

# STEM CELL ISSUE OVERHEATS; MEDIA TAPS CATHOLIC LEAGUE

The Catholic League's presence in the debate on stem cell research was evident in the pages of the *New York Times* and on TV shows like "Hardball with Chris Matthews," "Crossfire" and "Imus in the Morning"; Fox News Channel and UPN also carried league commentary on this issue.

When the Catholic League issues a news release, it sticks to issues affecting anti-Catholicism and the rights of Catholics. But when the media call upon the league for an informed Catholic perspective on a contemporary moral issue (as it increasingly does), we are only too happy to oblige them. That's what happened in this instance. In addition, some of the commentary lodged against the Church's opposition to embryonic stem cell research got so overheated that it spilled into bigotry, thus providing even more reason for a league response.

Throughout the debates on this issue, we repeated the Church's position that stem cell research is fine as long as it is done on adults. Stem cell research performed on embryos, however, must be opposed because it is impossible to do the research without killing the embryos.

"Bush Walks Fine Line on Stem Cell Issue" is how we phrased our news release on the president's decision. We were pleased that he opposed any federally-funded stem cell research that would require the killing of new embryos. We were also pleased with his choice of Dr. Leon Kass to head his Council on Bioethics. But we were not pleased with the president's statement that human embryos "have at least the potential for life." As we pointed out, a human embryo *is* a human life. This is not a religiously-held belief as much as it is a matter of Biology 101: human life begins at conception.

While most of the critics of the Church's position were not anti-Catholic, there were cartoons and columns in some newspapers that crossed the line. The worst cartoons were the ones by Englehart in the *Hartford Courant*, Benson in the *Arizona Republic* and Wright in the *Palm Beach Post*. Jan Jarboe Russell in the San Antonio Express-News wrote the most offensive article.

But by far the most irresponsible remarks were made by a congressman from the state of Washington, Rep. Jim McDermott. See page 4 for a detailed account of his comments.