

## **Bishop Douglas Deshotel Statement on the Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson Vaccines.**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage populations around the globe. Worldwide over 2.5 million have died. In the United States the death toll is over half a million, with Louisiana's approaching 10,000. Thankfully, vaccines have been developed to reduce the spread and effects of this virulent killer.

As I announced in a previous communication,

"Vaccines are now being made available to various groups throughout the United States. I have reviewed these remedies along with the Bishops of the United States and we have determined, reinforced by the Holy Father Pope Francis, that receiving the new Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are justifiable and morally acceptable ways to help end this pandemic. Being vaccinated should be considered as an act of charity toward others in our communities. I encourage all of the faithful of the Diocese of Lafayette to take this moral evaluation to heart as you make your decision to receive the coronavirus vaccinations as they become available."

I continue to encourage everyone to receive a vaccination, but the new vaccine from Johnson & Johnson has some moral concerns we must acknowledge. Unlike the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, Johnson & Johnson uses a line of stem cells procured from abortions performed over 30 years ago in the production of its vaccine. To the question of whether a person should receive this vaccine in good conscience the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith stated on December 21, 2020,

- "All vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derive.....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."
- This mirrors the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI in *Dignitas Personae*.

Given our present situation and the need to protect ourselves and one another from this virus, my guidance to the faithful of the Diocese of Lafayette is to accept as your first choices the vaccines created by Pfizer and Moderna, but if for any reasonable circumstance you are only able to receive the vaccine from Johnson & Johnson, you should feel free to do so for your safety and for the common good. In addition, I have consulted with Catholic health care representatives, and I understand and appreciate their serious challenges as to the acquisition and equitable distribution of all three vaccines. I therefore support their policy of administering any of the vaccines as circumstances require.

Again, as I have stated in my original letter to the Diocese, "I encourage all of the faithful of the Diocese of Lafayette to take this moral evaluation to heart as you make your decision to receive the coronavirus vaccinations as they become available."

With Hope in the Lord,

+J. Douglas Deshotel  
Bishop of Lafayette

*At the Chancery  
March 1, 2021*