

THOMAS MORE SOCIAL ACTION GROUP

NEWSLETTER

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Volume 2 - No.3 April 2002



Editorial
Issue
IDENTIFICATION

WRONG ON LOVE - WRONG ON LIFE

This month we deal with two issues which really demonstrate something pointed out by Pope Paul VI in 1968, that there is a real problem when you separate love-making from life-making and life-making from love-making.

In *Temptation Island* physical acts are taken out of the context of committed love which is open to life. In the push for embryonic stem cell research, life making is brought into the cold utilitarian context of petri dishes and pharmaceutical dollars.

What are they after? If it's happiness, they won't find it in recreational sex. If it's physical cures, they won't find them in embryonic stem cells ripped from little lives.

God has made us excellently. As for love, Pope John Paul II has said so much in his *Theology of the Body* about God's vision for us. As for life, the scientific fact is that adult stem cells are healing people already, while embryonic stem cells have healed no one.

We have a fight on our hands, to stand up for the truth about love and life. Science is on our side, but our voice needs to get into the media. We need to take up opportunities to witness to the Gospel of Life, we need to be bold.

Michael Casanova.

Catholic Social Teachings APPLICATION

Discussion Questions

1. What does John Paul II mean when he says that sexuality is supposed to be the sign, place and language of love, and not something for the selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts?
2. Contraception cuts life out of love, while IVF cuts love out of life. Discuss.
3. What is making our society desperate to destroy the very children it was desperate to create through IVF?
4. John Howard says that IVF embryos are going to die anyway, so why not use them? Why not?

TMSAG meetings:

Hawthorn
Mon 6th May
7:45 pm
Corner House - 182
Power St
Werribee
Fri 26th April 7.30pm
St Andrew's Pres.

Preston
Tues 16th March,
7:30 pm
St Raphael's Pres,
17 Hardy St

Doveton
Sat 13th March,
7:45pm
Holy Family
Presbytery
100 Power Rd

Ballarat
please phone Marie,
5331 9815

Ringwood
Wed 17th April, 8pm
16 Leonard Street

Monash, 1pm, Mon
15th March

La Trobe, 1pm, Wed
17th March
Fr Liam's Office

ACU Patrick Tues 16th
1pm

Melb Uni Wed 17th
325 Alice Hoy building

Further details, phone
9326 5757

Catholic Social Teachings READINGS

EVANGELIUM VITAE (The Gospel of Life)

JOHN PAUL II 25 March, 1995.

23. Within this same cultural climate, the body is ...reduced to pure materiality... Consequently, sexuality too is depersonalized and exploited: from being **the sign, place and language of love**, ...it increasingly becomes the occasion and instrument for self-assertion and the selfish satisfaction of personal desires and instincts.

Thus ... the two meanings, unitive and procreative,... are artificially separated: in this way the marriage union is betrayed and its fruitfulness is subjected to the caprice of the couple.

Procreation then becomes the "enemy" to be avoided in sexual activity: if it is welcomed, this is only because it expresses a desire, or indeed the intention, to have a child "at all costs", and not because it signifies the complete acceptance of the other and therefore an openness to the richness of life which the child represents.

Catechism of the Catholic Church 2275.

'It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material.'[CDF, Donum vitae I, 5.]

Catholic Social ACTION

Temptation Island

We want to keep up the pressure on Midori, the sponsor of Temptation Island, so that Midori and other companies will think twice before sponsoring the same sort of program in the future. There have been some emails to Midori ("Manuel Bonnici" <mbonnici@suntory.com.au>) and letters to newspapers. Please send more. We will find that Midori's response to us will change the more worried they get at our continued complaints.

Moved by the controversy over Midori's sponsorship of the TV program "*Temptation Island*", I recently went to a bottle shop to find Midori's market competitor. I was pointed to Bacchus **Melon-ore**. I was delighted to find that Melon-ore is Australian owned and made, here in Victoria, and is only half the price of the imported Midore (\$14.99 instead of \$31.99). Tell Midori this and let the Newspapers know too! Please let us know what letters you get into the newspapers.

IVF Embryo Experimentation

At present in Australia there is stong debate over whether there should be destructive experimentation on IVF embryos. People in favour of it claim that this will let scientists cure people by use of embryonic stem cells. See the article on the

next page – there are heaps of people being cured using Adult stem cells, but not by embryonic stem cells!

To illustrate the confusion on the issue of stem cells, the quadriplegic actor Christopher Reeve, who played Superman, told a US Senate hearing on March 5 of a promising example of research into spinal cord repair. He attributed the success to embryonic stem cells when, in fact, the research was done with adult stem cells.

On ABC radio and SBS TV, there have been reports of the cure of 18-month-old Rhys Evans from South Wales who had been known as a baby in a bubble because he was confined to a sterile room away from other children and away from germs which threatened to kill him. The story has been presented as if it were an embryonic stem cell cure, whereas it is actually not –Rhys was cured with his own cells which were genetically altered, not embryonic stem cells!

