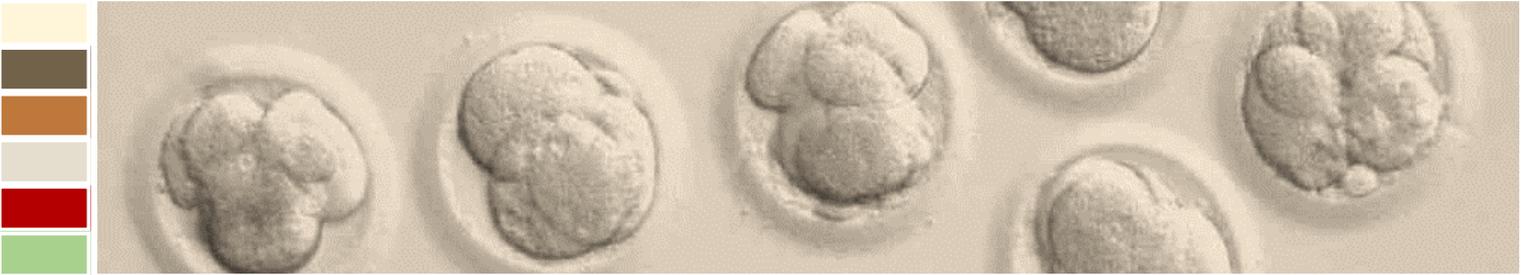


News and information about the youngest human beings



Brought to you by Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter



About Us

Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG) facilitates Christian burial for the embryonic human beings who die in IVF labs. All of our activities are carried out in faithfulness to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church. SHG is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization incorporated in Minnesota.



“Life once conceived, must be protected with the utmost care.” Donum Vitae.

Abnormal Embryos and Human Life: An Embryologist’s Post-Conversion Reflection

by Craig Turczynski, Ph.D.

When Laura Elm, the Director and Founder of Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter, asked me to write something about embryo viability as it relates to the discarding of human embryos, I was at first reluctant. Perhaps that is because it is digging up an unpleasant memory, or it requires deep thought and reflection that is sometimes difficult to do.

For context, after training for 9 years to be a reproductive physiologist, I became an embryologist and laboratory director for a human assisted reproductive technology laboratory. I conducted all the modern technical procedures related to IVF and I discarded many “non-viable” embryos into the medical waste. I can remember always instinctively pausing each time my hand was over the biohazard disposal container, as if to double-check that I was, in fact, discarding the correct embryos. Maybe it was also something else that caused me to pause.

The conversion that led me away from the field took over 7 years. Part of that conversion was because of the realization that IVF was a disordered approach. But it was also because of a deeper knowledge leading a person to realize that they know much less than they thought they did. For example, an embryologist is trained to identify the quality of an embryo. In theory, a higher quality embryo is more likely to result in a live birth than a low-quality embryo.

Except that there are plenty of examples of cases that should have resulted in pregnancy and didn’t. Even more surprisingly, there are examples of embryos that by all conventional measures should never have resulted in a baby, and yet they did. These types of embryos were only transferred back to the woman because they were the only ones available and if they had been subjected to selection by a trained eye, they would have been discarded. *Continued on page 2*

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To rectify this discrepancy in our ability to accurately determine embryo viability, the IVF field has developed extremely sophisticated methods to try to determine which embryos should be given the chance to develop. They use a procedure called preimplantation genetic diagnosis which requires microsurgery to remove one or more cells from the embryo and then analyze chromosome content or a specific gene of interest. It was believed that this powerful technology was a precise way to select viable from non-viable.

Except newer information is now indicating that the pre-implantation diagnosis procedure results in discarding embryos that could have developed normally.

Despite having some cells that are abnormal, an early embryo has the capacity to “self-correct.” It does this by selectively pushing the abnormal cells out and replicating the normal cells. In fact, it appears that the abnormal cells become part of the placenta, leaving the normal cells to become the fetus. This is a remarkable biological process that is somehow “programmed” into these primitive cells.

To me this revelation reinforces the meaning of the Psalmist’s words:

“For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth.” Psalm 139:13-15

Because IVF is a disordered approach, it creates the problem of thousands of embryos discarded, frozen and experimented on while attempting to solve the problem of infertility. But once already formed, maybe we should not be focused so much on judging viable from nonviable. Maybe we should be focused on what else we can do to support continued development for every one of them. Then when despite our efforts, these fragile early human lives end, maybe we should cherish, respect, and give them the dignity all human persons deserve.

Dr. Turczynski is a Reproductive Physiologist, Certified Teacher of the Billings Ovulation Method®, Director of Strategy and Scientific Affairs for BOMA-USA, and currently serves on the board of advisors for Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter.

Our Mission in Action >>>

Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter’s mission is to facilitate Christian burial for the embryonic human beings who die in IVF labs, and who would otherwise be disposed of as medical waste.

SHG facilitates four burials a year for human embryos that die in IVF labs. We outreach to IVF clinics across the country, asking that they send arrested (deceased) embryos to us for burial, rather than throw them out as waste. If they are unwilling to make this decision for themselves, we urge them to present this dignified final disposition choice to their clients.

Our mission witnesses to the reality that human embryos are human beings, and therefore fully human persons, each of whose life *“is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains for ever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end.”* (CCC 2258)

Our mission looks to St. Joseph of Arimathea’s act of charity (see page 3) and to Jesus Himself, as He instructs us on how to inherit His Kingdom by our love for Him expressed by our love for each other:

“And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’” Matthew 25:40



On August 10, 2021, 75 deceased embryonic human beings were prayerfully laid to rest at the Church of the Epiphany’s cemetery. Father Paul Baker celebrated the Rite of Committal with Final Commendation. Since 2018, SHG has facilitated burial for 531 deceased embryonic children.



Meet Our Patron Saint >>> St. Joseph of Arimathea

The following article was originally published by the National Catholic Register (NCR), and is reprinted here with the permission of the author and the NCR. Visit <https://www.ncregister.com/blog/st-joseph-of-arimathea-a-holy-member-of-the-sanhedrin> for the original article.

St. Joseph of Arimathea - A Holy Member of the Sanhedrin

by Theresa Doyle-Nelson. August 31, 2018

The Memorial of St. Joseph of Arimathea is Aug. 31

Rich, distinguished, courageous, virtuous, and righteous are words used in the Gospels to describe Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph of Arimathea was actually a member of the Sanhedrin—the council or court that condemned Jesus. Some assert that the roots of the Sanhedrin go all the way back to the time of Moses (Numbers 11:16–25); its role was to uphold Jewish laws. Joseph lived the way a Sanhedrin member was supposed to: as an earnest seeker of truth—a virtue that brought him to believe in all Jesus stood for. However, Joseph feared ostracism from his fellow council members and so initially kept his following of Jesus a secret.

However, when the Sanhedrin met about and denounced Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea expressed an opposition to their stand: *Though he was a member of the council, [Joseph] had not consented to their plan of action.* -Luke 23:50b–51a

Then, when Jesus was nonetheless led to Pilate and then crucified, it was Joseph of Arimathea who boldly made the official request to take away the dead body, showing a clear and much more obvious love for Christ.

Jesus's death occurred on a Friday afternoon, making the Sabbath just a few hours away. Joseph, with the help of St. Nicodemus (also Aug. 31), was forced to quickly tend to the basic needs of a burial. Fortunately, he happened to have a tomb already prepared, recently carved into some nearby limestone. Some historians suggest that it might well have been prepared for Joseph himself. So, rather than hastily tossing the body of Jesus into a common grave, Joseph carefully wrapped the body in a linen shroud and reverently placed it into this fresh tomb.

Although there is no further mention of him in the Bible, through these few recorded acts, Joseph of Arimathea offers inspiration and encouragement to sometimes risk painful disapproval in order to do the will of God.



Albin Windhausen & Paul Windhausen, "Jesus Dies on the Cross," 1914 (photo of mural: Public Domain)

On the Nightstand >>>

Books, articles, videos, and podcasts on issues pertaining to early human life.

- *IVF Test Actually Rules Out Viable Embryos.* *Futurity.* June 3, 2021. Katheryn Fenz-Rockefeller. <https://bit.ly/3zwWaDI>
- *Discarding IVF embryos: reporting on global practices.* *Journal of Assisted Reproduction and Genetics.* Published online: 1 December 2019. Mara Simopoulou, et. al. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31786731/>

November:

Month of the Holy Souls

We invite you to join us at our next burial on Tuesday, November 2nd, to pray for the deceased embryos interred that day, and for all the dearly departed.

Watch your email and Facebook for details, as they become available.



We need your help!

Every year, **hundreds of thousands** of embryonic human beings die in IVF labs and are disposed of as medical waste. We need your help to give these young souls the dignity of a Christian burial.

- ♥ **Donate to SHG.** Your financial support goes towards the cost of clinic outreach mailings, shipping of embryonic remains to SHG, and grave markers.
- ♥ **Invite SHG to speak** at your parish, Respect Life, or interest group. We can present in-person or virtually.
- ♥ **Pray with us. Pray for us.**



Donate Electronically:

www.sacredheartguardians.org

Donate by Mail:

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



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*Care & Prayer for the
Youngest People*

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