

As we make our way through Lent, the availability of new vaccines against the virus that causes COVID-19 has been a source of new hope. While the pandemic is still going on, and we have a long way to go, we can at least begin to look forward to an eventual return to more usual practices.

Our commitment to protecting the dignity and sanctity of human life urges us to consider vaccination not just for our own sake, but for the sake of others. By being vaccinated, we can help save the health and lives of one another as well as bring this pandemic to a quicker end. As the Bishops of Iowa wrote: “The common good of public health takes precedence over any reservation about being treated with vaccines; they will not be effective if people do not use them.” Links to information about vaccination can be found on the diocesan website at: <https://www.davenportdiocese.org/flu#COVID19Vaccines>.

In addition, I know many of you have raised ethical questions about the use of these vaccines. Briefly, several decades ago, tissue taken from the bodies of aborted babies were used to create “cell lines” for research. These cells are able to continue to divide and replicate themselves indefinitely, and are used in vaccine research, production, and testing. The cells themselves are *not* in the vaccines; neither are cells from “new” abortions being used. In fact, the use of these “immortal” cells makes obtaining new fetal cells unnecessary.

The Church has made it clear that it is wrong to create abortion-derived cell lines and for pharmaceutical companies to utilize them. At the same time, the Church has also said that we can use such vaccines with a clear conscience as long as there are no comparable alternatives without that original connection to abortion and there are serious reasons to do so (like a pandemic). In other words, it is *not* immoral to receive these vaccines.

The Church also makes a distinction between using such cells in research and production (such as the Johnson & Johnson, Merck, and Astra-Zeneca vaccines) and only in testing (such as the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines). While receiving the latter is preferable, it is also true that we will probably not have the luxury of choosing which vaccine to receive when our turn comes. We can do so with a clear conscience.

Again, more detailed information—including statements by the Vatican and the US Bishops—is available on the diocesan website: <https://www.davenportdiocese.org/flu#COVID19Vaccines>.

Our commitment to protecting the dignity and sanctity of human life also urges us to speak up on behalf of the unborn. Therefore, the Church also encourages us to urge vaccine companies to move away from using these cell lines to using other cell lines or processes that do not involve cells from abortions. Such resources are available and are regularly being used to produce other vaccines. Therefore, if you wish, what follows are two sample letters that you can use as examples to write to the vaccine companies in question to both thank them for the tremendous work they have done and to urge them to change their practices so cells derived from abortion are no longer used.

**SAMPLE LETTER #1: TO THOSE COMPANIES USING CELLS DERIVED FROM ABORTION IN
POST-PRODUCTION TESTING ONLY**

Pfizer

Angela Hwang, President
Pfizer Biopharmaceuticals
235 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017

OR

Moderna

Stephen Hoge, MD, President
Moderna Global Headquarters
200 Technology Square
Cambridge, MA 0213

Dear Ms. Hwang / Dear Dr. Hoge:

Please allow me to begin by thanking you for the work you and your team of scientists, technicians, and researchers have done to bring a safe and effective vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2 virus to market so quickly. You have given people around the world hope that this pandemic will soon be over. I imagine it is a source of joy for you knowing how many lives you will save.

However, my gratitude is tempered by the fact that a cell line originally derived from abortion was used in post-production testing of your new vaccine. While I am grateful that such cell lines were not used in the development and production of the vaccine, the same concern for the sanctity of human life that **[leads me to / has led me to]** get vaccinated also leads me to urge you to explore and use other approaches to vaccine research, production and testing that do not involve cells originally derived in an immoral manner. As I understand it, such approaches are readily available. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**SAMPLE LETTER #2: TO THOSE COMPANIES USING CELLS DERIVED FROM ABORTION IN
VACCINE RESEARCH AND/OR PRODUCTION**

AstraZeneca

Ruud Dobber, Ph.D., President
AstraZeneca BioPharmaceuticals
1800 Concord Pike
Wilmington, DE 19897

Johnson & Johnson

Alex Gorsky, C.E.O.
Johnson & Johnson
One Johnson & Johnson Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08933

Merck

Kenneth Frazier, C.E.O.
Merck & Co.
2000 Galloping Hill Rd.
Kenilworth, NJ 07033

Dear Dr. Dobber / Mr. Gorsky / Mr. Frazier:

Please allow me to begin by thanking you for the work you and your team of scientists, technicians, and researchers have done to bring a safe and effective vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2 virus to market so quickly. You have given people around the world hope that this pandemic will soon be over. I imagine it is a source of joy for you knowing how many lives you will save.

However, my gratitude is tempered by the fact that a cell line originally derived from abortion was used in the research and/or production of your vaccine. I am sure that you are aware that many find the use of such cells to be unethical. The same concern for the sanctity of human life that **[leads me to / has led me to]** get vaccinated also leads me to urge you to explore and use other approaches to vaccine research, production and testing that do not involve cells originally derived in an immoral manner. As I understand it, such approaches are readily available. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,