

IS IT WRONG FOR A CATHOLIC TO BE AN ORGAN DONOR?

It depends. The heart must still be beating for many organs to remain viable...and the removal of those organs causes death.

There are some occasions in which it is clearly permissible. For example when a person has a pair of organs, only one of which is really necessary, one can be removed to transplant to another person, such as in a kidney transplant. There are other cases in which it is permissible, such as eye corneal transplants, where the organ can be taken when the person is clearly already deceased.

However, it is manifestly immoral to kill a person to take one of their organs, even if that person most probably would have died on his own within a short period of time. It is never permissible to kill one person just to help another. Only God has power over life and death.

The problem arises because once a person has actually died, and his cardiac and respiratory functions have ceased for several minutes, his organs will begin to die as well, leaving them damaged in such a way that they cannot be used for organ transplants. ***Hence the organs must be removed before the heartbeat and breathing have stopped.***

The big dispute presently concerns defining whether a person is alive or dead. This involves the concept of ***brain death***¹.

According to modern medical professionals, when a person has been declared "brain dead", by a flat EEG or the absence of respiration if the respirator is turned off, then he must be considered to be dead...despite the fact that his cardiac and respiratory functions are being artificially maintained. ***Consequently, it is permitted, so they say, to remove any or all organs from a person who is still***

¹ For more information, please read the book titled, "*Finis Vitae - Is 'Brain Death' True Death?*", the Proceedings of the "*The Signs of Death*" symposium conducted at the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (PAS), February 3-4, 2005.

breathing and whose heart is still beating, so long as they are proven to be "brain dead."

This has actually become big business, and a "living corpse" like this is likely worth more than \$100,000 for its internal organs.

This practice is not only disgustingly inhuman, it is manifestly anti-God and immoral. Death is the moment at which the soul leaves the body. This is known *only* to God, the Creator of life. While a person is still breathing, even artificially, and while his heart is still beating, he has many signs of life. His body is being maintained in life by the circulation of blood. He is still a human being. It is true that if his brain is "dead" he will never think again, and he will not have the reflexes and reactions that depend upon brain function. However, this does not mean that he is not alive. It just means that there is a permanent irreparable impairment to his human activities.

It is not for man to decide that he is not a man and that he is not alive. Consequently, he must be treated as a living person. Hence no essential organs can be removed until well after all respiration and cardiac action have ceased.