



## Begotten Not Made: The Church’s Stance on IVF

By : Teresa Kenney, APRN, CFCMC

In 1978, Louise Brown became the world’s first test-tube baby born via *in vitro* fertilization. Since then approximately 240,000 babies are born using the technology referred to as IVF every year in the United States. Currently, there is at least a half million “left over” embryos frozen in liquid nitrogen.

You may have wondered “how can the Catholic Church be opposed to people wanting to have children?” This is a legitimate question so let’s take a look at *WHY* the Catholic Church is opposed to reproductive technologies like IVF.

First of all, let me explain the procedure of how a baby comes into the world using the technology IVF. The basics are this: the sperm is given by the man, the egg is harvested from the woman, and a scientist combines the two together in a laboratory to create a new unique genetic human being. It is at this point that the Church believes that God enters into the human and gives him/her a soul. After the embryos are created, the doctor

selects the one, two, or three embryos to be implanted in the mother’s womb in the hopes that it will implant in the womb and be born nine months later. The success rates of IVF vary around the country but on average it is about 30-35% successful.

The Church sees sex as an act of love by which God, if He chooses, can bring forth a new human life made in his image and likeness. We need to remember that human sex ‘belongs’ to God. God, from the very beginning, designed a man and a woman to unite themselves in a covenantal relationship called marriage and to become one physically not solely as a bonding gesture but to bring forth new life. Sometimes, we are so focused on the desires and rights of the parents that we forget about the rights of the child to be conceived within an act of love.

The Catholic Church believes that IVF is never acceptable because it removes conception from the marital act and because it treats a baby as a product to be manipulated, violating the child’s integrity as a human being with an immortal soul from the moment of conception (Donum Vitae 1987).

The Church’s opposition to using artificial methods of human reproduction is stated in many church... *Continued on page 2*

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Begotten Not Made: 1  
The Church’s  
Stance on IVF

The Time is Right 3

A Woman’s Dignity 3  
from Mulieris  
Dignitatem

SNAPSHOT: Story of 4  
Our Lady of Fatima

Resources 4

## DID YOU KNOW????

### Fertility Facts about Prenatal Genetic Testing, Downs Syndrome, and Abortion

“An estimated 92 percent of all women who receive a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome choose to terminate their pregnancies, according to research reviewed by Dr. Brian Skotko, a pediatric geneticist at Children’s Hospital Boston.

Birthing trends worldwide show that women are waiting longer to have children and advanced maternal age is associated with increased risk of having a child with Down syndrome. The number of Down Syndrome cases is declining enough in the United States to raise concerns that research funding to study the congenital condition will dry up. There’s also worry that more people will deny themselves what some call the “gift” of raising children with Down syndrome.

About 400,000 Americans have Down syndrome, the most common genetic condition in the United States, which produces an array of challenges, including retardation, delayed language and slow motor development. In the absence of prenatal testing, the United States would have experienced a 34 percent increase in the number of Down births between 1989 and 2005, Skotko estimates.

Instead, 15 percent fewer such babies were born during that time, representing a 49 percentage point difference between expected and observed rates, according to Skotko’s research.

By Susan Donaldson James, ABC News, Nov. 2, 2009

A newsletter dedicated to helping young women

## Begotten Not Made ...continued

Continued from page 1

documents. For example, the Catechism of Catholic Church states "Techniques that entail the dissociation of husband and wife, by the intrusion of a person other than the couple (donation of sperm or ovum, surrogate uterus), are gravely immoral. These techniques (heterologous artificial insemination and fertilization) infringe the child's right to be born of a father and mother known to him and bound to each other by marriage. They betray the spouses' "right to become a father and a mother only through each other." CCC 2376

The Catholic Church is not without compassion and She does understand the plight of parents who desire to have a child but are unable. Recently, Pope Benedict called for more investigation into the area of infertility to continue to help countless couples who suffer from infertility. He called scientists to pursue "research for diagnosing the condition and appropriate treatment [which] is the correct scientific approach to the question of infertility, and also the one that best respects the integral humanity of those involved" (Pontifical Academy for Life conference, Feb. 24th 2012).

The Catholic Church believes in helping couples who have infertility by assisting them medically by healing their diseases and by respecting what Pope Benedict calls "that community of Love and Life which is marriage, which represents the only worthy 'place' for a new human being to be called into existence."

