

Benedict XVI Urges Research With Adult Stem Cells Calls It Scientific Work That Respects Life

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy, SEPT. 18, 2006 (Zenit.org).- Benedict XVI encouraged scientific research with adult stem cells, saying that it is work that respects human life and opens "fascinating" possibilities for illnesses that now seem incurable.

The Pope clarified that the Church is not against science, but "is against those forms of research that involve the planned suppression of human beings who are already alive, though they may not yet have been born," as is the case of research with embryos that leads to their elimination.

The Holy Father explained this Saturday in the papal summer residence of Castel Gandolfo when addressing the participants in the international congress on the topic "Stem Cells: What Future for Therapy?"

The symposium, held last Thursday through Saturday at the Augustinianum Institute of Rome, was organized by the Pontifical Academy for Life and the International Federation of Catholic Medical Associations.

"Progress can only be authentic if it serves the person and the person himself grows, when not only his technical power but also his moral capacity grows," the Pope said.

From this point of view, "research into somatic stem cells merits approval and encouragement when it brings together scientific knowledge, the most advanced technology in the field of biology, and the ethic that postulates respect for human beings at every stage of their existence."

The duty

In this context, the Holy Father mentioned the promising horizons being opened in the cure of illnesses involving "the degeneration of tissues with consequent risks of invalidity and death for those affected."

Addressing the physicians and bioethicists present, Benedict XVI continued: "How can one not feel the duty to praise all those who apply themselves in this research and those who support its organization and costs?"

The Pope appealed to Catholic scientific institutions or those inspired by its humanism to increase research in this field and "to establish closer contact among themselves and with others who seek, using appropriate methods, to relieve human suffering."

The Holy Father added that "In the face of the frequent and unjust accusations of insensitivity directed against the Church, I would like to underline the constant support she has given over the course of her 2,000-year history to research aimed at the cure of illnesses and at the good of humanity.

"If there has been -- and there still is -- resistance, it was and is against those forms of research that involve the planned suppression of human beings who are already alive, though they may not yet have been born."

#### Suppression

"In these cases," Benedict XVI continued, "research, disregarding the therapeutic results, is not authentically at the service of humanity," as it implies "the suppression of human lives that have the same dignity as other human individuals and of the researchers themselves."

The Pontiff highlighted how history "has condemned such science in the past, and will condemn it in the future, not only because it is devoid of the light of God, but also because it is devoid of humanity."

"Man is not an object which we can dispose of; rather, each individual represents the presence of God in the world," he said. "In the face of the direct suppression of human beings, there can be no compromise or prevarication; it is inconceivable for a society to fight crime effectively when it itself legalizes crime in the field of nascent life."

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