention" is often lacking. As ZENIT reported in September, citing the Washington Post, some 90% of unborn children diagnosed with Down Syndrome are aborted. "Prenatal testing which aims to provide diagnostic information to assist in the treatment of an in utero patient represents a morally praiseworthy use of this powerful technology," he concluded.

Another positive effect that prenatal testing could have, Bellieni noted, regards the psychological serenity of the parents. "In cases especially full of tension," he said, the tests could serve "to calm the couple in case of intense anxiety over their child's genetic health, but this should not be routine, so as not to create the mentality—in the couple and in the population—that the first position to have toward a child is to 'verify his normality.'"

"The incidents of violence, deplored by all, manifest a profound unease; they are the sign—I would say—of a real spiritual poverty that afflicts the heart of contemporary man," the Pontiff suggested. "The elimination of God and his law as the condition for achieving man's happiness, has, in fact, not achieved its objective. On the contrary, it deprives man of spiritual certainties and of the hope necessary to face daily difficulties and challenges."

—Pope Benedict, March 9, 2009

ROME MARKS MONTANA DEATH PENALTY VOTE



ROME, MARCH 3, 2009 (Zenit.org)- A Montana state Senate decision to abolish the death penalty was marked in Rome on Monday—the Colosseum was lit up to celebrate another step toward the end of capital punishment. The Senate's decision last month still has to pass through the state's House of Representatives and be signed by the governor to become law, but the Community of Sant'Egidio celebrated the 27-23 vote as a victory.

At the initiative of that Catholic lay community, the ancient Roman site for killing Christians is set alight whenever a death sentence is commuted or a government moves toward abolishing the punishment.

If Montana abolishes the death penalty, it will be the third state to stop the procedure, following New York and New Jersey.

"The historic vote in the Montana Senate is a clear sign that public opinion in the United States is tending toward the abolition of capital punishment," a statement from the Sant'Egidio Community affirmed.

Last week, those same Montana legislators acted as the first U.S. state senate to approve a personhood amendment. Like the death penalty ruling, the amendment has to pass the House of Representatives and be signed by the governor. But pro-lifers are lauding the vote as a key accomplishment.

The bill defines persons as "a human being at all stages of human development of life, including the state of fertilization or conception, regardless of age, health, level of functioning, or condition of dependency."

New Mexico banned Death Penalty, also!

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For Life is a quarterly publication of the Pro Life Office, Catholic Charities Parish and Community Ministries, Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, as an educational service for the people of this diocese.

The mission of the Pro Life Office is to proclaim the sanctity and value of human life as a gift from God and the foundation of human dignity, and work to ensure the quality of life at all stages of existence. This office encourages a Consistent Ethic of Life approach in promoting reverence for life, which is rooted in the Gospel and teachings of the Church.

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www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/prolife

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Interested in Coffee Talk?

Life issues are in the news in sound bytes on a daily basis. There are emails and blogs of all sorts.

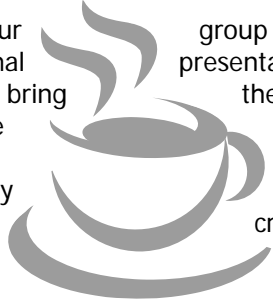
Would you like an opportunity to chat with other Catholics as well as a diocesan representative about what the Church says, plans, ponders, etc.?

Invite me to your group for a chat. It won't be a formal presentation. Let's just sit together. I'll bring the latest that I know and the coffee. You bring the participants. I am particularly interested in groups that cross boundaries like pro life and social justice or social concerns and seniors or people from more than one parish, school, institution, etc.

Give me a call and we'll coordinate schedules for an informal coffee chat over life issues.

216-334-2965

pmgerovac@clevelandcatholiccharities.org



Wish List . . .

Cleveland Pregnancy Center is in need of the following items. To help, please call 440-243-2520.

BABY SHOWER WISH LIST

Clothing: Sizes Newborn through 5T for both girls and boys. (*The greatest demand is for sizes 2T-5T.*)

- Onesies, shirts, pants, one- and two-piece outfits
- Sleepers, blanket sleepers, socks

Miscellaneous:

- Crib sheets (*great demand*)
- Bibs, preferably with Velcro fasteners
- Baby towel sets, hooded towels, washcloths
- Toiletries: baby bath, oil, lotion, powder, shampoo
- Baby bottles: 4 oz. and 8 oz.
- Diapers sizes Newborn to Size 6 (*great demand, especially for sizes 4-6*); wipes

Food:

- Baby food
- Formula (*greatest need is for Similac Advance*)

Furniture:

- Cribs, car seats, strollers, high chairs, swings

Do you want to stay current on pro life issues from the Catholic Church perspective? Our website is updated almost daily. If you would like to receive Email Alerts, send a request to: pmgerovac@clevelandcatholiccharities.org



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Call to brotherly love

—excerpt from *Our Sunday Visitor*, January 11, 2009

In his message for the World Day for Migrants and Refugees, which will be celebrated Jan. 18, Pope Benedict XVI draws on the example of St. Paul, whom the pontiff called an authentic “missionary to migrants.”

Emphasizing St. Paul’s constant teaching that disciples should strive to be imitators of Christ, conforming themselves to him in brotherhood with other believers, Pope Benedict says, “How can we fail to meet the needs of those who are de facto the weakest and most defenseless, marked by precariousness and insecurity, marginalized and often excluded by society? We should give our priority attention to them because, paraphrasing a well-known Pauline text, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (see 1 Cor 1:27).”

Care for creation is at the heart of Catholic teaching

—excerpt by Jessie Dye, *The Catholic Peace Voice*, Spring-Summer 2008

“God is present and speaks in the dynamic life forces of our universe and planet as well as in our own lives. Respect for life needs to include all creation.” The dignity of the human person can only be upheld in the context of a livable planet.

