

# Gene Engineering Draws Opposition

WASHINGTON (NC) - Twenty-one U.S. Catholic bishops, joined by other religious leaders and scientists, have backed a resolution opposing genetic engineering to improve the human species and called on Congress to prohibit genetic engineering of human cells. The religious and scientific leaders compared use of human genetic engineering to nuclear weapons technology. In their resolution, scheduled for release today in New York, the clergymen and scientists "resolved that efforts to engineer specific genetic

traits into the germline of the human species should not be attempted." (The germline refers to basic human cells called germ cells, which can unite with another cell and form a new individual.) According to the Washington-based Foundation on Economic Trends, which released the resolution, the Catholic prelates who back the resolution include Archbishops John L. May of St. Louis; John F. Whealon of Hartford, Conn.; and Daniel E. Sheehan of Omaha, Neb., as well as 18 bishops, including Bishops

Walter F. Sullivan of Richmond, Va.; Leroy T. Matthiesen of Amarillo, Texas, and James W. Malone of Youngstown, Ohio, who is also vice president of the U.S. Catholic Conference. Representatives of other denominations and groups include Methodist Bishop James Armstrong, president of the National Council of Churches; Bishop John M. Allin, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in America; Rabbi Ira Silverman, president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College; the Rev. Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority; and the Rev. Avery Post, president of the United Church of Christ.

Leaders of Lutheran, Baptist, Mennonite, Disciples of Christ and other congregations also were represented. "It will soon be possible to engineer and produce human beings by the same technological design principles as we now employ in our industrial processes," said a statement, called a "theological letter," accompanying the resolution. "Genetic engineering of the human germline cells represents a fundamental threat

to the preservation of the human species as we know it and should be opposed with the same courage and conviction as we now oppose the threat of nuclear extinction," the statement says. "It is very likely that in attempting to 'perfect' the human species we will succeed in engineering our own extinction" because "eliminating so-called 'bad genes' will lead to a dangerous narrowing of diversity in the gene pool," according to the statement. "Since part of the strength of our gene pool consists in its very diversity, including defective genes, tampering with it might ultimately lead to extinction of the human race."

The letter says that manipulation of human genetic material to prevent disease, prolong life and provide other medical benefits, despite its dangers, is "coming to us not as a threat but as a promise; not as a punishment but as a gift. And here is where the true danger lies. "Ultimately, there is no security to be found in engineering the human species, just as we have now

learned that there is no security to be found in building bigger, more sophisticated nuclear bombs," the statement says.

The statement says the genetic engineering opponents hope their resolution will represent "a watershed in our thinking" about science and technology.

"For the first time, it affirms the right of humanity to say no to the application of its own scientific knowledge," the statement says.

"Just because something can be done is no longer an adequate justification for assuming it should be done or that it can't be stopped from being done."

The Foundation on Economic Trends is directed by Jeremy Rifkin, who is author of a new book called "Algeny," in which he "reasons that our decision to develop biotechnology is potentially far more dangerous than our decision to split the atom," according to the publisher.



## The Fire in the Thornbush Dialogue

### Proclamation Of the Word

By Sister Barbara A. Moore, RSM

"Jesus came among us to proclaim day in and day out the Good News of his Father's unfailing love for us." (#60)

Section #60 of the Bishop's pastoral letter, "The Fire in the Thornbush," introduces us to perhaps one of the most discussed, debated and indeed painful sections of the entire letter to the people of our diocese.

Here is the basic model for us! Here is the basic subject matter for us! Day in and day out our baptism calls us to proclaim the wonderful news that our good God is in love with us, has gifted us and calls us to proclaim that love and share those gifts with our brothers and sisters.

The call to proclaim the "Good News" in season and out of season was a deep challenge that faced the early Church. One senses that, almost in spite of themselves, the early Christians could do no other! Filled with the Holy Spirit, compelled by the message and convinced of the call, they proclaimed the Word.

"So they called them in and gave them a warning on no account to make statements or to teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John retorted, 'You must judge whether in God's eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God. We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.'" (Acts 4:18-21)

For many lay men and women within our diocese, the challenge is the same. Filled with a powerful awareness of the Spirit's call, compelled by the message and gifted to share it with their brothers and sisters, they are pained when because of the present norms they are limited to certain times and situations when they can share that gift and call.

