

**Bishop Finn has asked that the homilies in the diocese this weekend explain some points about embryonic stem cell research. Some people are gathering signatures to place a state constitutional amendment on the ballot next fall. In the near future someone may ask for your signature on something called “Missouri Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative.” The bishop would like you to be clear about what this means.**

**Stem cells are human tissue in the early stages of development. In embryos, they have not yet differentiated into skin, bones and blood. Stem cells continue to exist in our bodies as we become adults. Adult stem cells have been harvested and used successfully to treat 65 diseases, including leukemia, lymphoma, heart damage, spinal cord and stroke damage, sickle cell anemia, and tissue and bone regeneration. The Catholic Church supports adult stem cell research.**

**We do not support embryonic stem cell research because the harvesting of stem cells from embryos destroys them and kills a human life. That’s bad enough, but researchers want to create human life in the lab by cloning embryos, which will then be destroyed for the sake of their stem cells. The initiative would also allow the killing of human embryos created through artificial conception by married couples trying to have children.**

**This proposed amendment would not increase taxes, but it would allow our tax dollars to be dispersed for these destructive purposes. All this is proposed under a sugar-coated title: Missouri Stem Cell Research and Cures Initiative. I join Bishop Finn in asking you to decline to add your names to the petition as it is circulated, and to vote no next fall if the amendment appears on the ballot.**

**At times like these Catholics feel very alone in the world of progress. We have a hard time convincing people that not everything science can do is what science should do. After all, advances in technology enhance our society and our personal lives. We can sound antiquated when we say no to any form of progress. But humanity progresses in other ways besides science; we also progress in morals, in faith and in love.**

**Parents struggle to explain to children why it is not necessary to own every new toy, gadget and appliance – especially as we throw ourselves headlong into the Christmas season. Progress is not measured by how many things we own; progress is also measured by how much we share. The less we have, the more we can share. That, too, is progress.**

**It is often hard to know the right thing to do. People can lead us astray by the sweetest of words. But when we place ourselves in God’s hands, it all becomes more plain. This Advent season begins with the psalm refrain, “Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.” When it isn’t clear what to do, which values are more important, what to buy, or how to vote, this is a very good prayer to know: Lord, make us turn to you. Let us see your face and we shall be saved.**