British Catholics wary of Autism test

—excerpt from *Our Sunday Visitor*, Feb. 1, 2009

A British study raising the possibility of a prenatal test for autism has prompted concerns among Catholics that pregnant women will be pressured to abort babies who might develop autism. A team of scientists found evidence to suggest babies exposed to high levels of testosterone in the womb have a higher risk of developing autistic traits. Helen Watt, director of the Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics, a London-based Catholic bioethical institute, said that “unless prenatal treatment for autism is available, a prenatal test would be disastrous.”

Principles of migration

—excerpt from *Our Sunday Visitor*, January 11, 2009

Over the decades, popes and bishops have drawn from Catholic tradition to articulate three basic principles of migration:

1. People have the right to migrate to sustain their lives and the lives of their families.
2. A country has the right to regulate its borders and to control migration.
3. A country must regulate its borders with justice and mercy.

—Source:

USCCB’s “*Welcoming Christ in the Migrant*”

“We are called to recognize Christ in every newcomer and to respect the dignity of all human beings, regardless of their legal status.”

—Minnesota bishops’ two-page statement on immigration, “*Welcoming Our Immigrant Sisters and Brothers.*”

Human smuggling or trafficking?

—by Kevin Clark, *US Catholic*, January 2009



Hundreds of thousands of migrants without legal standing are smuggled across the U.S. border each year, yet the State Department says only 18,000 of them are victims of human trafficking, even though they often follow the same routes of entry. What’s the difference?

Victims of human trafficking enter the United States unwillingly or because of deception. They may have been sold by their parents or promised a job or an educational opportunity that won’t materialize, and are about to enter into a long-term relationship with their traffickers or new employers that will be characterized by violence or coercion and a gamut of debt peonage schemes.

Although they, too, are often abused and exploited, people smuggled into the United States often pay their way upfront and may never see their smugglers again once they’ve crossed the border. Victims of trafficking, on the other hand, awake at their destination to a nightmare—they are a commodity delivered to a purchaser at the tail end of the modern-day slave trade.

Muslim-Catholic Meeting Statement

"A Culture of Peace Should Permeate All Aspects of Life"

The participants listened to the presentation of the theme "The Promotion of a Pedagogy and Culture of Peace with Particular Reference to the Role of Religions" from the point of view of Catholics, by Dr. Bernard Sabella, and from the Islamic point of view by Cheikh Ali Shahata.

The discussions took place in a spirit of mutual respect, openness, and friendship. They were inspired by the conviction of the importance of good relations between Christians and Muslims and of their specific contribution to peace in the world.

The participants agreed on these points and more.

- Peace and security are much needed in our present world marked by many conflicts and a feeling of insecurity.
- Both Christians and Muslims consider peace a gift from God and, at the same time, the fruit of human endeavor. No true and lasting peace can be achieved without justice and equality among persons and communities.
- Religious leaders, especially Muslims and Christians, have the duty to promote a culture of peace, each within his respective community, especially through teaching and preaching.
- Recognizing the strong link between peace and human rights, special attention was given to the defense of the dignity of the human person and his/her rights, especially regarding freedom of conscience and of religion.

—Cheikh Ali Abd al-Baqi Shahata, Head of al-Azhar Delegation

—Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, Head of the Catholic Delegation

—ROME, FEB. 26, 2009 (Zenit.org)

[Text adapted]

Be One in a Million: Catholics Confront Global Poverty

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) call on **one million Catholics** in the United States to confront global poverty. Advocate with us to end hunger, disease, conflict, and other issues that affect the lives of our brothers and sisters worldwide.

- Improve and increase U.S. international assistance, so people of East Timor can lift themselves out of poverty.
- Strengthen international peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives so children in the West Bank can live in peace.
- Complete debt relief, so poor nations can invest in the needs of their people from Cameroon.
- Reform global trade and agricultural policies, so that people in Burkina Faso, can flourish, and small farmers in the United States are protected.
- Ensure that poorer countries' wealth of natural resources are explored in ways that protect the environment and ensure that poor people from Peru benefit and have a voice.
- Promote comprehensive immigration reform and address the root causes of migration, so the rights and dignity of migrants can be upheld.
- Address global climate change and help people in Ethiopia adapt to its effects.

Learn more at <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/globalpoverty/>



Makes you go hmmm....

(A Column of Quotes)

To say that I am made in the image of God is to say that love is the reason for my existence, for God is love. Love is my true identity. Selflessness is my true self. Love is my true character. Love is my name.

—Thomas Merton,

New Seeds of Contemplation

(New York: New Dimensions Press: 1961): 60

♦♦♦

Trying to send a "strong political signal," the Vatican has signed a new treaty to end the production and use of cluster bombs. It appealed to the international community to ban "this inhumane type of weapon."

—*Our Sunday Visitor*,

December 22, 2008

♦♦♦

Famine and lack of nutrition are to be blamed on the poor distribution of plentiful foodstuffs, not overpopulation.

—Cardinal Renato Martino, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

L'Osservatore Romano, Jan. 1

♦♦♦

The international community, diplomats and local governments must remember that "the source of every conflict, not to mention the degradation of the environment and the social and economic injustices" that trigger the many crises plaguing communities today, is "contempt for, neglect of, or only partial agreement with the principle of respect for human dignity."

—Cardinal Renato Martino, head of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace

L'Osservatore Romano, Jan. 1

♦♦♦

"Whether the child was born is important because a stillborn is not considered a person under New Jersey law."

—AP January 6, 2009 entitled

Baby's corpse thrown out with hospital's trash

♦♦♦

"What moves us and guides our activity, both in the good moments and in the bad, is the great hope founded in the promises of God."

Pope Benedict,

—*Zenit*, Jan. 7