

May I be Vaccinated?

Reflections on the Vatican *Note on the morality of using anti-Covid-19 vaccines* [CDF 21 December 2020]

The following information may assist the clergy in advising people on the ethics of COVID-19 vaccines currently available in Australia.

The central ethical issue concerns the use of foetal cell lines from aborted babies in the development of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The science:

1. Cells from aborted fetuses in current use mainly come from abortions carried out in the 1960s and 1970s.
2. These cells have been replicated multiple times so that the existing cell lines are far removed from the original cells taken from the aborted fetuses.
3. The two main ways in which these foetal cell lines have been used in the development of vaccines currently available are:
 - a. The virus is grown on the bed of cells taken from the foetal cell line. The virus is then rendered inactive to produce the vaccine and the foetal cell material is removed; and/or
 - b. The vaccine may be tested for its efficacy using foetal cell lines.
4. In Australia, only two vaccines are currently available:
 - a. The **Pfizer** vaccine **has not** been developed from foetal cell lines but **has** been tested for its efficacy using foetal cell lines. There are no foetal cells in the syringe.
 - b. The **AstraZeneca** vaccine **has** been developed using foetal cell lines **and** tested for its efficacy using foetal cell lines. There are no foetal cells in the syringe.

May Catholics use vaccines developed using cells from aborted fetuses?

(Taken from: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid19-vaccines", 2020

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html)

1. It is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process. However, no one is under a moral obligation to be vaccinated with either of the two available vaccines
2. The morality of vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one's own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good. In the absence of other means to stop or even prevent the epidemic, the common good may recommend vaccination, especially to protect the weakest and most exposed.
3. The fundamental reason for considering the use of these vaccines morally licit is that the kind of cooperation in evil (passive material cooperation) in the procured abortion from which these cell lines originate, is remote.
4. The moral duty to avoid such passive material cooperation is not obligatory if there is a **grave danger**, such as the otherwise uncontrollable spread of a serious pathological agent--in this case, the pandemic spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes Covid-19.
5. The use of such vaccines in no way implies moral endorsement of the use of cell lines proceeding from aborted fetuses. Catholics should encourage lawmakers and companies to make vaccines which do not rely on the use of cell lines derived from aborted fetuses.
6. Those who refuse vaccines produced with cell lines from aborted fetuses must do their utmost to avoid, by other preventative means, becoming vehicles for the transmission of the infectious agent. In particular, they must avoid any risk to the health of those who cannot be vaccinated for medical or other reasons, and who are the most vulnerable.

Action which clergy may take

- Advise parishioners of Church teaching that it can be morally licit to be vaccinated against Covid-19.
- Advise parishioners that they are not morally compelled to be vaccinated.
- Advise parishioners that of the two vaccines currently available in Australia the Pfizer vaccine is to be preferred over AstraZeneca, ethically speaking.
- Advise parishioners that should a person choose to be vaccinated, and AstraZeneca is the only available choice, it is morally permissible to be vaccinated using that vaccine.
- Advise parishioners that they should take into consideration the need to safeguard their own health and the common good in terms of preventing the spread of disease to the vulnerable.
- Advise parishioners of the need to encourage governments and manufacturing companies to seek out and use methods for the development of vaccines which do not involve the use of cell lines derived from the cells of an aborted foetus.

This document has been prepared for and on behalf of the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, South Australia

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