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Issue 6
Fall 2020

News and information about the youngest human beings
Brought to you by Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG)



Where to Find Us >>>

- Visit www.sacredheartguardians.org
- Email info@sacredheartguardians.org
- Call 612-578-0377
- Mail 3432 Denmark Ave. #253, Eagan, MN 55123
- Like us on Facebook (@sacredheartguardians)



The Church of Saint Anthony of Lisbon. Lisbon, Portugal

Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization incorporated in Minnesota. Our mission is to provide corporal and spiritual care for the youngest, smallest members of our human family. All activities are carried out in faithfulness to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

From the Director

IVF's Life or Death Decisions

Have you ever had to make a decision but you didn't like any of the choices? After making your selection, did you feel unsettled? And even if you could logically defend or rationalize your decision, did you still feel uneasy?

People who undergo IVF are likely to be in just this type of situation. More often than not, IVF leaves people with embryonic children still frozen in liquid nitrogen. These tiny children will not (or cannot) be transferred and carried to term.

Cryopreservation pauses an embryo's life; it does not end it. The way it works is that a newly conceived, living embryonic human being is dehydrated, vitrified, and stored in a state of "suspended animation." Properly thawed and transferred to a uterus, his or her growth would resume.

But if transferring the child isn't in the plans, how long will the embryo's parents pay to keep him or her in storage? What are their alternatives?

IVF centers usually make three "disposition options" available to their clients. Many people struggle to make a decision, and sometimes ask for unusual alternatives (see *Words to Watch: Compassionate Transfer*, page 2). If the selected option is one that causes the embryo's death in the lab, its body is thrown away as medical waste.

Cryopreservation pauses an embryo's life.

Most IVF disposition options will end it.

SHG does not attempt to provide a "good" or "moral" alternative to the *IVF disposition* options that result in the

death of embryos. Rather, our mission is to give the young people who die in IVF labs a Christian burial. This *final disposition* is infinitely more appropriate than treating human beings as waste.

Please pray for SHG's mission and for everyone impacted by IVF, especially the embryonic children living in labs and in cryostorage.

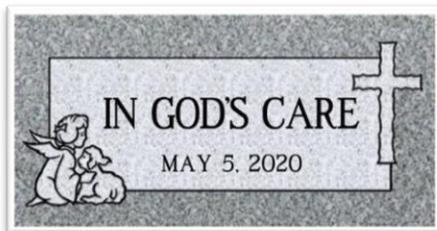
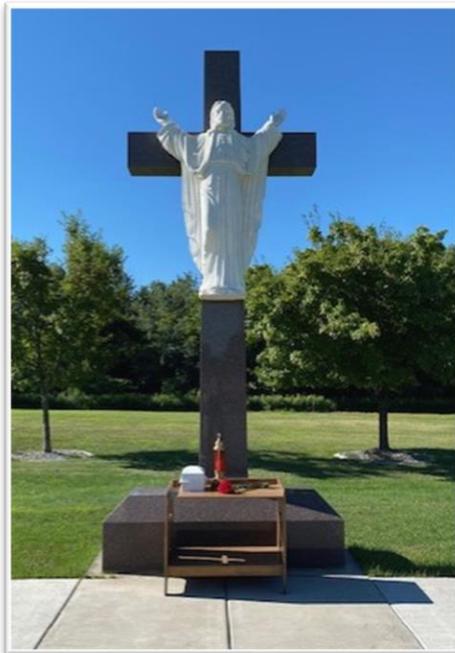
Laura Elm
Founder, Executive Director

Our Mission in Action

Embryo Remains Burial

Matthew 27:59-60. “*And Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock; and he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb, and departed.*”

On August 11th 2020, SHG was honored to provide Christian burial for 11 deceased embryonic children. The embryos were laid to rest at Epiphany Catholic Cemetery (Coon Rapids, MN) next to the burial site of the 52 embryos who were buried on May 5th 2020. The grave marker reads, “*In God’s Care,*” and the August date will be inscribed on it next month. Father Andrew Jaspers, SHG’s Chaplain, celebrated the Rite of Committal with Final Commendation at the grave site and offered Mass for the repose of the embryos’ souls later that day. Since its first burial in 2018, SHG has provided simple yet dignified Christian burials for 231 embryonic children who would otherwise have been discarded as medical waste.



Prayer and Care for the Youngest Human Beings

The Rite of Committal with Final Commendation
From *iBreviary*, sections 204-206.

<http://www.ibreviary.com/m2/pregchiere.php?tipo=Rito&id=417>

The rite of committal, the conclusion of the funeral rites, is the final act of the community of faith in caring for the body of its deceased member. It may be celebrated at the grave, tomb, or crematorium and may be used for burial at sea. Whenever possible, the rite of committal is to be celebrated at the site of committal, that is, beside the open grave or place of internment, rather than at a cemetery chapel.