What can we do? We need to fight the false propaganda with the truth, so letters to the editor would be great. We need to make the distinction clear between adult stem cells and embryonic stem cells and cut through the propaganda against adult stem cells.

[http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/;](http://www.heraldsun.news.com.au/)

letters@theage.com.au

And please try your local free newspapers, because politicians look at these too.

Australasian Bioethics Information

Sunday, 24 March 2002: for immediate release

Stem cell scientists raising false hopes

Scientists promising cures for spinal cord paralysis and deadly diseases with embryonic stem cells are cruelly deluding the sick, says the director of Australasian Bioethics Information, Dr Amin Abboud.

“If the Howard government approves embryonic stem cell research, the only winners will be a small group of research scientists with increased funding,” says Dr Abboud. “Embryonic stem cells have not been shown to help a single patient in the entire scientific literature to date.

“In fact, many studies have shown that embryonic stem cells have caused serious side effects (e.g. tumours, deterioration of pre-existing conditions in Parkinson’s patients). Leading scientists overseas have repeatedly acknowledged that the benefits of embryonic stem cell research have been exaggerated and its dangers ignored.

“It is tragic that people with irreversible paralysis like the actor Christopher Reeves or people whose children have diabetes should have their suffering exploited for the financial and professional profit of research laboratories. I do not think that you would be exaggerating if you called them snake oil salesman.”

There is no need to destroy embryos to get stem cells, says Dr Abboud. Stem cells harvested from children or adults have proved very effective in treating spinal cord injury, diabetes, corneal damage and a multitude of other illnesses.

“Embryonic stem cells have not helped a single patient, while adult stem cells have an established track record.” says Dr Abboud. “A small group of scientists is using patients as pawns in a political battle. They are behaving more like Filipino faith healers than scientists. Their tactics raise serious ethical issues which must not be ignored.”

“If allowed embryonic stem cell research will lead to cloning of humans. Governments should ban it and invest in the scientifically more effective and ethical adult stem cell research.”

Australasian Bioethics Information is a bioethics group for doctors and lawyers. It reflects the ethical position of hundreds of doctors and lawyers on this issue.

* * * * *

Dr Amin Abboud

TRUE FREEDOM

Youths of the third millennium, do not misuse your freedom.

If misused, freedom can separate us from God. It can make us lose the dignity that has been conferred on us.

When it is not formed by the Gospel, freedom can be transformed into slavery: the slavery of sin and of eternal death.

Do not lose the great dignity of children of God that has been given to you! Subject yourselves only to Christ, who desires your good and your true joy.

So you will discover that only by adhering to the will of God can we be light of the world and salt of the earth!

Pope John Paul II, MARCH 22, 2002 (Zenit.org)

Letters from/to TMSAG members

I share Debi Enker's views on temptation Island (GG, 21/3). Its chief sponsor, Midori, has no problem with the content as the participants are not married. Well, I have been tempted and I have left my beloved Midori for the younger, more glamorous, Australian alternative Melon-ore.

Eilis O'reilly, Burwood.

Thursday, March 28, 2002, Green Guide

First step in terrible exploitation

As Nicholas Tonti-Filippini stated (26/3), the public is being misled over how embryonic stem-cell research will be used. As we can't grow Christopher Reeve a new segment of his spine in a petri dish, it's much more likely that embryos will be used for research, such as the drug testing we now carry out on animals and adults.

Finally, we will be able to see if a pregnant woman using a particular drug will kill or harm the child within her ... by killing or harming someone else's unwanted child.

This is far worse than animal experimentation - a terrible exploitation of a unique human being.

***Cassandra Duncan, Blackburn South
The Age, Thursday March 28, 2002***

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your recent comments regarding Temptation Island. I think the show highlights how the couples involved aren't ready for a serious relationship. Most viewers understand that's what the show is about.

We will take your comments on board when we review this campaign.

regards,

manuel bonnici

suntory (aust.) Pty Ltd, 22-26 Mandible St,
Alexandria, NSW, 2015. Tel. 02 9698 9200,
fax. 02 9698 9157, mob. 0403 244 350

A Holy Heart

*"Lord, grant me a holy heart
that sees what is true and pure
and is not frightened at the sight of sin
but creates order wherever it goes.*

*Grant me a heart that knows nothing
of boredom, weeping and sighing.*

*Let me not be too concerned
with the bothersome thing I call myself.*

*Lord, give me a sense of humour
and I will find happiness in life
and profit for others."*

St Thomas More

National Civic Council meetings near you.

The NCC has meetings every month in venues near our TMSAG meetings and in other areas too. There is a strong emphasis on action and understanding what we can do in a clever way to improve Australia's political and social environment. Highly recommended! Details: Anthony Cappello, 9236 5757.

