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Statement on Vaccines

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Since early 2020, the world and Church have faced many challenges due to COVID-19. Although we now enjoy less restrictions in our daily life and religious worship, we continue to deal with the reality of COVID. Thankfully, we are reminded that Jesus Christ is “the leader and perfecter of faith” (Hebrews 12:2) and that He has given us His Church to guide us through tumultuous times such as these.

The Church has a rich history of moral theology, and in statements from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faithⁱ, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishopsⁱⁱ, and the National Catholic Bioethics Centerⁱⁱⁱ, it is noted that the connection between the COVID vaccines and abortion is remote, and so it is morally acceptable for Catholics to receive these vaccines. However, if possible, one should try to receive a vaccine that has less of a connection with abortion – i.e., one that only used aborted fetal cells in the testing phase (Moderna and Pfizer) and not in the actual production (Johnson and Johnson)^{iv}.

Pope Francis has said that receiving the vaccine is an act of love for your neighbor, and I, too, encourage Catholics to be vaccinated against COVID-19. Our governmental health agencies have also encouraged widespread vaccination in an effort to alleviate the suffering due to COVID, but there are those who have decided not to be vaccinated, due to medical reasons or reasons of conscience and their decision should be respected. Each person has the right and responsibility to inform themselves of the benefits and risks of a given medical treatment, both for themselves and the wider community, and be able to freely make a decision, in consultation with their physician, about whether to receive it.

While schools and workplaces may request that all students, staff, and employees be vaccinated, universal mandates for vaccinations are to be avoided^v. Thankfully, many of the places instituting vaccine mandates have provided the option of a conscience or medical exemption. Since it is the individual’s personal decision of conscience not to receive the vaccine, I request that pastors do not sign conscience exemption forms. To do so would inappropriately insert the pastor between the institution and the individual conscience of the person requesting the exemption. I encourage clergy to be familiar with the various documents referenced throughout this statement, in order to help the faithful form their consciences and guide them through these complex issues.

As we continue to navigate our way through the COVID-19 pandemic, I encourage you to “rejoice in hope” and “persevere in prayer” (Romans 12:12), knowing that Jesus Christ has already conquered sin and death and that our faith in the Triune God can stand firm in the face of the trials and suffering of this life. Blessed are you.

+John M. Quinn

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- ⁱ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "[Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines](#)," December 21, 2020.
- ⁱⁱ Chairmen of the Committee on Doctrine and the Committee on Pro-Life Activities United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "[Moral Considerations Regarding the New COVID-19 Vaccines](#)," December 14, 2020.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ethicists of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, "[Points to Consider on COVID-19 Vaccines and Abortion-Derived Cell Lines](#)," March 30, 2021, updated August 23, 2021.
- ^{iv} "[U.S. Bishop Chairmen for Doctrine and for Pro-Life Address the Use of the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 Vaccine](#)," March 2, 2021.
- ^v "[NCBC Statement on COVID-19 Vaccine Mandates \(Amended\)](#)," August 23, 2021.