

In Today's Gospel

St. Paul tells us that "Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom." (1 Cor 1:22) The sign that Jesus offered is his death and resurrection. Today, we take the resurrection for granted, although many consider it a myth. In today's gospel, Jesus is asked for a sign of his authority. Jesus responded, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (Jn 2:19) The Jews were not willing to accept this sign.

We still seek signs, but like the Jews, we are often not willing to accept what God gives us. We tried to create God in our image rather than allowing ourselves to be molded into the image of God. We reject that which is uncomfortable; we reject anything that goes against our desires.

Before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." (Lk 22:42) Jesus did not desire crucifixion, but he submitted his will to the will of the Father. Let us seek God with an open heart and when we see his signs, let us accept them with open arms, even if they are difficult.

Sunday Mass Obligation

For almost a year now, there has been a dispensation for all Catholics from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. On March 13th, this dispensation will end. Starting next weekend, the obligation to attend Sunday Mass will again apply to most people, although many will still be exempt from this obligation.

If there are any potential health risks to your attending Mass, you are still exempt from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass. If you over the age of 65, if you are sick, homebound, or infirmed, if you have flu-like symptoms or symptoms of COVID-19, if your health is compromised, or if you care for any of the previous, then you are exempt from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass.

However, this exemption from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass does not exempt you from the obligation to "keep holy the Sabbath." If you cannot attend Sunday Mass, you should still set aside time on Sunday for prayer and worship of God. Although you can do this in whatever way is most beneficial to you, an excellent way to do this would be by tuning in to our livestream of Mass on Sundays at 11:30 AM or 2:00 PM at www.stmarywayne.org.

COVID-19 vaccines

The vaccines for COVID-19 have now been available for a couple of months. Until recently, there were only two choices, the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines. Recently a third vaccine, produced by the Johnson and Johnson subsidiary Janssen, has become available in the United States. Unfortunately, all these vaccines have used cell lines developed from children murdered in abortion at some point in their development and testing. This leads us to question whether or not it is morally acceptable to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

On December 21st the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) announced 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 the research and production process.*" Because there are no "ethically irreproachable COVID-19 vaccines", we must decide which of the morally compromised vaccines we should receive. Bishop Kevin Rhoades, the chairman of the USCCB Committee on Doctrine stated that, "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."

In evaluating the currently available vaccines, we must look at their connection to abortion. Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna vaccines used cell lines derived from abortion in their development and production. However, both vaccines used cell lines produced from abortion as part of confirmatory tests. As such, the USCCB states that "while neither vaccine is completely free from any connection to morally compromised cell lines, in this case the connection is very remote from the initial evil of abortion."

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The recently released Janssen vaccine and the yet-to-be-released AstraZeneca vaccine were produced using abortion-derived cell lines. Therefore, these vaccines are more morally compromised because they have a more direct connection to abortion and therefore should be avoided if possible.

Although the Church allows the use of these vaccines, even though, to some degree, they are all morally compromised, it recognizes “that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary.”

In making the decision on whether to receive the vaccine, we must recognize that “from an ethical point of view, *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.” (CDF)

Those who choose not to receive “vaccines produced with cell lines from aborted fetuses, must do their utmost to avoid, by other prophylactic means and appropriate behavior, becoming vehicles for the transmission of the infectious agent.” (CDF) If, for whatever reason, you choose not to receive the vaccine, you must do your best to avoid any risk to the health of those who are most vulnerable.

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