



THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAN ANTONIO

Catholic Church supports morally sound scientific research. A column from Archbishop José H. Gomez

"As I was reading the opinion piece by Kevin Eckstrom titled "Galileo's ghost haunts Catholic Church", published in the Express-News on July 23, 2005, I was surprised that anyone still thinks that there is opposition between faith and reason in the teachings of the Catholic Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly teaches: "Though faith is above reason, there can never be any real discrepancy between faith and reason." (CCC, 159).

The headline itself is rooted in an invalid, anti-science stereotype of the Church that is useful to those who oppose its teaching concerning embryonic stem-cell research. To constantly bring back Galileo's "ghost" and judge the Catholic Church by a 17th century event, is like judging the veracity of the medical community, because in the past it used bleeding and leeches. Not even Galileo's telescope would look that far back.

Pope John Paul II made it clear why the Catholic Church has taken the position it has. In his encyclical, [The Gospel of Life](#), he stated, "It is immoral to produce human embryos destined to be exploited as disposable 'biological material.'" I believe that the Church is not asking people to make a choice between embryonic life and the lives of those struggling with disease. It is asking us to consider the absurdity of creating human life only to destroy it. C.S. Lewis wrote in his essay, "The Abolition of Man", "If man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be."

The Catholic Church will not and cannot base its teaching on opinion polls that merely reflect what "people prefer". We prefer and pray that those who are suffering be healed, but we must never let the end justify the means. The Church cannot change its commitment to protect all life, from conception to natural death, just to win the public opinion polls.

It is important to know that the Catholic Church is not opposed to all stem-cell research. The Texas Conference of Catholic Bishops definitively states that, "We fully support **adult** stem-cell research since it does not take the life of the donor and we ask our legislature to help these morally acceptable efforts. Adult stem-cells have been used to help hundreds of thousands, if not millions of patients, and new clinical uses expand monthly." It is cruel to taunt suffering people with the false hope that embryonic stem-cell research is close to providing them with miracle treatments. In a document from the *U.S Bishops Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities* they remind us, "To date embryonic stem-cells have never helped a human patient; any claim that they may someday do so is guesswork".

In Mr. Eckstrom's article, it is correctly pointed out that the church has been "outgunned by high wattage celebrities" who have made passionate prime-time pleas on behalf of embryonic stem-cell research. In a society that places such credibility in celebrity, we must be careful not to blur the real moral and scientific questions. Embryonic stem-cell research takes a life, period. With faith, love and compassion, the Catholic Church encourages society to do all that is morally possible to relieve suffering and protect God's precious gift of life.

Archbishop José H. Gomez
Archdiocese of San Antonio
2718 West Woodlawn Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78228
210-734-2620 EXT 301