

## **Stem cell policy cheapens human life**

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By The Rev. Paul Viggiano

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"Greater love has no one than this," Jesus taught, "than to lay down one's life for his friends." With these words he was clearly foretelling his own sacrifice. But any parent weeping over a sick child can identify with this type of love -- a desire to take your child's pain, to be a willing substitute for their suffering.

This grand definition of sacrificial love loses its impact when you force others to unwillingly lay down their lives. Jesus didn't teach, "Greater love has no one than this, than to make sure others sacrifice their lives for your friends." This is the stem cell research mentality. The same socialistic mindset that defines generosity as giving away other people's money defines love as sacrificing someone else's life.

Is there a greater moral mandate given to humanity than to protect the helpless and innocent? Is there anyone more helpless and innocent than the unborn? Marching them into laboratories to be sliced up in a culture dish may be the most unconscionable and barbaric action in the history of our nation.

Some may object to my use of a personal pronoun when alluding to a mere embryo. But as one apologist, Gregory Koukl, rightly observes, an embryo is not a thing -- it is a stage. It is a stage in human development with subsequent stages, such as fetus, newborn, adolescent, adult and senior.

Others will argue that that the definition of the beginning of human life is merely my opinion. But it is not merely my opinion. The Psalmist classifies himself as human at conception. Now the "leave religion out of it" eruptions begin to quake. When President Barack Obama announced his intentions to remove the federal roadblocks to stem cell research Monday, he said he claimed to be guided by science, not ideology. But the president was quick to add that, "As a person of faith, I believe we are called to care for each other and work to ease human suffering." So faith-based decisions

are being made by the president vis-à-vis the stem cell issue and how could it be otherwise?

The ethical requirements to ease human suffering, similar to the determination of when human life begins, are matters of faith. By "matters of faith," I am not suggesting that which is in opposition to science. These are questions beyond the scope of science. Good scientists observe and classify (a discipline known as taxonomy). Their expertise is not in making moral or ethical judgments. So who makes these judgments?

Obama announced during his campaign that the "when does life begin?" question was above his pay grade. Yet he didn't hesitate to overturn policies that required an answer to that very question.

Who provided the answer for the president? It was left to the National Institute of Health, an organization standing to gain its portion of the \$10 billion included in the federal stimulus package approved last month for public research. How is this not a conflict of interest? What standard did they use to determine when life begins? How did they avoid some ideological, faith-based criteria in arriving at their conclusion?

It is impossible to avoid ideological convictions when it comes to these matters. These are soul-searching questions requiring us all to ask, "Who is my master?" Do we trust the NIH or the Psalmist or Jesus? This is not merely inserting religion into science or public policy. These are questions that must be asked and answered. A nation rejecting the special revelation of God contained in the Old and New Testaments is necessarily left to the conventions of fallen man, and the consequences are devastating.

Myron Genel, an emeritus professor at the Yale University School of Medicine, had conveyed that President George W. Bush's stem cell policies had a chilling effect upon many researchers. Obama's policies have a horrifying effect upon those who value human life.

A student raised his hand and offered his amazement that God had not yet judged our nation for the ungodly policies enacted in the last generation. I'm not one to view every earthquake, flood or disease as some judgment from God. But if you were to ask me to imagine the worst possible judgment, it would involve the death of children. We've lost tens of millions in my lifetime - all in the name of freedom, choice and the prevention of suffering. If that's not a judgment, I don't know what is.

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