FATHER SCOTT WALLISCH'S

PASTOR'S CORNER

Dear Flock,

Happy 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time. I am the chaplain for a women's retreat this weekend, so sorry that I will be missing most of you.

Since we are in Respect Life Month, I thought I would share the Church's stance on a topic that might be difficult for some readers: IVF (or in vitro fertilization). This may be a sensitive topic for some, as there may be readers, or family members of readers, who have been conceived through this method. There also may be readers who have struggled with fertility and have used IVF to have children. Although the Church does not approve of IVF, I want to affirm the dignity of all human life, no matter how the person is conceived, and I want to recognize with compassion the real pain that couples experience when conceiving children is seemingly impossible. That being said, the truth about IVF still must be understood by Catholics in order to avoid what are the two primary problems of IVF.

First, let us talk about the "collateral damage problem". When attempting to realize one birth through IVF, clinics will create up to a dozen or more embryos. These are screened for defects, and then the most viable one or ones are implanted. The other embryos are discarded or frozen (often ending in eventual discarding). This means that human lives are created and then destroyed. According to the article by Dr. John Haas entitled *Begotten Not Made: A Catholic View of Reproductive Technology*, over 90% of embryos created through IVF are ultimately destroyed. The "collateral damage" of IVF is the loss of countless preborn lives.

Second, there is the "intrinsic problem". God designed the marital sexual act to be an intrinsic part of the creation of new life. Sex was created to be unitive, but it also was created to bring about humanity's next generation inside the sure bond of marriage and within a mother's loving and protective womb. IVF is contrary to this. This is an "intrinsic problem" and means that even if IVF was done in such a way that only one embryo was created, implanted, and protected to birth, this technique would still be against God's design for procreation.

Now, as I said before, this does not negate the dignity of those among us who were conceived through IVF (it actually affirms their dignity, but also affirms the dignity of those who were discarded in the process). Although many persons walking the earth were conceived through IVF and are fully dignified human beings, IVF is still not an acceptable form of procreation and should be avoided by Catholics (and all people of good will.) For those who struggle to conceive naturally, this may be hard to accept. It is important to note that there are aids to fertility that are morally acceptable, because they do involve the marital sexual act but do not involve the destruction of human life, including Natural Family Planning, surgeries to overcome reproductive tubal blockages, and some fertility drugs (when used with caution). The Church recognizes that even these aids may not be enough to bring about pregnancy for some couples, but she then encourages couples to consider fostering or adopting.

In this Respect Life Month, I hope this clears up any confusion around what can be a hot topic. For more information, I encourage you to go to www.ncbcenter.org.

Until next time, may the Lord be gracious to you.

Fr. Scott Wallisch