



The Catholic Women's League of Canada Position Paper

TITLE: Reproductive and Genetic Technologies

POSITION STATEMENT

The Catholic Women's League of Canada respects human life, believing life and personhood begin at conception until natural death. Reproductive and genetic technologies must be consistent with these values, respecting the dignity and value of human life and the unitive and procreative aspect of matrimony.

- Many reproductive and genetic technologies benefit humankind. However, there are concerns about human embryo cloning, some infertility interventions, the marketing of fetal tissue and all zygote/embryo research.
- The League looks to the Vatican and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops for direction regarding fundamental moral criteria.

BACKGROUND

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* supports procedures on the human embryo if they “respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but are directed toward its healing the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival... It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material.” For gene therapy and research, it states, “Certain attempts to influence chromosomal or genetic inheritance are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities... are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his integrity and identity” (2275).

It is recognized that couples experiencing infertility can suffer greatly (Francis; Vatican). Research aimed at reducing human infertility is encouraged in the Catechism if the aim is “at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, and his true and integral good according to the design and will of God... A child may not be considered a piece of property” (2374, 2378), considered as a right for a person to have.

The church instructs that infertility interventions such as *in vitro* fertilization procedures are considered immoral. The procedure violates human dignity and the unitive and procreative aspect of matrimony. The man and woman move from the act of conjugal love to that of sources for the genetic material required to conceive a child (Vatican). Serious moral problems arise when several embryos are conceived, and not all are implanted, or when they are implanted, selective termination (fetal reduction) of the unborn occurs (Haas; Okun and Sierra).

Canadian legislation—the *Assisted Human Reproduction Act*, includes the prioritization of the health, well-being, respect and dignity of children and all people affected by assisted human reproduction technologies, the criminalization of the commercial trade and abuse of the reproductive capabilities of children, women and men and the protection of human individuality and diversity. The act also requires preserving and protecting the integrity of the human genome, prohibiting actions such as human cloning.

SUPPORTIVE ACTIONS

- Encourage and support members' education on the Catholic church's teachings regarding reproductive and genetic technologies.
- Monitor ongoing research in reproductive and genetic technologies.
- Monitor government legislation and regulations, especially about genetic research and interventions, terms of reference for the regulatory agency, and reproductive regulatory guidelines.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

“Assisted Human Reproduction Act.” *Justice Laws Website*, 9 June 2020, laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-13.4/.

Francis. “Amoris Laetitia.” *The Holy See*, Vatican Press, www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf.

Haas, John M. “Begotten Not Made: A Catholic View of Reproductive Technology.” *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/reproductive-technology/begotten-not-made-a-catholic-view-of-reproductive-technology.

Okun, Nanette, and Sony Sierra. “Pregnancy Outcomes After Assisted Human Reproduction.” *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada*, Jan. 2014, [www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163\(15\)30685-X/pdf](http://www.jogc.com/article/S1701-2163(15)30685-X/pdf).

Pontifical Academy for Life. “Declaration on the Production and the Scientific and Therapeutic Use of Human Embryonic Stem Cells.” *The Holy See*, 25 Aug. 2000, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdlife/documents/rc_pa_acdlife_doc_20000824_cellule-staminali_en.html.

Vatican. “Catechism of the Catholic Church,” *The Holy See*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 4 Nov. 2003, <https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/INDEX.HTM>.

STATUS

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