Probably faced with a similar question, Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth directing them to settle their struggles about the many gifts that seemed, with the Spirit's prompting, to be emerging within the community.

"There is a variety of gifts, but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose." (1 Cor. 12:4-8)

The pastoral letter is encouraging in that it recognizes the gifts for preaching within the community and calls the church to celebrate those and enable them to flourish. "Even now within the norms of the Church, there is room for lay persons who preach well to do more public preaching than they do, or than we encourage." (#64)

The questions remain, however. Did not the early church foster growth and life by a theology of gift or charism? Are we not setting subtle blocks in the path of the Holy Spirit about whom Paul says, "All these (gifts) are the work of one and the same Spirit who distributes different gifts to different people just as the Spirit chooses"? (1 Cor. 12:11)

What happens to gifts in this in between time... the time between the reality and the vision, the time between the shadows of the Kingdom and the fullness we hope to experience?

The words of Peter and John come back to us. "We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard." For some that will happen through the acceptable avenues within our tradition, and for others it will carry them to the pulpits of other Christian churches that celebrate and accept their gifts.

Somehow, just as in the early Church, the flame of the Spirit of God will continue, and gifts freely given by the Lord will surface and will be laid at the feet of the church and those communities that will accept them.

In that "in between time", therefore, we are called and indeed challenged by that same Spirit to pray for and work for that time when we can rejoice in what God had given and be enriched by the giftedness and beauty of one another, a time when we judge by charism and not by artificial barriers.

Sister Barbara A. Moore, RSM, is executive director of the Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministry.

## Spiritual Direction Seminar to Be Given

"Spiritual Direction: Process and Skills," a mini-course sponsored by the Office of Vicars for Religious and the Office of Continuing Education has been scheduled 9 a.m.-noon, July 11-15, at the Divinity Schools complex, 1100 S. Goodman St.

A flier for the program describes the course as "an examination of the goals of spiritual direction, the role and preparation of the director, the variety of approaches to spiritual direction, and the listening and responding skills in spiritual direction."

Each class session," the release states, "will provide input and discussion on the topics, the observation and practice of fundamental skills in small and large group settings, and input, discussion and practice around the use of verbatims. Preliminary readings, as well as

readings during the week, will be required."

Leading sessions will be Sister Mary Irving, SSND. She holds a ThM in spiritual direction from Weston School of theology in Cambridge, Mass. She is spiritual director at the theologate of the Paulist Fathers in Washington, D.C., and is an adjunct faculty member at the Washington Theological Union there. In addition, she is involved extensively in training programs for laypeople, religious and clergy.

Registration for the course is limited to 35; and a \$50 fee (payable to the Diocese of Rochester) is required with registration by June 28. Inquiries are sent to Office of Continuing Education (SBI), 1100 St. Goodman St., Rochester, N.Y. 14620; (716) 271-1320, ext. 21.

## Mature Driving Courses Scheduled

The 55 Alive/Mature Driving Program has scheduled three more courses for the month of June.

The first will be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on two consecutive Saturdays, June 11 and 18, at the Rochester Council of the Knights of Columbus, 670 Thurston Rd. Call 436-5705 for reservations.

### Judge Ciaccio Naz Speaker

Monroe County Surrogate Court Judge Arnold F. Ciaccio will speak at a special estate planning program, 4:30 p.m., Wednesday, June 8 in the Forum of the Otto A. Shults Community Center on the Nazareth College campus.

The program, entitled "A View from the Bench," is sponsored by the Nazareth College Development Office and its Planned Giving Advisory Committee.

Judge Ciaccio is the first Democrat to be elected county surrogate in Monroe County.

The second course is also offered from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday, June 21-22, at the Messiah Lutheran Church, 4301 Mt. Read Blvd. Reservations for this course can be made by calling 865-6962.

The third course will be offered from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m., on two consecutive Wednesdays, June 22 and 29, at the Fairport Library. For reservations for this session, call 223-5524.

The course is for those 55 years of age or older and for eight hours, four each session. Upon completion, the name of the participant is sent to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), which will issue a certificate.

The certificate, when presented to the recipient's insurance company, should result in a 10 percent discount on the liability portion of the insurance for car owners, a reduction of three points for driving infractions, and make the participant a better all-around driver.

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