Statement from Bishop Michael C. Barber, S.J.
On Religious Exception from COVID-19 Vaccine

The Catholic Church recommends people get vaccinated against COVID-19, and for good reason.

The Vatican has stated the connection with aborted fetal tissue is remote enough that it is morally permissible to take the vaccine.

Therefore, since the Catholic Church has formally recommended its members receive the vaccine, a "religious exemption" would not apply to Catholics.

The Church also teaches people should not be forced to take the vaccine against their will. The Diocese of Oakland will not mandate obligatory vaccination for our employees and clergy. But we do mandate that our Catholic school employees unable or unwilling to be vaccinated get tested every week.

If a Catholic feels it is against their conscience to take the vaccine, that is a decision between them and God. True, the Church teaches people should follow their consciences. But a priest or bishop may not sign a "religious exemption" for a conscientious objection. They are two different things.

As faithful Catholics and responsible citizens, we have the moral and civil obligation to protect the well-being of our society. To get vaccinated is to protect ourselves, our neighbors and to help stop the spread of this deadly virus.

Pope Francis received the vaccine. So did Pope Benedict. We recommend you get vaccinated too.

For the greater glory of God