"The Cold, Clinical Harnessing of Technology"

A good day to you and to each of my esteemed listeners! Welcome to EWTN's Open Line Tuesday edition! I'm Barbara McGuigan, alive and grateful. It is such a joy to meet you over God's airwaves and to receive your heartfelt emails. Again, as always, I thank you for your patience regarding my response. The lines are open, and this is the time from all eternity and through all eternity that God ordained we come together to discuss love and life. Here are the numbers to call:

In North America call 1-800-585-9396
Outside North America call 1-205-271-2985
Our email address is always: Openline@ewtn.com

Brothers and sisters, it is sad but totally predictable in this cultural madhouse in which we live that the British biologist Robert G. Edwards, whose work led to the first "test-tube baby," has just been awarded the 2010 Nobel Prize for medicine or physiology. Edwards, who is 85, is known as "the father of in vitro fertilization," or IVF as it's known. He will receive $1.5 million for developing, along with the late gynecologist Dr. Patrick Steptoe, what is deemed as "a milestone in the development of modern medicine."

News of the award prompted the president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, Bishop Ignacio Carrasco de Paula of Spain, to say, speaking in a private capacity, that Edwards is someone who cannot be belittled but that, quoting:

> I find the choice of Robert Edwards completely out of order… Without Edwards, there would not be a market in which millions of ovocytes are sold… and there would not be a large number of freezers filled with embryos in the world. In the best of cases they are transferred into a uterus, but most probably they will end up abandoned or dead, which is a problem for which the new Nobel Prize winner is responsible.

Reuters.com reporter Mia Shanley quotes a Dr. Alan Thornhill as saying, "Bob Edwards changed the way we think about having babies." And that he did, brothers and sisters. He used verbal engineering to bring about social engineering; he used heartfelt words to change hearts in order to change minds.

And with his genetic manipulation and research, Edwards ensured that babies need not be procreated the way our Creator intended from all eternity and through all eternity, that is, by a man and woman committed for a lifetime, in a mutual life-giving/love-giving marital embrace.

Edwards figured out a way to manufacture new human beings in a lab as if they were commodities and certainly not the result of total self-giving human love. Some couples are not gifted by God with children, and Edwards conveniently believes that

every couple who wants a child has a *right* to a child. You see, when children are manufactured they become property- possessions, not gifts from God.

Edwards and Steptoe began their experimentations in the 1960's, and many embryonic babies died along the way. Only in 1978 was Louise Brown, the first IVF baby, born. The death toll from IVF is staggering. Mia Shanley quotes Professor David Albert Jones, director of the Anscombe Bioethics Center, a Catholic research institute in Oxford, England, who points out that, "In vitro fertilization has led directly to the deliberate destruction of millions of human embryos."

In 1980, Edwards and Steptoe founded the world's first IVF clinic, where gynecologists and cell biologists could be trained. The bullet train had left the station! As you might expect, some European countries actually fund IVF. And when I was in New Zealand, they told me each family could try two, but only two, attempts. In the United States the cost is up to $12,400 for one IVF attempt.

Many IVF attempts continue to fail. But since Dr. Edward's motivation was to "help families," many folks around the world are willing to overlook the millions of aborted embryonic humans and the millions of tiny embryos cryopreserved in liquid nitrogen, who end up being dumped down a sink or donated for research. Many folks around the world are also willing to overlook all the elevated risks of birth defects in IVF children. But what goes around eventually comes around.

Pro-life Catholic bioethics expert Fr. Tad Pacholczyk, Ph.D., has just published a great article on catholiceducation.org entitled, "When the Kids Grow Up and Find Out About the Test Tubes." He writes:

> Although they clearly face elevated health risks for a number of diseases and physical disorders, the psychological effects on these children have not been thoroughly studied. Nevertheless, children born from other, closely related technologies, like anonymous sperm donation, are starting to be tracked, and researchers are finding that these children face significant difficulties in dealing with their feelings and emotions as they grow older. They oftentimes struggle with their own sense of dignity and identity, with their need for a father, and with a desire to understand their family connection.
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> A recent online article in Slate Magazine entitled, "The Sperm Donor Kids Are Not Really Alright" describes one such study and includes some thought-provoking personal testimony from a British writer named Christine Whipp. Ms. Whipp, herself conceived by anonymous sperm donation, expresses the feelings that some donor offspring have, of being, in the pointed words of the article, a "freak of nature" or a "lab experiment." She puts it this way: "My existence owed almost nothing to the serendipitous nature of normal human reproduction, where babies are the natural progression of mutually fulfilling adult relationships, but rather represented a verbal contract, a financial transaction and a cold, clinical harnessing of medical technology."

