

January 10, 2021

Dear Parishioners,

+JMJJ

As COVID-19 vaccine options become available, questions arise regarding the morality surrounding vaccinations. The main moral issue that concerns Catholics is that historically some of our vaccines have been produced by using biological material from aborted fetuses. Can a Catholic take such a vaccine? Given such questions, various Church authorities have issued directives.

- In 2008, the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued *Dignitas Personae*, which specifically addressed the question of Catholics availing themselves of a vaccine that was created using aborted fetal tissue. That instruction can be found here: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html

- Recently the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Doctrine committee issued a document to answer the same question regarding the current Coronavirus vaccine options. That document can be found here: <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2020-12/us-bishops-covid-clarification-ethical-use-vaccine.html>

- Finally, the Ohio Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement that can be found here: <https://toledodiocese.org/page/coronavirus-covid-19>

Here are primary points from the statement of the Bishops of Ohio:

- Any vaccine must be developed in a morally acceptable manner. Catholics have the obligation to advocate for vaccine production that is morally acceptable.

- However, the Pontifical Academy for Life in 2017 issued a statement making the distinction between the immoral action of creating a vaccine with the use of aborted fetal tissue, and the action of using the vaccine itself. Given the threat of the virus, a Catholic could morally accept such a vaccine that came into existence in a morally compromised way.

- However, if a vaccine option exists that has not been created from aborted fetal tissue, that option should be used. The vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer may be morally taken. “Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development or production... They are not completely free from any connection to abortion, however, as both Pfizer and Moderna made use of a tainted cell line for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their products. There is thus a connection, but it is relatively remote.” But, Vatican documents “all make it clear that, at the level of the recipient [of the vaccine], it is morally permissible to accept vaccination when there are no alternatives and there is serious health risk.”

- Catholics are obliged to advocate for a just distribution of the vaccine, so that those most vulnerable can have access.

- The Bishops and moral experts will give more direction as more information becomes available.

- The Ohio Bishops refer their people to the monthly column by Father Tad Pacholczyk of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, entitled "Making Sense of Bioethics". His column can be found here: <https://www.fathertad.com/writings/making-sense-bioethics/>.

Have a blessed week!

In cordibus Iesu et Mariae,

Father Poggemeyer