

## Stem Cell Breakthrough

Catholic Conference hails stem cell breakthrough by stem cell researchers from Wisconsin and Japan that allows the creation of embryonic-like stem cells by reprogramming mature human cells, rather than destroying human embryos. The Conference urged the state government to pursue this research with the public funds earmarked in the New York State budget for stem cell research. Kathleen M. Gallagher, Director of Pro-Life Activities for the Catholic Conference, made the following comment:

*Today marks the dawn of a new age for ethical scientific research and discovery. This breakthrough announced in two scientific journals appears to solve the ethical dilemmas of embryonic stem cell research and human cloning by eliminating the need for them. Instead, by simply adding four genes to an existing skin cell, the cell can be reprogrammed as a "pluripotent" stem cell. The process appears to be easier, more cost efficient, scientifically promising, and morally untroubling.*

*Beyond the fact that scientists will no longer need to create and destroy human embryos in a laboratory setting, the new process eliminates the need for donor eggs and the potential exploitation of poor women that could entail. Further, it appears that medical issues such as tissue rejection would not be a factor. This may be the best possible outcome for people who yearn for cures of chronic diseases and disabilities. Much work needs to be done, but it seems clear that the hurdles will be much easier to overcome than those that continue to plague embryo research and cloning.*

*The Catholic Conference urges the Empire State Stem Cell Board, created by Gov. Spitzer and the state legislature earlier this year, to direct all state funding that would have gone to destructive embryo research and cloning into research utilizing this new procedure, which can make our state a leader in the field. At the same time, we continue to fully support funding for research on "adult" stem cells, which already have many therapeutic uses in the treatment of disease and disability.*

*The Conference congratulates those in the scientific community who have pursued this life-saving research, which should put an end to any scientific justification for embryo-destructive research and the cloning of human beings.*

The Catholic Conference represents New York State's Bishops in matters of public policy.