A growing number of children born this way instinctively sense how that "cold, clinical harnessing of technology" can never quite measure up to the warmth and commitment embodied in the life-giving marital embrace of a mother and a father. The absent father who donates sperm anonymously, the financial exchanges involved, and the depersonalized laboratory environment surrounding their origins imply an element of being "used." It can be difficult for such children to put into words what they are really feeling and experiencing, as a young man named Craig emphasizes in his online comments following the Slate Magazine article:

> The confusion I felt growing up was not your normal run of the mill confusion. I didn't even begin to understand the inner turmoil I felt until I found out about my beginnings. My suggestion to you would be that before you start giving suggestions to others about how to live in a mixed family, come to know what it's like to be a child who knows something is wrong but you just don't know why. Know you're different… but you just don't know why. Live with a question mark over your head every day of your life and not be able to put words to that question.

Another young person in the same situation poignantly comments:

> I am a product of sperm donation and I can tell you that I always hated growing up without a dad. I can't tell my mom how I feel because I said something to her when I was little and she got very hurt and upset and tried to explain to me that a lot of kids grow up without dads and kinda went into all of this women can do this and women can do that and most women really don't need a man and blah blah blah. So I now keep all of my feelings to myself. I can tell you that for as much as I love her, inwards I still hate her for doing this to me and thinking that she had a right to decide if I needed a dad or not.

Brothers and sisters, sure, many IVF created children have both Moms and Dads. The point that led me to Fr. Tad's article is very well said by the bioethicist himself:

> All children deserve to have a mother and a father as they grow up. We should never intentionally choose to set up situations where a child will be conceived in a manner that deprives him or her of a parent. Every child, moreover, is entitled to the full respect of being conceived and brought into the world only though the marital acts of committed parents, through the intimate, loving embrace of husband and wife, not in petri dishes and test tubes.
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> Because awareness of our own human roots is critical to our sense of personal identity, and because of our vulnerable "sense of self" as humans, we have a particular responsibility to avoid creating a subclass of those who have "different origins" from the rest of us. It ought to come as no surprise that subtle

> psychological burdens may be placed upon children born from donor sperm as they subjectively struggle with broken or absent relationships, and experience a sense of being a "commodity" or an "object" because of how they were created. These dark and morally troubling aspects of modern reproductive technologies need to be more fully acknowledged and discussed in our society, as they unleash powerful forces that profoundly affect the future of the human beings who are thereby brought into the world.

Brothers and sisters, my daughter Colleen had two students in one of her classes who found out as seniors in high school that they were conceived through IVF. My daughter told me she couldn't put her finger on what was causing so much depression among these two young girls. One day, they both shared with her the same sad feelings as the teens quoted by Fr. Tad. They resented how they were conceived. Fortunately, they had a teacher like Colleen, who told them that a child is always a precious gift from God, no matter how he or she is conceived and that they are still "blessings" made in the image and likeness of God with a special mission in life. The way they were conceived will never change that.

It's still sad to think: How many children will have serious psychological problems when they come to realize that they were carried by even well-meaning surrogates or by their grandmothers bearing them for their daughters, or were conceived in mothers "for hire" to give children to homosexual couples – all because Robert G. Edwards and Patrick Steptoe decided to experiment with genetic manipulation despite all the opposition from Mother Church and medical ethics?

We all must answer to God one day. One thing is certain, the Creator of us all, the Great I Am, will be the final arbiter over this desecration and taking of the lives of millions of tiny human beings. And Nobel Prizes will not impress *Him* at all.

Brothers and sisters, I welcome your comments and questions. Here are the numbers to call: 1-800-585-9396 and 1-205-271-2985.

Closing: A thousand thanks for your calls and emails. It is a grace to be with you! Since yesterday was the Feast of the Great St. Francis of Assisi, I can't think of a better way to close than to recite his Poem "You shall love the Lord"

With our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole mind, with our whole strength and fortitude, with our whole understanding, with all our powers, with every effort, every affection, every feeling, every desire and wish, let us all love the Lord God...

Who has given and gives to each one of us our whole body, our whole soul and our whole life, Who has created, redeemed and will save us by His mercy alone, Who did and does everything good for us, miserable and wretched, rotten and foul, ungrateful and evil ones.

Therefore, let us desire nothing else, let us want nothing else, let nothing else please us and cause us delight except our Creator, Redeemer and Savior, the only true God,

Who is the fullness of good, all good, every good, the true and supreme good,

Who alone is good, merciful, gentle, delightful, and sweet,

Who alone is holy, just, true, holy and upright,

Who alone is kind, innocent, clean, from Whom, Through Whom and in Whom is all pardon, all grace, all glory of all penitents and just ones, of all the blessed rejoicing together in heaven.

Until next week on Open Line, Blessed be God and may He bless you abundantly! Bye for now!