

Pope: Scientific Research Must Not Exploit Humans

South Korean Envoy Cautioned About Abuse of Embryos

VATICAN CITY, OCT 11, 2007 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- Benedict XVI says that South Korea's success in scientific research and development cannot come at the cost of manipulating human lives.

The Pope said this today when he received the letters of credence of Francis Kim Ji-Young, South Korea's new ambassador to the Holy See.

The Holy Father lauded "advances in biotechnology with the potential to treat and cure illnesses so as to improve the quality of life in your homeland and abroad." But he cautioned against the application of such technology that threatens human life.

South Korea is known as a leader in stem cell research. The South Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare announced last month that it would allow scientists to conduct research on cloning human embryos to create embryonic stem cells.

The announcement came after the country banned such research last year due to scandal surrounding Hwang Woo-Suk and colleagues from Seoul National University. They published fraudulent claims that they had created genetically matched embryonic stem cell lines.

"The use society hopes to make of biomedical science must constantly be measured against robust and firm ethical standards," the Holy Father said in his English-language address. "Foremost among these is the dignity of human life, for under no circumstances may a human being be manipulated or treated as a mere instrument for experimentation.

"The destruction of human embryos, whether to acquire stem cells or for any other purpose, contradicts the purported intent of researchers, legislators and public health officials to promote human welfare. The Church does not hesitate to approve and encourage somatic stem-cell research -- not only because of the favorable results obtained through these alternative methods, but more importantly because they harmonize with the aforementioned intent by respecting the life of the human being at every stage of his or her existence."

The Pope said he prays that "the inherent moral sensibility of the Korean people, as

evidenced by their rejection of human cloning and related procedures, will help attune the international community to the deep ethical and social implications of scientific research and its utilization."

Faith-based education

Benedict XVI also touched on faith-based education in his discourse, saying that schools linked to religious groups have much to contribute to the promotion of human dignity.

He said: "It is incumbent upon governments to afford parents the opportunity to send their children to religious schools by facilitating the establishment and financing of such institutions. Insofar as possible, public subsidies should free parents from undue financial burdens that attenuate their ability to choose the most suitable means of educating their children.

"Catholic and other religious schools should enjoy the appropriate latitude of freedom to design and implement curricula that nurture the life of the spirit without which the life of the mind is so seriously distorted.

"I appeal to Church and civic leaders to move forward in a spirit of cooperation to guarantee a future for Catholic schooling in your country which will contribute to the moral and intellectual maturation of the younger generation for the benefit of all society."