

WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

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For Immediate Release

BISHOPS URGE GOVERNOR TO RETHINK EMPHASIS ON EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH

In a [letter](#) to Governor Doyle on May 22, Archbishop Timothy Dolan and Bishop Robert Morlino urged the Governor to rethink the state's policy regarding the destruction of human embryos. The letter was written in response to an earlier announcement that more funds will be invested in embryonic stem cell research.

“[L]et us emphasize once again that we do not condemn science or the pursuit of biotechnology,” the bishops wrote. “Indeed, we have every confidence that the brilliant people involved in this research can achieve scientific, medical and economic success by pursuing methods that do not destroy developing human life.”

The bishops said they were troubled by the emphasis on the economic development value of embryonic stem cell research discussed in Executive Order # 147.

“Generally, support for research that involves destroying embryos is justified by the potential it holds to treat and cure illness, an understandable, but morally flawed justification,” they wrote. “However, to justify such research on economic grounds takes the conversation in a disconcerting direction – a direction that further diminishes human embryos to mere commodities.”

“It would be much better if the Executive Order had expressed a preference for attracting research utilizing stem cells derived from means other than destroying embryos. Not only does such adult stem cell research resolve ethical concerns over the destruction of human life, it also shows greater promise for treatments and cures,” they added.

The bishops' letter coincides with front-page news accounts of dramatic cures resulting from adult stem cell therapy. On May 21, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported the successful use of muscle stem cells harvested from patients as a treatment for urinary incontinence. The success of this adult stem cell therapy, wherein a patient's own stem cells are used to avoid problems with immune system rejection, follows on numerous other reports of successful adult stem cell treatments such as:

- Doctors at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and its Heart Institute in Baltimore are beginning patient trials to determine the safety and efficacy of using stem cells from bone marrow to regenerate a damaged heart. (*Washington Times*, Feb 14, 2006)

- The chairman of the University of Louisville Department of Anatomical Sciences and Neurobiology led a research team that found lab rats with a spinal cord injury regained mobility after an injection of human adult stem cells. (*Kentucky Courier-Journal*, March 8, 2006)

The bishops also took issue with the Governor's contention that politics should have no place in determining the future of this scientific research.

"If you mean politics in the sense of a narrow calculation of partisan advantage, we heartily agree. But if by politics you mean the activity by which all in the community engage in a civic conversation about the means and ends of any enterprise done in the community's name with the community's money, then we must heartily disagree," they asserted. "For if the questions of whether and under what circumstances human life can be taken or subordinated to other purposes are not matters of public concern, it is difficult to identify what questions are."

For more information, contact: John Huebscher at 608/257-0004.

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131 W. Wilson St., Suite 1105
Madison, WI 53703
608/257-0004
www.wisconsinatholic.org