

CBCP Statement On Organ Donation Against Organ Sale

God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him... God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. (Gen. 1:27, 31)

Human organ transplantation gives new hope, particularly to patients with end stage diseases, to recover and regain an acceptable and decent lifestyle. It provides a better quality of life compared with alternative expensive and exorbitant medical interventions (e.g., renal dialysis). Human organ transplantation, however, cannot be separated from the human act of donation. John Paul II states that "It is a decision to offer, without reward, a part of one's own body for the health and well-being of another person. In this sense, the medical action of transplantation makes possible the donor's act of self-giving, that sincere gift of self which expresses our constitutive calling to love and communion." (John Paul II, 20 June 1991, no. 3)

The same act, however, can also be abused and exploited usually at the expense of the economically poor. The lack of access to renal care and the non-affordability of a life-long dialysis increase the demand for organ donors. In spite of the prohibition for health care professionals and facilities, there is an increasing organ sale, especially of kidneys, a practice that is perhaps apparently permitted by some physicians, Kidney Transplant Teams, and hospital authorities. There are even some currents in the Philippines who are advocating a change in policies and guidelines to open the door to incentives for organ donors and, even perhaps, to compensation.

We understand the poor and they should not be blamed. There are other ways to help them but not through organ sale. They are human beings and cannot be treated as commodities. We encourage voluntary organ donation from cadavers and also from living donors. We condemn any form of organ sale and organ trade.

Human organ sale or trade, by its very nature is morally unacceptable. It is contrary to the dignity of the human person, his or her authentic autonomy and the essential equality of all persons. The dignity of the human person as the image of God includes not only his or her soul but his or her corporeal being. Hence, our body ought not to be treated as a commodity or object of commerce, which would amount to the dispossession or plundering of the human body.

We, therefore, ask the government to continue its program towards holistic program of gathering and distributing donated organs. We raise our voice against those who are involved in organ trafficking.

We recommend that a stricter law against those involved in the commercialization or selling of organs be enacted and implemented without discrimination.

A just allocation of the scarce organ donor should be safeguarded. Scarce organ donors should be made available first to the local recipients. A strict limit on allocation should be set for foreign recipients.

We call for the education of our people especially with regards to organ donation. The physician or medical professional has the sublime duty to supply the possible candidates for organ donation with all the necessary information to help them make an informed consent.

Though professional competency is necessary in order to care for those who are sick and in need of medical care, it is nevertheless insufficient. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that: "We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern... these charity workers need a 'formation of heart'; they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others."(Deus Caritas Est, 31 § 2.)

We, the shepherds of the flock, entrust our people and our country to the protection of our Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of life, so that as we begin a New Year of grace, we may enjoy fullness of life.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

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