

The Catholic Doctor is In

The Dangers of Artificial Reproductive Technologies:

Making Babies – Life without Love

Helping couples struggling with infertility is a challenging and rewarding part of my practice. I await the results of pregnancy tests just as eagerly as the couples do. If months or years go by and a couple has not achieved a pregnancy, they often turn to infertility clinics where little investigation is done to find out **why** a couple is infertile. Fertility specialists typically steer couples towards their "best (and most expensive) chance" of having *their own* baby through *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), intrauterine insemination (IUI), or even surrogate pregnancy. Children are treated as commodities as each embryo is tested for genetic diseases, sex, intelligence, height, hair color, etc. before discarding, freezing, or implanting them in the mother's womb.

Today, many couples believe that having a biological child is a *right*. While the Catholic church endorses the fruitfulness of marriage, it does not promise that marriages will always bear the fruit of biological children. Though infertility is extremely painful for couples, they deserve a loving response from other Christians and the Church, they do not deserve dangerous reproductive procedures that separate them from God's authentic marital love.

What are the physical and moral dangers of embracing IVF and similar technologies?

1. **The meaning of marital sex as God intended it is undermined.** We are not mere animals producing offspring; we are co-creators with God, procreating human beings with immortal souls. If the holy, conjugal love between a couple has already been distorted by the use of contraception (sex without babies), one can see how slippery the slope can be towards undergoing IVF (babies without sex).
2. **The Marital Act is replaced.** A woman's eggs are harvested after the use of potent hormones that stimulate super-ovulatory cycles that can lead to life-threatening complications. Sperm are combined with these eggs in sterile petri dishes to make embryos; each one a child of God.
3. **Male fertility is evaluated immorally.** Men are asked to give a sperm sample generally stimulated by the use of pornography. Couples are rarely offered a morally-acceptable way to collect a sample.
4. **The husband and wife are separated during conception and the baby is separated from her mother before implantation.** A baby has a right to be conceived by her mother and father and to be carried in the loving confines of her mother's womb. With IVF and other procedures, a technician uses a syringe containing embryos (young

humans) to impregnate the woman. A woman shouldn't need to ask, "Who is making me pregnant?"

5. **Thousands of children are created - and discarded.** Nearly 500,000 embryos are currently frozen across the country - lives that are suspended and abandoned in deep freezers. This number increases daily with no morally sound solution in place.
6. **The mother and baby face many risks.** Children conceived through IVF have a higher rate of birth defects and neonatal complications than naturally-conceived children.

During our wedding ceremony, we take a vow to "accept children willingly from God", but we do not have the right to use any means necessary to conceive and bear biological children. The ends can never justify the means. When a couple is unable to have children, they should be counseled to investigate through moral means why they are infertile.

NaProTechnology (Natural Procreative Technology) is a medical science using moral means to determine the cause of infertility and moral solutions to achieving pregnancy.

NaProTechnology embraces the combined fertility of the married couple in accordance with Church teaching, is proven to be inexpensive (compared to IVF, IUI, etc.), and is very effective for achieving pregnancy. The small percentage of couples who remain infertile after exhausting all moral means to bear children are asked to prayerfully consider other opportunities to live out their marriage vocation – adoption, foster care, or service. More information can be found at: www.naprotechnology.com.

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