

Human life made the news a couple of times this week, once with regard to the origins of the human race, and later with regard to stem cell research.

Archeologists working in central Ethiopia say they have uncovered remains of an ancestor to the human race. They think modern humans have been around for 100,000 years, so if you think your grandparents or your parents aren't modern, think again. They also say that earlier human creatures, pre-modern humans, evolved two million years ago. This week they reported that they have found an ape-like ancestor to humans over 5 million years old. It will help them trace how humans and apes diverged.

Meanwhile, at the Eastern Virginia Medical School, scientists have admitted they are creating human embryos not to be born, but just for research. They want to extract stem cells. Stem cells can grow into any kind of human tissue. They can get them from fetuses, but they can also get them from adults. Adult stem cells have successfully treated conditions from bone damage to strokes to brain tumors. So far, the stem cells of embryos have not helped anyone, but researchers hope they will help everything from Alzheimer's to Parkinson's.

Legally, research on embryos in the United States has been limited to those sitting in freezers at fertility clinics. There are about 100,000 frozen embryos and very few of them will be born. Here's the moral dilemma: Some people say it's OK to create embryos for research only. Others say that's not right, but if you want to research embryos, use the frozen ones because most of them are just going to be thrown out anyway, and this would make better use of them.

With regard to the origins of the human race, the Catholic Church has no problem with the theory of evolution. We just say that however and whenever human beings got here, God made it happen. With regard to the creation of embryos, we support a couple's desire to have kids, and we support research to cure diseases, but not the creation of embryos for destruction, especially since adult stem cells seem to be helping just fine.

The letter to the Colossians says that Christ Jesus is the firstborn of all creation, and that he is the firstborn from the dead. Everything was created through him and for him, and he holds it all together. We don't know exactly how the human race began, but we believe that God made it happen. We don't understand all the mysteries of human life, but we believe that Christ holds it together. When we deal with humanity, we deal with Christ.

The Catholic Church is all for the advancement of knowledge, but we also promote good moral behavior. Just because we can do something doesn't make it right. If you can hack a website, if you can fake your age, if you can cheat a customer, if you can create an embryo, that only makes it possible. It does not make it right.