

## IN VITRO FERTILIZATION AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- Pope Benedict XVI, speaking to members of the Pontifical Academy for Life earlier this year, addressed the issue of married couples struggling with infertility.
- He said, “The Church pays great attention to the suffering of couples with infertility, she cares for them and, precisely because of this, encourages medical research.”
- But he warned against “the lure of the technology of artificial insemination,” which is not permitted by Catholic teaching.
- The Pope said to couples unable to conceive: *“Your vocation to marriage is no less because of this. Spouses, because of their baptismal and marriage vocation, are called to cooperate with God in the creation of a new human being”*.
- The vocation to love, in fact, is a vocation where the man and woman become a gift to each other where no organic condition such as infertility can prevent.
- Catholic teaching prohibits in vitro fertilization, maintaining that a child has the right to be conceived in the marital embrace of his parents.
- Human sexuality has two components, the unitive and procreative; IVF separates these components and makes the procreative its only goal.
- Pope Paul VI said that there is an “inseparable connection, willed by God, and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive meaning and the procreative meaning.”
- There are other issues involved. IVF makes the child a commodity produced in a laboratory, and makes doctors, technicians, and even business people part of the conception

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process.

- The sperm used is usually obtained by masturbation, which the Church teaches is immoral.
- The sperm or eggs used may not come from the couple desiring the child; because one of the spouses may be infertile, it may be necessary to use the sperm or eggs from an outsider and this may make the child unsure of its identity.
- Most of the embryos conceived—which the Church holds should be respected new human lives—die, are frozen indefinitely for later implantation, are used for research, or are discarded.
- Children conceived through IVF also have a greater incidence of birth defects.
- The bottom line is that the Church views the child as a gift from God, not a right (although the child has rights).
- For more information on Catholic teaching on the issue, read the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 2373-2379.