

December 12, 2020

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As the current pandemic continues to devastate families and communities, we must, as people of faith, continue to take necessary steps to protect the health and life of our families and communities, even when it is difficult or uncomfortable.

We are grateful to the clergy, religious and lay people in our parishes, schools, social service programs and health care facilities who have been providing ministry under very difficult circumstances, as well as the parishioners and parents who have made significant sacrifices to help protect public health.

We look with hope toward recent developments to produce effective and life-saving vaccines. We are heartened by the quick progress to date and look forward to working with federal, state and local government leaders to promote widespread vaccination against COVID-19 in the interests of protecting public health and human life.

In response to some questions about the source of the vaccines, we wish to provide some clarity regarding the ethical and moral status of COVID-19 vaccines. As a recent communication from the chairmen of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' pro-life and doctrine committees notes:

“Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccine involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue taken from the body of an aborted baby at any level of design, development, or production.”

At the same time, they add, “They are not completely free from any connection to abortion, however, as both Pfizer and Moderna made use of a tainted cell line for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their products. There is thus a connection, but it is relatively remote.”

Over a number of years, the Holy See has addressed the use of tainted vaccines and, as the chairmen write, “at the level of the recipient, it is morally permissible to accept vaccination when there are no alternatives and there is a serious risk to health.”

Therefore, a Catholic can in good conscience receive these COVID-19 vaccines. Moreover, given the grave risk of harm to others, we strongly encourage the faithful to receive a vaccine against COVID, unless medically indicated otherwise. It is vitally important that the most vulnerable among us and those who are from communities that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID receive the vaccine swiftly. It also is imperative that pharmaceutical companies be urged to develop vaccines that fully respect the dignity of the human person at all stages.

This has been a difficult year. We mourn with all those who have lost loved ones. We pray for the faithful departed and for all those experiencing deep suffering, including illness, loss of

employment, isolation, loneliness and anxiety. May the intercession of Mary, Health of the Sick, bring healing and comfort to our Catholic community. And may she draw us ever closer to her Son, the Divine Physician.

In Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore

Wilton Cardinal Gregory
Archbishop of Washington

Most Reverend W. Francis Malooly
Bishop of Wilmington

Most Reverend Roy E. Campbell Jr.
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Most Reverend Mario E. Dorsonville-Rodriguez
Auxiliary Bishop of Washington

Most Reverend Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore

Most Reverend Denis J. Madden
Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Baltimore

Most Reverend Adam J. Parker
Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore