



Organ Transplant

ἸΧΙΝΟΙΤ ἸΡΑΤΩΩ

Written By His Grace Bishop Serapion
ΠΕΡΙΩΤ ΕΠΤΑΙΗΟΥΤ ΔΒΒΑ Σεραπιον
Bishop of Los Angeles, Southern California and Hawaii



The human body consists of a group of organs. Some of these are vital organs, i.e., the human cannot live without them. Examples of such organs are the liver, the brain, the heart, the lungs, the kidneys and the pancreas. Humans can live without eyes, for example, but they cannot live without a liver. Certain diseases can cause functional failure in one or more of the vital organs, and this leads to death.

With the scientific developments in the field of surgery, anesthesia, and immunology, the human mind was able to overcome the problem of many vital organs functional failure. This is accomplished by transplanting a healthy organ from a living person, or from a person who has just died, into the patient's body. Thus, we hear of the transplantation of a heart, a liver, a kidney, and other such organs, which saves the lives of many people who otherwise would have died. Although organ transplantation gives hope to a lot of people, it has raised many critical questions. Some of which are:

A. Does interception to save a person's life constitute interference with God's Will?

According to His Holiness Pope Shenouda III, a person's life does not contradict religion, neither does making use of modern science for preserving human life contradict religion. Science itself is a gift from God, and the human mind is also a gift from God. Thus it can be used to do good or evil.

Scientific development in this field is a result of the human mind, given to us by God; He gave us the mind to use for the benefit of our life. Besides organ transplantation, there are other things which save many people's lives, e.g. the discovery of certain drugs, such as antibiotics, has also saved the lives of

many people who were near death. Moreover, organ transplantation does not guarantee that the patient will live; he might die after the transplantation. This is left to God's Will.

B. Is it permissible for a person to sell his organs?

God gave the human body a special dignity, "do you know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?" (1 Cor 13: 15), and "do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own" (1 Cor 6:19). Therefore, human organs are not for sale since they belong to God. However, God asks us to love one another and show our love in deed and not only with words, "Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 Jn. 3:18). The epitome of love is shown when one sacrifices himself for others, "greater love has no one than this that one lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15: 13). Thus, although man is not allowed to sell his organs for profit, yet donating one of his organs to save a patient's life is a noble act.

Concerning this point, His Holiness Pope Shenouda III said, "If love can reach the point of sacrifice, and sacrifice can reach the point of laying down one's life, then how easy it is for the one who lays down his life for others to donate an organ of his body to save others!"

C. Is it permissible for a Christian to donate his organ to a non-Christian?

Organ donation is a labor of love that reaches the point of sacrificing oneself. Christian love is deep and knows no limits. It is not restricted by differences in religion, beliefs, or nationality. Christian love that urges a person to donate his organs takes into



consideration the patient's need and not his beliefs or religion.

D. Is transplanting a dead person's organs against his dignity?

In regards to organ transplantation of a deceased person, His Holiness said, organs are eaten by worms, and they are turned into dust. Thus, it is better to make use of the organs of someone who has left our present world in order to have someone else live with them, instead of leaving them to be the food of the worms or to be turned into dust.

The presence of a noble goal behind transplanting a dead person's organs gives dignity to the deceased, not the opposite. Moreover, nowadays a dead person's body is sometimes autopsied for scientific purposes in medical schools, or for legal reasons when a criminal act is suspected as the cause of death. In all these cases, it is not considered to be against the dead person's dignity.

We should encourage people to give instructions regarding the use of their organs after death in order to save patients' lives. Due to the fact that it is sometimes difficult to think of death and to write a will concerning one's organs, some developed countries consider every dead person a donor if he does not give other directions. This is called "hypothetical donation" and it helps in establishing banks of organs.

E. How can the poor benefit from organ transplantation?

Organ transplantation, like many other scientific developments, is very costly, leading many socioeconomic classes to be classified as poor. In

many of the developed countries, medical insurance covers such operations. As for the developing countries, there is a need to have a special fund to cover all or part of the expenses of such operations for the poor. We also need to establish organ banks in order to put an end to the trade of these organs, which increases the cost of such operations.

In Egypt, since the early fifties, corneal transplantation has been successful. A law was issued to regulate obtaining the corneas of those who have died recently. This made it possible to establish a bank of corneas making their transplantation affordable. This bank also supplies the university hospitals with the corneas needed for free treatment of the poor.✝

Who wrote the following Holy Books?

1. Acts
2. Hebrews
3. Revelation
4. Exodus
5. Deuteronomy
6. Proverbs
7. Psalms
8. Esther
9. Ecclesiastes
10. Numbers
11. Chronicles