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Ephesians 1:17-21

Many ethical dilemmas surround IVF. According to statistics, for every single live birth in IVF five embryos are destroyed. Pope Benedict XVI has told researchers that IVF embryos have a right to life even before implantation. Speaking to the Pontifical Academy for Life, he declared that all human life is 'sacred and inviolable' and that 'moral judgment is valid from the start of the life of an embryo, even before it is implanted in the maternal womb.

Another ethical problem that has occurred with IVF is the use of "selective reduction". Since frequently several embryos are implanted at one time, multiple pregnancies occur. Early in pregnancy, some of these babies are killed by an injection of potassium chloride into the heart. The parents have to make a decision to select one of their babies to kill in order that one or two may live. How would you feel if your parents chose to kill one of your siblings so that you might have life?

Don't forget about embryonic stem cell research, genetic engineering, and cloning that have arisen with IVF or about the octo-mom scenario, surrogate motherhood, embryo banks where anyone can buy a child for their own. We are now at the point where you can pick not only the sex of your child but whether you want them to have blue or brown eyes, be athletic or smart or handsome or beautiful. All of these new technologies are the fruit of IVF. They all lead to the manipulation and destruction of human life and all are condemned by the Catholic Church and many people of Christian faith.

Fertility and the ability to co-create life with God is a great blessing not a right. In Patrick Coffin's book *Sex Au Naturel*, the question is addressed about whether we are treating our bodies like machines and children like property in our current culture.

Coffin discusses the differences between a child being made and not begotten. "Notice the difference between 'reproductive' and 'procreative'. To reproduce is literally to manufacture again. It's a solely human enterprise; whereas procreation is a much richer concept, suggesting man's supporting role in God's creation...children are a gift, not a right...Gifts can only be received, and given by another." The Catechism states, "A child is not something owed to one, but is a gift. The 'supreme gift of marriage' is a human person. A child may not be considered a piece of property...the child possesses genuine rights: the right to be the fruit of the specific act of the conjugal love of his parents, and the right to be respected as a person from the moment of his/her conception" (CCC 2378).

There is much hope in the area of research in infertility. Dr. Thomas Hilgers started the Pope Paul VI Institute for the Study of Human Reproduction in 1985 and has developed a new scientific approach to treating infertility and other women's health disorders. Dr. Hilgers developed a new women's health science called NaProTechnology, which stands for natural procreative technology. The evaluation of infertility with NaProTechnology is a comprehensive, thorough approach to seeking the underlying causes of infertility and to treating them. The central tool to evaluating, diagnosing, and treating infertility is a charting system called the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System. This is a system where a woman charts the biological markers of her reproductive system on a daily basis. It is a window into the women's body and it allows trained doctors to do advanced hormonal testing and other forms of evaluation and treatment that exceed what modern technology has been able to accomplish in the area of infertility.

Once all the causes for infertility are identified, they are treated. Treating infertility enables the couple to achieve naturally. NaProTechnology has a success rate that is two to three times that of *in vitro* fertilization and is much more cost effective. NaProTechnology is morally acceptable to all faiths as it protects the sacredness of life from conception till natural death.

In summary, I would like to leave you with a few questions to ponder while thinking about the issues regarding infertility and artificial reproductive technology, IVF. Do we respect the work of God on this earth? Are we trying to control the forces of life against the plan of our Divine Creator? Does each of us prayerfully discern with the grace of the Holy Spirit the Truth that is in our heart?

# The Time is Right

By: Victoria Sage, BSc

God calls everyone to holiness. He has very precise plans for each person, a personal vocation which each must recognize, accept and develop.

To all Christians—priests, laity, married people, or celibates—the words of the Apostle of the Nations apply: “God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved” (Colossians 3:12).

The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality—Pontifical Council for the Family, Alfonso Cardinal Lopez Trujillo, December 8, 1995, paragraph 111b

Women can unleash the power in their cycles. The tool that empowers women to do so is the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System! And, this has great significance to overall women’s health care.

With the Creighton Model System, a woman can monitor and maintain her menstrual and fertility cycles. She records the various biological markers that occur during her menstrual and fertility cycles. Recording these observations on a Creighton Model chart is called “NaProTracking”. The types of observations that she is making as well as the overall patterns of her observations tell her about her health. If the observations or patterns of observations are abnormal, then these signal to her (or her Creighton Model System teacher) that an underlying health problem might be present.

