



Over stamcellen van menselijke embryo's

**Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to h.e. mr. Ji-Young Francesco Kim,
ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the Holy See**

Thursday, 11 October 2007



Vaticaan, 11 oktober 2007

Your Excellency,

I am pleased to welcome you to the Vatican to accept the Letters of Credence by which the President of the Republic of Korea has appointed you Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Holy See. I take this occasion to renew the expression of my respect and warm affection for the Korean people, and I ask you to convey to President Roh Moo-hyun and all your fellow citizens my prayerful good wishes for the peace and prosperity of your nation.

Your Excellency has noted the remarkable growth of the Catholic Church in your country, due in no small part to the heroic example of men and women whose faith led them to lay down their lives for Christ and for their brothers and sisters. Their sacrifice reminds us that no cost is too great for persevering in fidelity to the truth. Regrettably, in our contemporary pluralist world some people question or even deny the importance of truth. Yet objective truth remains the only sure basis for social cohesion. Truth is not dependent upon consensus but precedes it and makes it possible, generating authentic human solidarity. The Church—always mindful of the truth's power to unite people, and ever attentive to mankind's irrepressible desire for peaceful coexistence—eagerly strives to strengthen concord and social harmony both in ecclesial life and civic life, proclaiming the truth about the human person as known by natural reason and fully manifested through divine revelation.

Your Excellency, the international community joins with the citizens of your country in their heightened aspirations for newfound peace on the Korean peninsula and throughout the region. I take this opportunity to reiterate the Holy See's support for every initiative that aims at a sincere and lasting reconciliation, putting an end to enmity and unresolved grievances. Genuine progress is built on attitudes of honesty and trust. I commend your country's efforts to foster fruitful and open dialogue while simultaneously working to alleviate the pain of those suffering from the wounds of division and distrust. Indeed, every nation shares in the responsibility of assuring a more stable and secure world. It is my ardent hope that the ongoing participation of various countries involved in the negotiation process will lead to a cessation of programmes designed to develop and produce weapons with frightening potential for unspeakable destruction.

Your country has achieved notable successes in scientific research and development. Prominent among these are advances in biotechnology with the potential to treat and cure illnesses so as to improve the quality of life in your homeland and abroad. Discoveries in this field invite man to a deeper awareness of the weighty responsibilities involved in their application. The use society hopes to make of biomedical science must constantly be measured against robust and firm ethical standards (cf. Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, 6 November 2006). Foremost among these is the dignity of human life, for under no circumstances may a human being be manipulated or treated as a mere instrument for experimentation. The destruction of human embryos, whether to acquire stem cells or for any other purpose, contradicts the purported intent of



researchers, legislators and public health officials to promote human welfare. The Church does not hesitate to approve and encourage somatic stem-cell research—not only because of the favourable results obtained through these alternative methods, but more importantly because they harmonize with the aforementioned intent by respecting the life of the human being at every stage of his or her existence (cf. Address to the Pontifical Academy for Life Symposium, 16 September 2006). Mr. Ambassador, I pray that the inherent moral sensibility of the Korean people, as evidenced by their rejection of human cloning and related procedures, will help attune the international community to the deep ethical and social implications of scientific research and its utilization.

The promotion of human dignity also summons public authorities to ensure that young people receive a sound education. Faith-based schools have much to contribute in this regard. It is incumbent upon governments to afford parents the opportunity to send their children to religious schools by facilitating the establishment and financing of such institutions. Insofar as possible, public subsidies should free parents from undue financial burdens that attenuate their ability to choose the most suitable means of educating their children. Catholic and other religious schools should enjoy the appropriate latitude of freedom to design and implement curricula that nurture the life of the spirit without which the life of the mind is so seriously distorted. I appeal to Church and civic leaders to move forward in a spirit of cooperation to guarantee a future for Catholic schooling in your country which will contribute to the moral and intellectual maturation of the younger generation for the benefit of all society.

Your Excellency, on this happy occasion as you begin your mission, I assure you that the Holy See and its various offices will be ever ready to assist you in carrying out your duties. I invoke divine blessings upon you, your family and the people of your country, who hold a special place in my thoughts and prayers at this time.