

Portsmouth Diocese

The Church's teaching about human embryos.

Respect for all human lives from the very beginning.



At the Annunciation, the human life of Jesus Christ began in the womb of the Virgin Mary. At this moment, as with the ordinary conception of other humans, a new human being began.

This is of course also true of the fusion of sperm with ovum in a laboratory dish. One of the makers of the first "test-tube baby" described the few-days-old, full-stop-sized embryo as "a microscopic human being in the very earliest stage of its development" (A Matter of Life, Steptoe and Edwards).

Many human embryos are daily destroyed by so-called contraceptive pills which have a back-up effect of ending any lives which have begun.

The Church opposes artificial contraception – though not natural family planning - as interfering with the total self-giving of married couples.

She also has very good reasons for strongly opposing any laboratory manufacture of human beings by IVF.

Although kindly meant in giving couples a chance of having much-wanted children, IVF involves large-scale destruction of early human beings as failing 'quality control' or as being otherwise 'surplus to requirements'.

A child should be created through the sexual love of man and woman, not by a scientist in a laboratory dish as if he or she were a manufactured object.

The Church opposes human embryonic stem cell research as requiring the harvesting of cells from an embryo, an absolutely unacceptable act which destroys very young humans.

The Church supports research that involves stem cells from adult tissues and the umbilical cords of new-born babies.

As a practical matter, enormous sums have been wasted on unethical research, which in spite of the hype has not produced much useful knowledge. This money could have been spent on ethical use of adult stem cells, which are already producing treatments for over 150 conditions.

The three-parent embryo is a step further. There is wide international

objection on medical grounds to untested procedures which would interfere with the germ-line and affect future generations, possibly causing disability not only in the child born but in the child's descendants for generations to come. These are not medical treatments for any existing child or adult but dangerous experiments and a further step in treating human beings as mere things or commodities.

Further Reading

Church teaching on these subjects can be found in *Donum Vitae* 1987, *Evangelium Vitae* 1995, and *Dignitas Personae* 2009. See also the Catechism of the Catholic Church, articles 1703, 357, 1930, 2270 – 2275, especially 2274 and 2275.

Further reading: CTS pamphlets on Artificial Contraception and Infertility by Agneta Sutton, and by Pia Matthews; or more technically www.corethics.org.uk and www.lozierinstitute.org.

What can we do to help?

Become informed on the message of the Church about Christian Marriage and the value of every human life, so that we can explain it clearly and positively.

Make sure that natural family planning, an ethical means of family spacing, is taught in our schools and parishes and as part of Marriage preparation (the Billings, symptothermal and Creighton methods of NFP are just three of the reliable methods now available).

Support and publicise Life fertility's work not just in helping couples space their children but in restoring fertility for couples wishing to conceive.

lifefertilitycare.co.uk

Take every opportunity to write to M.P.s or contact the media to correct misunderstandings.

And above all, pray.

Pray for couples wanting to have a child.

Pray for doctors, scientists, and pharmacists.

Pray that politicians may protect human lives from the very earliest stages.

Pray for everyone to understand that a new, infinitely valuable, human life starts when a sperm unites with an ovum.

Our Lady, Conceived Immaculate, pray for us.

St Ann pray for Us

St. Gabriel, pray for us.