

## MORAL CONSIDERATIONS OF COVID-19 VACCINES

An excerpt the USCCB's document "Moral Considerations Regarding the New COVID-19 Vaccines"

As Pope Saint John Paul II never tired of proclaiming to the world, "the Church has always taught and continues to teach that the result of human procreation, from the first moment of its existence, must be guaranteed that unconditional respect which is morally due to the human being in his or her totality and unity as body and spirit" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 60). Recognizing that respect due each member of the human race, the Church does not now and has never accepted abortion: "Christian Tradition...is clear and unanimous, from the beginning up to our own day, in describing abortion as a particularly grave moral disorder" (*Evangelium Vitae*, 61).

Both the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Academy for Life emphasize the positive moral obligation to do good and in so doing to distance oneself as much as possible from the immoral act of another party such as abortion in order to avoid cooperation with someone else's evil actions and to avoid giving scandal, which could happen if one's own actions were perceived by other people to ignore or to minimize the evil of the action. [...]

[T]here are different degrees of responsibility in cooperating with the evil actions of others. With regard to people involved in the development and production of vaccines, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explains that "in organizations where cell lines of illicit origin are being utilized, the responsibility of those who make the decision to use them is not the same as that of those who have no voice in such a decision" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Dignitas Personae*, 35). As for the moral responsibility of those who are merely the recipients of the vaccines, the Congregation affirms that a serious health danger could justify use of "a vaccine which was developed using cell lines of illicit origin, while keeping in mind that everyone has the duty to make known their disagreement and to ask that their healthcare system make other types of vaccines available" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Dignitas Personae*, 35).

[Three vaccines have been presented and are likely to be made available in the coming months: those from Pfizer, Moderna, and AstraZeneca. Regarding the first two, aborted fetal cell lines are used in the testing of the vaccines, though not in the vaccines' production. The

AstraZeneca vaccine does, however, use aborted fetal cells in the design, development, production, and confirmatory test of the vaccine's efficiency.<sup>1]</sup>

In view of the gravity of the current pandemic and the lack of availability of alternative vaccines, the reasons to accept the new COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer and Moderna are sufficiently serious to justify their use, despite their remote connection to morally compromised cell lines.<sup>2</sup> [...] The AstraZeneca is more morally compromised [and] should be avoided if there are alternatives available.

While having ourselves and our families immunized against COVID-19 with the new vaccines is morally permissible and can be an act of self-love and of charity toward others, we must not allow the gravely immoral nature of abortion to be obscured. [...] The association with the evil action that comes with receiving benefits from that evil action [...] can have a corrupting influence on one's perception of the evil action, making it more difficult to recognize it as evil. [...] One might become complacent about that action and ignore the obligation to do what one can to oppose the evil action. Another consideration is the fact that one's receiving benefits from an evil action might [make others] less inclined to see that action as evil. [...]

With this in mind, we should be on guard so that the new COVID-19 vaccines do not desensitize us or weaken our determination to oppose the evil of abortion itself and the subsequent use of fetal cells in research. [...]

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<sup>1</sup> While these three "approved" vaccines are all connected to aborted cells in some way, the Sanofi/GlaxoSmithKline (Sanofi/GSK) COVID-19 vaccine is not associated with abortion in any way. See <https://mycatholicdoctor.com/our-services/vaccines> for more information.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing in this document is intended to express any opinion as to the safety or efficacy of any vaccine in general or in any particular case.