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If the Embryo is Human, It is a Person: Vatican Doctrine Official

By Hilary White

ROME, November 13, 2009 (LifeSiteNews.com) - If an embryo is human, it is a person - this is the golden rule for bioethics if it wants to uphold the full dignity of the human person, said the secretary of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) on Tuesday.

The "concept of person" and its application to all human beings at every stage of their development is the key to understanding the Catholic teachings on the life issues Archbishop Luis Ladaria told a conference in Rome.

Archbishop Ladaria was speaking to an audience of students at a conference sponsored by the Lay Centre at Foyer Unitas, on the document, "[Dignitas Personae](#)" ("The Dignity of the Person"), an instruction from the CDF published in 2008 on "certain bioethical questions." These included developments in artificial reproductive technologies, such as genetic manipulation of embryos and cloning. Ladaria noted that when US President Barack Obama was visiting Rome, he was presented with a copy of the document by Pope Benedict XVI.



Archbishop Luis Ladaria

Pope Benedict, while Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Prefect of the CDF, was responsible for the 1987 publication of the landmark document *Donum Vitae*, upon which *Dignitas Personae* was based. The much-ignored "[Donum Vitae](#)" ("The Gift of Life"), laid down the Church's teaching on the moral inadmissibility of nearly all artificial reproductive technologies currently in use around the world.

Both documents emphasize that the fundamental moral objection to such practices as genetic manipulation, artificial insemination, cloning and in vitro fertilization is that they invariably result in the deaths of innumerable human beings at the embryonic stage and that they deny the fundamental right of the child to be conceived and nurtured naturally in the context of marriage.

Archbishop Ladaria spoke of the "new approach" the document presents for bioethicists based on the nature of the human person and the special relationship of man to God who was incarnate in Jesus Christ.

Human beings cooperate with God when they reproduce, he said. "Procreation is a special cooperation. Only in human love, which is a reflection of divine love, in mutual donation, is found the context for cooperation with the love of God the creator."

This teaching, Ladaria said, holds that human dignity is "not granted" by human agency, but "is recognized as a previous fact."

The Church's teaching is based on the now-scientifically proved fact that human life begins in its entirety at the moment of conception. The basic rule for ethicists, he said, is, "If it is a human, it is always a person." This includes

the zygote, the single-cell product of the union of ovum and sperm.

From the first moment, he said, the embryo "has a full anthropological qualification; there is a continuity; there are no leaps that have in them substantial mutations; the embryonic body develops. One can see the decisive reason to accept the very dignity of the person."

(With files from Zenit News Agency)

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