Thomas More Social Action Group Newsletter

Editor: Michael Casanova. Sub-Editors: Rosy de Castella, Catherine Sheehan, Anthony Cappello, Eilis O'Reilly, M.J. Donnellan, Laura McCormick.

The Thomas More Social Action Groups are bringing together young people to be formed in the Catholic Social Teachings and to move on to activism and evangelisation.

If you are interested in knowing more about the work of the TMSAGs please call the Thomas More Centre on 9326 5757.

Please note: It is important to submit any published letters or any replies arising from the actions

proposed in this newsletter. The editor also encourages contributions and comments.

Hard copies of the Newsletter are also available – simply call the Thomas More Centre. Other journals available from the Thomas More Centre are: AD2000, News Weekly and the Thomas More Bulletin. Please call the Thomas More Centre for subscription details.

PLEASE NOTE: IN ORDER TO CONTINUE THIS WORK THE THOMAS MORE CENTRE WELCOMES DONATIONS- C/O The Director 582 Queensberry St. North Melbourne 3051

More Australasian Bioethics Information

Stem Cell Reality Check

Myth: “Embryonic stem cells are the most effective treatment for treating serious degenerative diseases.”

Reality: Embryonic stem cells have not helped a single human patient or demonstrated any therapeutic benefit. By contrast, adult stem cells and other ethically acceptable alternatives have already helped hundreds of thousands of patients, and new clinical uses are announced almost weekly.:

Juvenile diabetes

Adult Pancreatic Islet Cells: 15 people with serious Type I (juvenile) diabetes became “insulin free” after adult pancreatic islet cell transplants; 9 still need no insulin injections.—*American Diabetes Association. Report, 24 June 2001*

Embryonic Stem Cells: No person has benefited.

Spinal cord injury

Adult Immune-System Cells: A young woman rendered paraplegic by a car accident can move her toes and legs after injection of her own immune-system cells into her severed spinal cord.—*Toronto Globe and Mail, 15 June 2001*

Embryonic Stem Cells: No person has benefited.

Immune deficiency

Adult Bone Marrow Stem Cells: 2 children born without immune systems (“bubble boy” syndrome) have left their sterile environment and are leading normal lives after bone marrow stem cell treatment.—*Science, The Washington Post, 28 April 2000*

Embryonic Stem Cells: No person has benefited.

Corneal repair

Adult Corneal Stem Cells: Several legally blind people can now see more clearly after their corneas were reconstructed with corneal stem cells.—*New England Journal of Medicine, 13 July 2000*

Embryonic Stem Cells: No person has benefited.

Current clinical use of adult stem cells to help human patients

Proponents of embryonic stem cell research have created a false impression that these cells have a proven therapeutic use. In fact, *embryonic cells have never helped a human patient* and any claim that they may some day do so is guesswork. Adult stem cells have proven benefits, and new uses are constantly being found to help in the following diseases:

Multiple sclerosis; Lupus; Juvenile and other rheumatoid arthritis; Stroke;
Sickle Cell Disease; Immunodeficiencies; Anaemia; Epstein-Barr virus infection;
Corneal damage; Blood and liver diseases; Osteogenesis imperfecta; Brain tumours;
Retinoblastoma; Ovarian cancer; Solid tumours; Testicular cancer;
Multiple myeloma, leukemias; Breast cancer; Neuroblastoma;
Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma; Renal cell carcinoma; Cardiac repair after heart attack;
Type I diabetes; Cartilage and bone damage.

Current clinical use of embryonic stem cells to help human patients

None. Absolutely None. **Comments from overseas researchers**

Stem cell research is a controversial area, not only ethically but scientifically as well. A number of scientists overseas have not hesitated to express their scepticism about the value of research on human embryonic stem cells.

A leading stem cell journal

Stem Cells, September 2001

“We scientists have exaggerated the immediacy of the prospects of clinical therapies using stem cells, and that this has led to public misunderstanding. I continue to think that clinical application is a long way off... Prior to clinical use of embryonic and foetal stem cells, it will be necessary to thoroughly investigate the malignant potential of embryonic stem cells.”

Citations from a workshop sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine in Washington DC, *Stem Cells and the Future of Regenerative Medicine* (22 June 2001):

Marcus Grompe, MD, PhD, Department of Molecular and Medical Genetics, Oregon Health Sciences University (an expert in cell transplantation to repair damaged livers)

“There is no evidence of therapeutic benefit from embryonic stem cells.”

Bert Vogelstein, Professor of Oncology and Pathology at Johns Hopkins University and Chairman of the Institute of Medicine's committee studying stem cell research

“There is no experience with embryonic stem cells in humans, and very little in mice... all claims of therapeutic benefit from embryonic stem cells are conjectural.”