CATHOLIC HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

CHRIST CENTERED CARE

March 2025 Newsletter

President's Column

"Be fruitful and multiply." (Genesis 1:28)

Dear Friends in Christ,

On February 18th, President Trump signed an Executive Order regarding access to in vitro fertilization (IVF). Catholics will agree with the following excerpt from the stated purpose of the EO:

"Today, many hopeful couples dream of starting a family, but as many as one in seven are unable to conceive a child. Despite their hopes and efforts, infertility struggles can make conception difficult, turning what should be a joyful experience into an emotional and financial struggle. My Administration recognizes the importance of family formation, and as a Nation, our public policy must make it easier for loving and longing mothers and fathers to have children…Providing support, awareness, and access to affordable fertility treatments can help these families navigate their path to parenthood with hope and confidence."

We also empathize with couples struggling with infertility and support increasing access to affordable reproductive health care services. However, we cannot accept the administration's commitment "to ensure reliable access to IVF treatment" as a solution to the problem on both medical and moral grounds; we can wholeheartedly encourage promotion of a safer, effective, affordable, and ethical alternative: Restorative Reproductive Medicine (RRM).

RRM, as its name implies, aims to restore natural reproductive health by identifying and treating the root cause of infertility. Restoring proper function improves the likelihood of achieving pregnancy while respecting the natural order of procreation, rather than merely bypassing an underlying problem with artificial, assisted reproductive technologies (ART) like IVF. By correctly diagnosing and treating underlying diseases leading to infertility such as endometriosis, polycystic ovary syndrome and hormonal imbalances, reproductive health can often be restored, and pregnancy achieved naturally. RRM is able to address problems associated with both female and male infertility.

Since many are not familiar with the IVF procedure, a Catholic obstetrician/gynecologist provides an explanation of the process and several reasons why it should be avoided. Couples should also be aware of the potential complications associated with IVF for both mothers and their children, including countless lives lost when "excess" embryonic human beings are discarded, frozen, or experimented upon. A comparison of the benefits and risks of RRM vs. IVF is also an important consideration

From a medical perspective, it is fair to say that as an alternative to IVF, RRM is a more natural, holistic approach to the problem of infertility, of comparable efficacy with fewer potential complications, and is often more affordable, depending upon the treatment required for the underlying medical condition causing the infertility. Therefore, it should be included as an option in any serious commitment to "provide support, awareness, and access to affordable fertility treatments."

And while there is increasing evidence that RRM may be preferable as the better medical alternative in the treatment of infertility, as Catholics we must also object to IVF on moral grounds. The Catholic objection is based upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition consistently proclaimed over two millennia.

From the beginning, God's plan for mankind, "made in His image…male and female"(Genesis 1:27), included "marriage and marital love ordered to the procreation of children…wishing to associate them in a special way with his own creative work…Be fruitful and multiply." (Gaudium et Spes #50, Genesis 1:28) In the natural order and in harmony with the divine design, the procreation of human life is accomplished in the conjugal act of marital intimacy.

The conjugal act has two integral dimensions. It involves both a union of spouses in an act of self-donating love, as well as the potential for the generation of new life during the fertile period of a woman's natural reproductive cycle. In the language of the Church these two dimensions are

referred to as unitive and procreative and are considered inseparable as established by God.

Pope Paul VI, in his 1968 encyclical letter Humanae Vitae, definitively upheld the Church's consistent teaching on the generation of human life and the marital act. "This particular doctrine, expounded on numerous occasions by the magisterium, is based on the inseparable connection, established by God, which man on his own initiative may not break, between the unitive significance and the procreative significance which are both inherent to the marriage act." (HV #12) Marital intimacy during a woman's infertile period or beyond her natural childbearing years is not considered of violation of this principle since there is no deliberate intention to prevent conception unnaturally.

This definitive, doctrinal statement proclaimed in Humanae Vitae, along with further instruction given on the dignity of human procreation in Donum Vitae from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1987), provides a clear explanation for the Church's prohibition of contraception and in vitro fertilization. In their essence, contraception and IVF are morally unacceptable because they artificially interfere with God's design for the natural order of human reproduction by dissociating the unitive and procreative dimensions of sexual intercourse. Contraception is a deliberate attempt to prevent procreation, and IVF excludes the natural union of spouses by generating new human life in a laboratory.

In a recent pastoral letter by Bishop Michael Burbidge titled The Christian Family, In Vitro Fertilization, and Heroic Witness to True Love, along with a Catholic Primer on In Vitro Fertilization published by the USCCB, you will find a compassionate and authoritative summary of the Church's teaching on IVF and an appeal for the promotion of the ethical alternative, RRM.

Despite the evidence regarding the serious medical complications and ethical concerns associated with IVF, a recent national survey found that 82% of the general republic, including 65%of Catholics, believe IVF is a good thing. I suspect at least as many, if not more, are unaware there is an effective, ethical alternative.

There is an urgent need for an honest and objective public discussion to identify the most medically effective and ethically acceptable method for addressing the crisis of infertility in America. It can begin with each one of you familiarizing yourself with the information provided here, sharing it with others, and referring couples experiencing infertility to medical professionals practicing the art and science of restorative reproductive medicine.

God Bless,
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President, CHCLA