

Vatican official criticizes choice for Nobel Prize

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The Vatican's top bioethics official expressed "perplexity" after the Nobel Prize in Medicine was awarded October 4 to the inventor of in vitro fertilization (IVF).

Bishop Ignazio Carrasco de Paula, president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, praised British scientist Robert G. Edwards for opening a "new and important chapter in the field of human reproduction" but blamed him for opening the door to a system of "donations and sales that involve human beings."

"Without Edwards there would be no market for oocytes [unfertilized eggs]; without Edwards there would be no freezers full of embryos waiting to be transplanted into uteruses or, more likely, to be used for research or else die abandoned and forgotten by all," Carrasco said.

The Roman Catholic Church condemns the use of IVF in humans because it leads to reproduction without the "conjugal act" of sexual intercourse, and because it frequently involves the production of excess embryos that are eventually destroyed.

While acknowledging that Edwards should not be "underestimated," Carrasco said that "personally, I would have voted for other candidates" to receive the prize.

The Vatican characterized Carrasco's statement as a personal one, but that did not deter much of the Italian press from disparaging the Vatican's criticism of the award. —RNS