

Dear Parishioners,

Sad and frightening developments have occurred over the last few weeks. The government plan to license scientists **to create embryos that are a mixture of human and cow or rabbit.** (A human embryo is a human life at the earliest stages of development normally within the womb).

The Government's Bill will allow research on hybrids – these are created by

- mixing animal and human sperm and eggs
- embryos created by adding animal DNA to human embryos
- embryos created by adding animal cells to a human embryo.

The House of Commons will vote on the Bill this month (February); the Government hope to make it law this year.

The Bill permits experiments that most of the world would like to see outlawed. In other western countries such as France, Germany and Canada, scientists face prison sentences of up to seven years for what Britain's government wants to make legal.

To its shame, Britain refused to sign the 1997 European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine which prohibited the creation of human embryos purely for research. In 2005, the United Nations called on member states "to prohibit all forms of human cloning inasmuch as they are incompatible with human dignity and the protection of human life." Scandalously, the British Government voted against it and aligned itself with such glowing human rights champions as China and Korea.

Perhaps the saddest thing of all is that some patient groups and medical charities have been hijacked into falsely believing that cures for everything from diabetes to Alzheimer's will be discovered only by using human embryos.

Some MPs, who quite understandably had a genuinely humanitarian desire to help those who suffer from disabling diseases, were duped into believing that unless they supported laws permitting embryo experiments they would be condemning people to a life of suffering and pain and be endangering life saving work.

They were led to believe that they had to choose between the idea of helping to cure disease over the equally cherished belief that it was unconscionable to destroy early human life in experimentation. Six years later that advice has been rendered redundant. The scientific breakthrough in 2007 of the successful creation of embryonic-like cells from adult stem cells (Stem cells are the body's master cells which can develop into any tissue and, in theory, be used to replace diseased/damaged cells in the body) – renders completely needless the further destruction of human embryos or the creation of animal-human hybrids.

Wonderful advances in ethical adult stem cell research are being made at an incredible rate. Over 70 real treatments at the last count and 300 clinical trials have been documented using adult stem cells. Whereas, since 1990, over two million human embryos have been destroyed or experimented on and the experiments have not led to a single cure anywhere in the world.

Even Professor Ian Wilmut, the celebrated creator of Dolly the Sheep which captured world headlines, is abandoning cloning in favour of a far more ethical technique in which cells have been developed from fragments of skin. He believes his earlier method no longer offers the best way to grow a patient's own cells and tissues in a bid to treat a range of medical conditions.

Surely it is time for a fresh start with adult stem cells; a technology that is ethical, practical and brings real miracles to people's lives.

The government hopes that the majority of the public remain indifferent to these issues. If few people speak out it will be presumed that most people are happy enough with what is being proposed. **Politicians must be told bluntly by thousands of voters that their vote will be cast against any MP supporting this Bill.**

Remember, this Bill if passed will among other things -

- **allow the making of embryos that are a mixture of human and animal**
- **remove the right, at present there, to consider the child's need for a father**
- **be used by those who want to make abortion even easier**
- **permit the making of babies so that their "spare parts" can be cannibalised to be used by others**

You have political rights and duties to influence our legislators in Parliament. Every MP will have to vote for or against the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. You should waste no time in contacting your MP asking them to support your position on this Bill. And emphasise to them that **abstention is not enough.**

Yours devotedly,

+Rt Rev Joseph Devine
Bishop of Motherwell

(PLEASE SEE NEXT PAGE)

Below is an example of a letter you could send to your MP. By all means use your own words if you prefer. But make the points strongly. The aim of the letter is to persuade your MP to vote the right way by telling him or her that your vote will definitely be lost otherwise. It is also vital to ask your MP to let you know how he or she voted. Write to your MP by name. The address is –
The House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

You can also send an email to your MP – [www. writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com)

Encourage your relations, friends and neighbours, of all religious faiths and none, (**for this is not just a Catholic issue**) to join in our campaign.

Do not leave this to others. Take action yourself. Take action today.

DRAFT LETTER

Dear Mr/Ms,

As one of your constituents, I consider the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill to be one of the most important bills ever to go through parliament, since it affects the very right to life.

I ask you to vote against any part of this bill that would allow in any way, at any stage of life, the creation of hybrids, or chimeras - a form of life that is part human and part animal.

Secondly, I consider that the present provisions for abortion are far too easy and so I ask you to resist anything that will make abortion easier or more common in any way. If you can vote to restrict the present allowance of abortion that would be good news.

Thirdly, I ask you to insist that any provision in the Bill demands that the child's need for a father be essential.

Fourthly, I ask you to vote firmly against any idea of making babies so that their "spare parts" can be cannibalised to be used by others.

Please will you let me know, clearly and in detail, how you vote on this Bill. You should know that irrespective of the party I normally support and how I voted in the past, I will definitely and categorically be unable in conscience to vote for you at the next election if you support this Bill contrary to my requests.

If you do oppose the anti-life provisions in the Bill as I ask, then I promise you that I will almost certainly vote for you at the next election.

Whichever way you vote, I will give publicity to it among my relatives, friends, neighbours and the members of my church. I assure you of my prayers.

Please do your duty to protect the weakest members of our society.

Yours faithfully,