



Pro-Life Activities

UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STEM CELL BREAKTHROUGH ADVANCES SCIENCE WITHOUT “ETHICAL LANDMINES,” SAYS CARDINAL

WASHINGTON--The following statement was released today by Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia, chairman of the Committee for Pro-Life Activities at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:

“Studies published this week in the journals *Cell* and *Science* offer new hope for advancing stem cell research and therapies while fully respecting the dignity of human life.

“Scientists in Japan and Wisconsin used four genes to ‘reprogram’ ordinary adult human cells, creating ‘induced pluripotent stem cells’ (iPS cells). James Thomson, head of the Wisconsin team and the founder of human embryonic stem cell research, says these cells ‘meet the defining criteria’ for pluripotent human embryonic stem cells, ‘with the significant exception that the iPS cells are not derived from embryos.’

“Thus the goal sought for years through failed attempts at human cloning – the production of ‘pluripotent’ stem cells that are an exact genetic match to a patient – has been brought within reach by an ethical procedure. This technology avoids the many ethical landmines associated with embryonic stem cell research: it does not clone or destroy human embryos, does not harm or exploit women for their eggs, and does not blur the line between human beings and other species through desperate efforts to make human embryos using animal eggs. Ian Wilmut, head of the team that cloned ‘Dolly’ the sheep, now says he is abandoning efforts at human ‘therapeutic cloning’ to pursue this adult cell reprogramming avenue instead, because it is technically superior as well as ‘easier to accept socially.’

“I am grateful today for scientists who took up the challenge of finding morally acceptable ways to pursue stem cell research, and for government leaders who have encouraged and funded such avenues. This advance reminds us once again that medical progress and respect for human life are not in conflict; they can and should support and enrich one another for the good of all.”

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