Two forms of the rite of committal are provided here: “Rite of Committal” and “Rite of Committal with Final Commendation.” The first form is used when the final commendation is celebrated as part of the conclusion of the funeral liturgy. The second form is used when the final commendation does not take place during the funeral liturgy or when no funeral liturgy precedes the committal rite.

In committing the body to its resting place, the community expresses the hope that, with all those who have gone before marked with the sign of faith, the deceased awaits the glory of the resurrection. The rite of committal is an expression of the communion that exists between the Church on earth and the Church in heaven: the deceased passes with the farewell prayers of the community of believers into the welcoming company of those who need faith no longer but see God face to face.

>>> On the Nightstand

Books, videos, and podcasts to enhance your understanding of issues pertaining to early human life.

- “Charity and Clarity: Artificial Reproductive Technology.” Redeemer Radio’s *Doctor, Doctor* program. Dr. Chris Stroud, Dr. Tom McGovern, Peter Colosi, PhD. Listening Time: 52 minutes. <https://bit.ly/31aaOtu>.

Philosopher Dr. Pete Colosi shares how to clearly and charitably speak about the Catholic Church’s teaching on the morality of artificial (or, “assisted”) reproductive technologies (ART).

- Mary and Bioethics: An Exploration. Francis Etheredge. 2020. En Route Books & Media. <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1952464226/>



- “When Does Human Life Begin? The Scientific Evidence.” Microbiologist Fr. Nicanor Austriaco, O.P., Ph.D., S.T.D. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1bcHVMaKSM>
Viewing Time: 1 hour, 7 minutes.

Fr. Austriaco’s lecture was delivered as part of a special Notre Dame Vita Institute webinar series hosted by the de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture. Each summer, the Vita Institute brings pro-life leaders from around the world to Notre Dame for a weeklong intensive interdisciplinary intellectual formation program that extends

and deepens their breadth and depth of understanding of the subjects most essential to building a culture of life, including biology, philosophy, law, theology, and social sciences. View all five presentations from the 2020 Vita Institute webinar series at: <https://bit.ly/34myGmK>.

Words to Watch

Some words used in IVF should make you ask, “*What does that mean?*”



“COMPASSIONATE TRANSFER”

An IVF disposition option. Frozen embryos are thawed and transferred into the woman’s body at a time when they are unlikely to implant.

Ex. “*When my friend was done with IVF, her solution to the excess¹ embryos was to have them thawed and transferred when she was least likely to get pregnant.*”

¹“*Excess embryo*” is a term heard too often in IVF programs, and is in fact a contradiction to the existence of the human person. A human embryo is a human being, and every human being, regardless of age, is fully a human person endowed with both body and spirit. No matter the method of conception, every conceived human being exists, and his or her existence is known and willed by God beyond all time. He or she has an eternal purpose and destination. It is not possible for a human person to exist “in excess.”

Psalm 139:16. “*Your eyes beheld my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*”

“*Words to Watch*” is usually a brief feature in the SHG newsletter that explains a term or phrase unique to Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART; e.g., IVF). But because “compassionate transfer” is an IVF disposition option (though rare relative to other options), I wanted to spend some time showing how the meaning and scope of IVF disposition differs from “final disposition.”

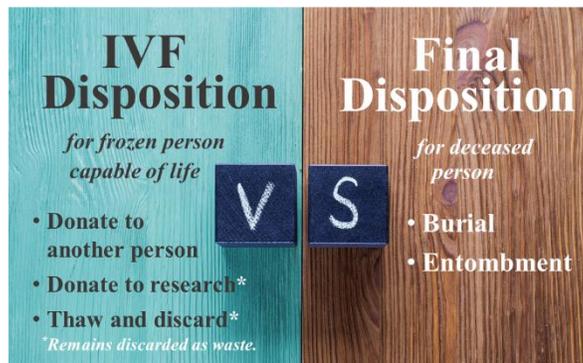
In any situation other than IVF, we generally understand that selecting a disposition option means determining the final way in which the body of a deceased human being is handled, thus the term “*final disposition.*” Traditions and customs vary, but final disposition is an act that honors the life of the deceased individual and can provide meaning and comfort to those who knew them.

IVF disposition means something different altogether. Most notably, the object of IVF disposition options are young people who are not yet dead.

Even when entered into with the intention of only creating as many embryos as they can raise, most IVF participants will have remaining embryos in frozen storage when they are done with the procedures. They could continue to pay for the embryos’ storage (approx. \$400/year) long into the future, but it seems most feel that, at some point, dispensing of their embryonic children is something they must do.

