The Immorality of Human Cloning

Address by Father Michael F. Hull of New York

NEW YORK, APRIL 12, 2003 (Zenit.org).- Here is the address of Father Michael F. Hull on "The Immorality of Human Cloning," delivered during a recent theological videoconference on bioethics. The event was organized by the Vatican Congregation for Clergy. The text has been adapted for publication.

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Pope Paul VI, in his encyclical letter "Humanae Vitae," warned against the danger of separation between the unitive and procreative aspects of the conjugal act, which "most closely uniting husband and wife capacitates them for the generation of new lives" (No. 12), to the effect that artificial birth control would initiate a slippery slope of moral denigration and disregard for life (No. 17).

Paul's prescience was acute. As worldwide society detached love (unity) from life (procreation), divorce and fornication arose to the detriment of innumerable families. As worldwide society detached life from love, abortion and infanticide (euphemized as "partial-birth abortion") arose to the detriment of the entire human family. The latest disregard of love and life is human cloning.

Mindful of contemporary attempts to clone human beings, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued an Instruction entitled "Donum Vitae."

"Donum Vitae" notes that "attempts or hypotheses for obtaining a human being without any connection with sexuality through 'twin fission,' cloning, or parthenogenesis are to be considered contrary to the moral law, since they are in opposition to the dignity both of human procreation and of the conjugal union" (No. I.6).

Human cloning is twice immoral. It is the ultimate separation of love and life to the extent not only of perverting the conjugal act, vis-à-vis the absence of loving unity, in in-vitro fertilization, but also to the extent of nullifying the natural fusion of the male and female gametes (sperm and egg) in the procreation of human life.

Proponents of human cloning often distinguish between reproductive cloning (cloning with the intent of producing embryos to be reared as children) and therapeutic cloning (cloning with the intent of producing embryos for biomedical research).

This is a distinction without a difference: The methods and results of such production are the same, namely, human lives are wrought. This distinction, differentiating only secular ultimate ends, is contemptuous of the rights of the human beings to be fashioned.

In the first instance, such cloning would produce human beings who are the genetic doubles of already living or deceased persons. Born without mother or father, outside the course of natural procreation, such persons would be bereft of identity, should they be allowed to reach maturity. And in the darkest moments, they are human beings who are destined to be nothing more than a conglomeration of spare parts to be harvested by their human originators.

In the second instance, such cloning would produce human beings who are the guinea pigs of science run amok. Born without mother or father, outside the course of natural procreation, such beings would be corralled like laboratory rats or cattle, should they be allowed to live more than a few days. And in the darkest moments, they are human beings who are destined to be tortured, mutilated, dismembered or murdered in unbridled experimentation. Human cloning, for reproduction or therapy, is repugnant to human dignity and to God's will for those whom he created in his own image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27).

Although a number of nations have enacted legislation to ban or limit human cloning, reckless and irresponsible technicians practice human cloning nonetheless. Humanity is too far along on a slippery slope to a barbarism hitherto unknown in human history.

Human cloning must be stopped, despite any scientific advances it might yield, for man's destiny is not ultimately fulfilled in this life. "Let all be convinced that human life and its transmission are realities whose meaning is not limited by the horizons of this life only: their true evaluation and full meaning can only be understood in reference to man's eternal destiny" ("Gaudium et Spes," No. 51).

ZE03041203