

A statement by Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue in response to reports of human cloning by Dr Panayiotis Zavos
24 April 2009



- STATEMENT BEGINS-

“Following the *Catholic Bishops’ Conference* Statement of 22 April 2009, I would like to add the following on behalf of the Diocese of Lancaster:

The claims by the American researcher Dr Panayiotis Zavos that he has created cloned human embryos and actually implanted 11 of them into four women, are extremely disturbing. If it is true, Dr Zavos’ actions are deeply repugnant for the future of humanity.

Cloning entails manipulating human life in ever more invasive ways, and this will lead to ‘making embryos to order’, as well as other more and more serious abuses.

Some doctors and scientists have condemned Dr Zavos for breaching the widely accepted ban on transferring cloned embryos to the womb. But those who support destructive embryo research while criticising Dr Zavos are laying themselves open to a charge of hypocrisy.

The approach that is often taken in Britain is to say firstly that embryo research should be allowed and secondly that it can be strictly controlled. This is wrong on both counts. Embryo research which entails deliberately killing human embryos should never be allowed, and experience shows that once this key ethical principle is breached, it leads in turn to relentless demand for more and more embryos to be used in ever more debasing ways.

Some have condemned Dr Zavos as ‘irresponsible’ because cloning is not ‘safe’ - in the sense that cloned children might have serious physical, mental or

psychological problems. However, even if all these problems could be overcome, the underlying moral objection to cloning remains:
It [cloning] creates a dislocation in the human family; it removes the begetting of children from its true context – the fruit of mutual self-giving in marriage – and turns human children into a manufactured product. “

+Patrick O’Donoghue, Bishop of Lancaster

- STATEMENT ENDS-

Background note:

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 extended the permissible creation and use of human embryos in the UK, formally allowing the creation of “saviour siblings”, cloned embryos for research (including embryo stem cell research) and inter-species embryos. It also removed the requirement that IVF practitioners should have regard to the child’s need for a father when offering women IVF treatment.

The most recent instruction from the Vatican on the subject, *Dignitas Personae* (CDF, September 2008) re-stated the Catholic Church’s clear opposition to “assisted reproductive technologies” and the need to protect and promote the rights the human embryo from the time of conception (fertilisation).

Sources:

[Scotsman](#)

[Guardian](#)