



Diocese of Rockford

555 Colman Center Drive
P.O. Box 7044
Rockford, Illinois 61125

(815) 399-4300
Fax (815) 399-4769

Office of the Bishop

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My brothers and sisters in Christ,

This past week news reports have indicated that a third COVID-19 vaccine, produced by Johnson & Johnson, will begin to be used along with the previously available vaccines produced by Pfizer and Moderna. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine, unlike the previous two, was not only tested with the use of cell lines derived from abortions decades ago, it was also developed and produced using those cell lines.

To address this question, the Chairmen of the USCCB Committees on Doctrine and Pro-Life activities have issued the following guidance:

"The approval of Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine for use in the United States again raises questions about the moral permissibility of using vaccines developed, tested, and/or produced with the help of abortion-derived cell lines.

"Pfizer and Moderna's vaccines raised concerns because an abortion-derived cell line was used for testing them, but not in their production. The Johnson & Johnson vaccine, however, was developed, tested and is produced with abortion-derived cell lines raising additional moral concerns. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has judged that 'when ethically irreproachable COVID-19 vaccines are not available ... it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.'[1] However, if one can choose among equally safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should be chosen. Therefore, if one has the ability to choose a vaccine, Pfizer or Moderna's vaccines should be chosen over Johnson & Johnson's.

"While we should continue to insist that pharmaceutical companies stop using abortion-derived cell lines, given the world-wide suffering that this pandemic is causing, we affirm again that being vaccinated can be an act of charity that serves the common good."

As the Bishop of Rockford, I affirm both this statement from the Bishops' Conference as well as the statement by the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith on the morality of the COVID-19 vaccines. I would like to reiterate the following important points these statements make. Namely, that choosing the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine is preferable. If there is any choice possible we should specifically ask to receive one of those two. However, if one has no choice of vaccines then receiving even the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is morally permissible, given the current pandemic. And finally, choosing to be vaccinated can be both an act of love toward our most vulnerable brothers and sisters, as well as a contribution to the common good of our society.

Prayerfully yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Malloy
Bishop of Rockford