

THE MORALITY OF CERTAIN VACCINES

An excerpt from “On the moral illicitness of the use of vaccines made from cells derived from aborted human fetuses”
Opinion, LifeSite News, 11 Dec 2020

In recent weeks, news agencies and various information sources have reported that, in response to the Covid-19 emergency, some countries have produced vaccines using cell lines from aborted human fetuses. In other countries, such vaccines are being planned.

A growing chorus of churchmen (bishops’ conferences, individual bishops, and priests) has said that, in the event that no alternative vaccine using ethically licit substances is available, it would be morally permissible for Catholics to receive vaccines made from the cell lines of aborted babies. Supporters of this position invoke two documents of the Holy See: the first, from the Pontifical Academy for Life, is titled, “Moral reflections on vaccines prepared from cells derived from aborted human fetuses” and was issued June 9, 2005; the second, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, is titled, “Instruction *Dignitas Personae*, on certain bioethical questions” and was issued September 8, 2008. Both of these documents allow for the use of such vaccines in exceptional cases and for a limited time, on the basis of what in moral theology is called remote, passive, material cooperation with evil. The aforementioned documents assert that Catholics who use such vaccines at the same time have “the duty to make known their disagreement and to ask that their healthcare system make other types of vaccines available.”

In the case of vaccines made from the cell lines of aborted human fetuses, we see a clear contradiction between the Catholic doctrine to categorically, and beyond the shadow of any doubt, reject abortion in all cases as a grave moral evil that cries out to heaven for vengeance (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 2268, n. 2270), and the practice of regarding vaccines derived from aborted fetal cell lines as morally acceptable in exceptional cases of “urgent need” — on the grounds of remote, passive, material cooperation. To argue that such vaccines can be morally licit if there is no alternative is in itself contradictory and cannot be acceptable for Catholics.

One ought to recall the following words of Pope John Paul II regarding the dignity of unborn human life: “The inviolability of the person which is a reflection of the absolute inviolability of God, finds its primary and fundamental expression in the inviolability of human life. Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights — for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture — is false and illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition for all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination.” (*Christifideles Laici*, 38). Using vaccines made from the cells of murdered unborn children contradicts a “maximum determination” to defend unborn life.

The theological principle of *material cooperation* is certainly valid and may be applied to a whole host of cases (e.g. in paying taxes, the use of products made from slave labor, and so on). However, this principle can hardly be applied to the case of vaccines made from fetal cell lines, because those who knowingly and voluntarily receive such vaccines enter into a kind of concatenation, albeit very remote, with the process of the abortion industry. The crime of abortion is so monstrous that any kind of concatenation with this crime, even a very remote one, is immoral and cannot be accepted under any circumstances by a Catholic once he has become fully aware of it. One who uses these vaccines must realize that his body is benefitting

from the “fruits” (although steps removed through a series of chemical processes) of one of mankind’s greatest crimes.

Any link to the abortion process, even the most remote and implicit, will cast a shadow over the Church’s duty to bear unwavering witness to the truth that abortion must be utterly rejected. The ends cannot justify the means. [...] Now is not the time for Catholics to yield; to do so would be grossly irresponsible. The acceptance of these vaccines by Catholics, on the grounds that they involve only a “remote, passive and material cooperation” with evil, would play into the hands of the Church’s enemies and weaken her as the last stronghold against the evil of abortion. [...]

Some churchmen in our day reassure the faithful by affirming that receiving a Covid-19 vaccine derived from the cell lines of an aborted child is morally licit if an alternative is not available. They justify their assertion on the basis of “material and remote cooperation” with evil. [...] Now more than ever, Catholics categorically cannot encourage and promote the sin of abortion, even in the slightest, by accepting these vaccines. Therefore, as Successors of the Apostles and Shepherds responsible for the eternal salvation of souls, we consider it impossible to be silent and maintain an ambiguous attitude regarding our duty to resist with “maximum of determination” (Pope John Paul II) against the “unspeakable crime” of abortion (II Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 51). [...]



Holy Infant Jesus, pray for us.