IVF centers typically present three IVF disposition options to clients who have embryos they don’t intend to transfer: (A) thaw and discard; (B) donate² to research; (C) donate² to another person.

A human embryo is fully a human being whose life has already begun. And although cryopreservation imposes a “pause,” (a dangerous one at that, as it is possible for the embryo to die at freeze or thaw due to the challenges of the procedure or because of human negligence), if the embryo survives and is transferred to a uterus, chances are that he or she will resume life’s journey.



With the exception of donating² to another person, IVF disposition authorizes the death of a human being. It’s not hard to imagine how difficult it is to make this decision. Consequently, some find that they cannot decide, leaving the fate of their embryos to the lab. For this reason, most IVF centers require patients to choose a disposition method *before* IVF can start.

Occasionally people ask for alternative IVF disposition options, like compassionate transfer, though not all clinics will fulfill this request. People who have dispensed of their embryos by compassionate transfer say it is a “personal” or “natural” alternative to thaw and discard in that it mimics a “failed IVF cycle” or an early miscarriage. But, while dispensing of an embryo in this manner may bring comfort to the family, it is still a decision that ends the life of a human being.

SHG has deep compassion for anyone whose embryonic children died in the lab (for any number of reasons, including as the result of an IVF disposition choice) or are still in frozen storage. The desperation that comes with infertility combined with minimal (if any) clinic-provided education about the embryo’s humanity made it nearly impossible for them – at the start of IVF – to comprehend the gravity of this unintended consequence.

People have told us that they suffer from grief or guilt long after IVF was complete;

these feelings are further complicated if IVF resulted in a live born child. Professional counseling can offer a path to healing. For Catholics, we highly recommend talking to your priest. Most priests are familiar with IVF and can help you find peace. Finally, SHG wants to join our prayers with yours. Let us know your intention (*anonymous ok*): <https://sacredheartguardians.org/services/prayer/>.

²The ART industry favors the term “donation,” claiming that embryo “adoption” is “**inaccurate and should be avoided**” (ASRM 2016 Ethics Committee opinion; <https://bit.ly/2HWhZam>). But an embryo is not *part* of a human (like a kidney). He or she is already a unique, complete (for his or her stage of development) member of our human family. It is a dangerous idea to think that some human beings can be “donated.”

>>> SHG's Clinic Outreach: 2nd Mailing of the 2020 Postcard <<<

Twice a year we mail to the 1500+ IVF doctors and embryologists working at more than 400 fertility centers, asking them to let SHG bury the embryonic human beings who die in their labs.

Please pray for the success of our mission: that embryonic human life is treated with dignity.

Why Burial?

<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">1</p> <p>Because a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertilized Egg • Zygote • Morula • Blastocyst • Embryo <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">is a human being.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">2</p> <p>Because embryos arrest in the lab, before <i>and</i> after cryopreservation.</p> <p style="font-size: small; font-style: italic;">"We retrieved 21 eggs, 17 fertilized, 8 made it to blast, 2 were transferred fresh and only 3 were good enough to freeze."</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How many arrested?</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">3</p> <p>Because an alternative to waste disposal exists.</p> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">And, it's free.</p>
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Send arrested embryos to Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG) for burial as part of your lab process. Or give the choice to patients, prior to cycle start.

It's easy to have SHG bury arrested embryos.

-Separate arrested embryos from viables, place in 1.8mL cryovial (or similar), and ship to SHG weekly, monthly or quarterly.

-Minimal paperwork requires only lab contact and # of arrested embryos. Patient information is not required.

-SHG provides pre-paid shipping labels and covers all burial costs.

-Quarterly burial in St. Paul, MN.

Contact us to get started:
 Laura Elm, Executive Director
 612-578-0377
 3432 Denmark Ave. #253, Eagan, MN 55123
 info@sacredheartguardians.org

Dr. John Smith
 IVF Center
 123 Main Street
 Anytown, ST 12345

We need your help!

Every year, **hundreds of thousands** of embryonic human beings die in IVF labs and are disposed of as medical waste. They, and their cryopreserved brothers and sisters, need our prayers and our voices.

- ♥ **Donate to SHG.** Your support makes clinic outreach and burial possible.
- ♥ **Have SHG speak** at your parish, Respect Life, or interest group.
- ♥ **Pray with us. Pray for us.**

Donate Electronically:

www.sacredheartguardians.org

Donate by Mail:

Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG)
 3432 Denmark Avenue #253 Eagan, MN 55123

SHG is a 501(c)(3) organization and gifts are tax-deductible.



Sacred Heart *Guardians and Shelter*

3432 Denmark Ave #253
 Eagan, Minnesota 55123

2 Embryos (blastocyst stage)
 Both are unique, alive, and fully human beings.

