

Amendment 2 has become an emotionally charged issue for Missourians. Supporters say the proposed amendment will develop life-saving cures. Everyone wants life-saving cures, including the Catholic Church. Our church opposes this amendment for other reasons.

The problem is that amendment 2 supports embryonic stem cell research. It will allow researchers to clone human embryonic cells in a laboratory dish, and to extract stem cells from them. The embryos are destroyed in the process.

Some people are saying the cells are not embryos because they were formed by cloning, not by sperm and egg. Others say they are not embryos because they exist in a lab dish and not in a uterus. Our church says there is no biological distinction. No matter how they were formed or where they are, they are embryos.

For us, to destroy such an embryo for the sake of research is equivalent to destroying an adult human for the sake of research. Suppose Missouri put on the ballot an amendment permitting scientists to kill mentally disabled adults and harvest their organs for research into life-saving cures. People of good will would find that idea repulsive. Most would say that could never happen here. But for us, this unlikely scenario is morally equivalent to what Amendment 2 proposes. Everyone wants life-saving cures, but no one wants life-saving cures at any expense, especially if it means killing a healthy human.

Also on the ballot this week is Proposition B, which would raise the minimum wage in Missouri for the first time in 10 years. Although it has not grabbed the spotlight as much as Amendment 2, Proposition B has impressed the Missouri Catholic Conference. Right now if you work 40 hours a week at minimum wage, you earn less than \$11,000 a year. That puts you right at the federal poverty level. If you support a family of 3 at minimum wage, you are \$5000 below the poverty level. You can work extra jobs, but you spend less time with your family. The current minimum wage is not a living wage. The Catholic Church favors a living wage that allows a worker to support his or her family.

Both these issues are on the ballot this week. And in case you've heard that I'm going to be in Green Bay, Wisconsin, this Tuesday, I want you to know I have already voted absentee. I voted no on 2 and yes on B. I hope you will too.

The refrain to our psalm today is, "I love you, Lord, my strength." In times of trial, we rely on whatever gives us strength. Sometimes what inspires you is a person you admired, children you are responsible for, or a cause you believe in. We love whatever gives us strength. Ultimately our strength comes from God. When we love God first, all the other decisions we make about our life, work and healthcare will be easy to figure out – as long as we love the source of our strength.