

NOTES FROM FR. SEÁN

January 10, 2021

In Today's Gospel

John the Baptist was sent ahead of Jesus as, "A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." (Mk 1:3) Although John proclaimed a powerful message of repentance, he recognized his humility before the power of God.

Today we celebrate the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. In today's gospel, he who was without sin entered the waters of the Jordan River as a model for us to follow in our lives. Through his baptism, Jesus consecrated the waters of baptism so that in our baptism, like Jesus, the Holy Spirit will descend upon us, and we will become the beloved sons and daughters of God.

COVID-19 Vaccine

As we continue to fight COVID-19, we have a couple of new weapons. The vaccines to fight the virus are now becoming available. As we decide whether or not to receive the vaccine, we must weigh the moral implications of the vaccine. Currently, there are two vaccines available in the United States, one developed by Pfizer and one developed by Moderna. A third vaccine, developed by AstraZeneca (a.k.a. Oxford vaccine), may also soon be available.

In evaluating the morality of a vaccine, we must look at how it was produced, and if that method of production is morally problematic. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon to use cell lines taken from children who were killed in abortion in medical research. The cells can be used in the development and testing of vaccines and other medications. As people of good conscience, we must seek to avoid vaccines that have been produced using these morally compromised cell lines.

Unfortunately, none of the vaccines currently available, or soon to be available, are entirely free of moral questions. There are, however, significant differences between some of the vaccines. The vaccine produced by AstraZeneca was created using cell lines from aborted children. As such, this vaccine is very morally compromised.

The vaccines created by Pfizer and Moderna did not use cell lines taken from children killed in abortion during their creation; however, they may have used these cell lines in the testing phases of these vaccines. As such, while these vaccines are not entirely free from moral question, the US bishops and the bishops of the State of Michigan have judged that "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 from Pfizer and Moderna are sufficiently serious to justify their use, despite the remote connection to morally compromised cell lines."

We must further weigh the consequences of not receiving the vaccine at all. In their statement, the bishops of Michigan state: "If one were to choose not to be vaccinated, one would have a moral responsibility to embrace the necessary precautions to avoid spreading the disease to others."

Find additional information though the website for the Archdiocese of Detroit at www.aod.org.

Mass Schedule Change

Since the resumption of public Masses in the Archdiocese of Detroit, at St. Mary and St. Richard parishes, we have increased the number of Masses we offer to better to accommodate the need for social distancing at Mass. The Masses that were added to the schedule were never intended to be a permanent addition to our schedule. We continue to evaluate the need for the additional Masses in the schedule and will adjust as necessary.

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The Mass with the smallest attendance is the 5 PM Mass on Sundays at St. Mary. Attendance at this Mass is between 5 and 25 people. Currently, this is not a sustainable number of people to continue this Mass. Therefore, beginning on February 7th, we will no longer offer the 5 PM Sunday Mass. This change will not affect the rest of our schedule. We will continue to offer the Saturday evening Mass at both St. Mary and St. Richard, as well as the 8:30 AM, 11:30 AM and 2 PM Masses at St. Mary, and the 10 AM Mass at St. Richard.

Although I regularly have outside help to cover the Mass schedule, we must pay those priests for their service. I recognize that this change may come as an inconvenience for those who have regularly attended 5 PM Mass, but in a community of our size, it is just not reasonable to offer five Masses on a Sunday. Many communities much larger than us do not offer this many Masses on the weekend. With this change, we will still offer six Masses on the weekend, including 2 evening Masses on Saturday.

We will continue to evaluate the needs of our community in light of the current pandemic. We will make additional changes to our schedule as they become necessary.

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