If a woman needs medical evaluation, specially-trained NaProTechnology physicians can evaluate her Creighton Model charts and use this resource to tailor an evaluation protocol and, later, a treatment approach to her specific needs. Because of this, the Creighton Model System is invaluable.

Women’s menstrual and fertility cycles are affected by the rising and falling of hormones and physiologic events. Normally, from cycle to cycle, the days vary on which these hormones rise and fall and on which the physiologic events occur, but these events

always occur in a specific relation to each other. With Creighton Model charting, NaProTechnology physicians can determine where a woman is in her cycle and can evaluate the normalcy of her hormone levels in relation to the time of the cycle when the evaluation is being made. So, for example, NaProTechnology physicians can evaluate a woman’s hormone levels before ovulation has occurred and know that the hormone levels should reflect pre-ovulation hormone levels.

After making accurate evaluations because of Creighton Model charting, NaProTechnology physicians can administer treatments in response to where a woman is in her cycle. This ensures that treatment will be most effective. For example, if a woman has low progesterone levels after ovulation, it will not be helpful to give her progesterone before ovulation. But, it can correct her problem if she receives progesterone after she ovulates.



Targeting (or knowing the timing) an individual woman’s cycle makes the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System one of the best means of not only monitoring and maintaining menstrual and fertility cycles but also of evaluating and treating gynecologic and reproductive health problems.

*Victoria Sage is a scientific & technical communications assistant at the Pope Paul VI Institute.*

A woman’s dignity is closely connected with the love which she receives by the very reason of her femininity; it is likewise connected with the love which she give in return. The truth about the person and about love is thus confirmed. With regard to the truth about the person, we must turn again to the Second Vatican Council: “Man, who is the only creature on earth that God willed for its own sake, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of self”. This applies to every human being, as a person created in God’s image, whether man or woman. This ontological affirmation also indicates the ethical dimension of a person’s vocation. Woman can only find herself by giving love to others.

— From: *Mulieris Dignitatem*, Blessed John Paul II, 15 August 1988

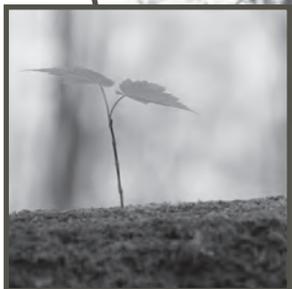
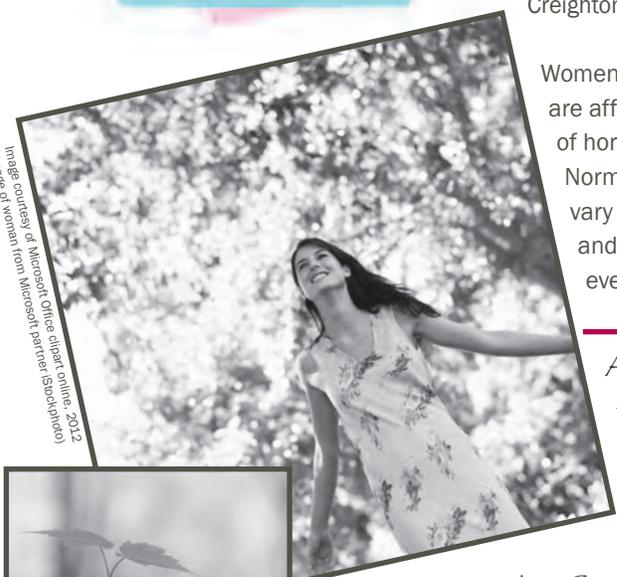


Image courtesy of Microsoft Office clipart online, 2012 (image of woman from Microsoft partner (Stockphoto))

# Resources

[www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com)

[www.DrHilgers.com](http://www.DrHilgers.com)

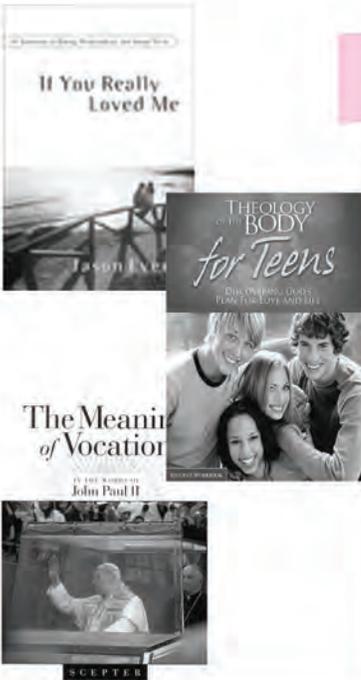
[www.fertilitycare.org](http://www.fertilitycare.org)

<http://www.chastity.com>

<http://vocation-network.org>

[www.onemoresoul.com](http://www.onemoresoul.com)

[www.ewtn.com](http://www.ewtn.com)



## SNAPSHOT: Story of Our Lady of Fatima

On 13 May 1917, three children were pasturing their little flock in the Cova da Iria, parish of Fatima, town of Vila Nova de Ourém, today the diocese of Leiria-Fatima. They were called: Lucia de Jesus, aged 10, and her cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto, aged 9 and 7.

About midday, after praying the Rosary, ...they were amusing themselves... Suddenly they saw a brilliant light, and thinking it to be lightning, they decided to go home. But as they went down the slope another flash lit up the place, and they saw on the top of a holmoak, “a Lady more brilliant than the sun”, from whose hands hung a white rosary.

The Lady told the three little shepherds that it was necessary to pray much, and she invited them to return to the Cova da Iria during five consecutive months, on the 13th day at that hour. The children did so...[in] June, July, September and October, the Lady appeared to them again and spoke to them in the Cova da Oa. On the 19th of August, the apparition took place at Valinhos...because on the 13th the children had been carried off by the local Administrator to Vila Nova de Ourém.

At the last apparition, on October 13, with about 70,000 people present, the Lady said to them that she was the “Lady of the Rosary” and that a chapel was to be built there in her honor. After the apparition all present witnessed the miracle promised to the three children in July and September: the sun, resembling a silver disc, could be gazed at without difficulty and, whirling on itself like a wheel of fire, it seemed about to fall upon the earth.

Afterwards, when Lucia was a Religious Sister of Saint Dorothy, Our Lady appeared to her again in Spain (10 December 1925 and 15 February 1926, in the Convent of Pontevedra, and on the night of 13/14 June 1929, in the Convent of Tuy), requesting the devotion of the five first Saturdays (to pray the Rosary, meditate on the mysteries of the Rosary, confess and receive Holy Communion, in reparation for the sins committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary), and the Consecration of Russia to [her] Immaculate Heart. This request had been announced by the Apparition on 13 July 1917, in what is called the “Secret of Fatima”.

Years later, Sr. Lucia related that, between April and October of 1916, an Angel had appeared to the three seers on three occasions, twice in the Cabeço and once at the well in the garden behind Lucia’s house, who exhorted them to prayer and penance.



Our Lady of Fatima (left) appeared to three children (above) — Jacinta, Lucia, and Francisco — in 1917 in Fatima, Portugal

Since 1917 pilgrims have not ceased to come to the Cova da Iria in thousands upon thousands from all parts of the world, at first on the 13th of each month, later during summer and winter holidays, and now...any day all year round.

### October 13, 1917

An estimated crowd of 70,000 people gathered in a rainstorm for the promised apparition. Among the crowd were many who did not believe and the members of the secular press who

were there to report on the event. During the praying of the Rosary, Our Lady appeared and made Herself known as the Lady of the Rosary. She instructed the children to pray the Rosary every day and to build there a chapel in Her honour.... She opened her hands and made them reflect on the sun, and as she ascended, the reflection of her own light continued to be projected on the sun itself. During the miracle of the sun, many present fell in the mud and water, believing that the end of the world was taking place. Many later reported that despite being covered in mud, they were dry and free of mud when they arose. Rose petals fell from the sky only to dissipate upon being touched by those present. After Our Lady had disappeared into the immense distance of the firmament, the children beheld St. Joseph with the Child Jesus and Our Lady robed in white with a blue mantle, beside the sun. St. Joseph and the Child Jesus appeared to bless the world.... When this apparition disappeared, the children saw Our Lord and Our Lady of Dolours. Our Lord appeared to bless the world...as St. Joseph had done. This vision also vanished, making place for the vision of our Lady of Carmel.

Taken from <http://www.santuario-fatima.pt/portal/index.php?id=41998> and <http://www.worldfatima.com/>

## Pope Paul VI Institute

For the Study of Human Reproduction

6901 Mercy Road • Omaha, NE 68106-2621

(402) 390-6600 • [www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com)

Comments/questions: [popepaul@popepaulvi.com](mailto:popepaul@popepaulvi.com)