



¡Ven, Holy Spirit, Ven!

Statement of Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS, regarding the moral permissibility of the use of the recently released vaccines for COVID-19

December 4, 2020

We have been notified by Texas Governor Greg Abbott that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made an initial allotment of more than 1.4 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccines to the state this month. These vaccines, possibly arriving by mid-December, will be distributed to qualifying providers across the state who will administer these immunizations.

Faithful Catholics will have questions about the moral permissibility of using vaccines for COVID-19, especially those which have been developed by Pfizer and Moderna. To assist in the formation of the consciences of the faithful of the Archdiocese of San Antonio, I am enclosing a memorandum with additional information recently sent to the bishops of the United States by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Ind., chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Doctrine; and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

The memorandum provides clarification regarding the moral permissibility of the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines for COVID-19. Unfortunately, as has been reported, there has been some confusion about these vaccines, with some asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines, then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. That is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching, and the memorandum goes into great detail on this subject, with reference made three times to material from the Pontifical Academy for Life on these issues.

Although it is not referred to in the memorandum from the USCCB, a vaccine produced by AztraZeneca has also received news coverage recently. Due to its origins and the cell lines from which it was derived, this specific vaccine is of moral concern, however, it is also acceptable to receive this vaccine if it is the only one available to our people, according to Catholic moral teaching.

The Church in San Antonio, as well as throughout the world, stands in solidarity with and is indebted to the medical researchers and healthcare professionals who are selflessly and tirelessly giving themselves to our whole community during this pandemic.

As I stated in my pastoral letter, "Transformed by Hope, Let Us Rebuilt Our Tomorrow!" written to the people of God in the archdiocese on the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, "While we wait and work for this crisis to be over, let us hope together not that this will just be an episode in history from which we recovered, but a turning point that we embraced allowing God to heal and transform each one of us, our Archdiocese and the whole world into something better. ... With God nothing is lost! Our hope in the Lord sustains us!"

A handwritten signature in black ink. The name "Gustavo" is written in a large, flowing cursive script. Below it, "msps" is written in a smaller, more compact cursive script. There is a small mark to the left of the "G" in "Gustavo".

Most Reverend Gustavo García-Siller, MSpS
Archbishop of San Antonio



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MEMORANDUM

TO: BISHOPS OF THE U.S.C.C.B.

FROM: MOST REVEREND KEVIN C. RHOADES
BISHOP OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON DOCTRINE

MOST REVEREND JOSEPH F. NAUMANN
ARCHBISHOP OF KANSAS CITY
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON PRO-LIFE ACTIVITIES

SUBJECT: VACCINES FOR COVID-19

DATE: 23 NOVEMBER 2020

There appears to be some confusion in the media regarding the moral permissibility of using the vaccines for COVID-19 developed by Pfizer Inc. and Moderna. We would like to offer some clarifications.

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.¹ 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.

Some are asserting that if a vaccine is connected in any way with tainted cell lines then it is immoral to be vaccinated with them. This is an inaccurate portrayal of Catholic moral teaching.

There are three documents from the Holy See that treat the question of tainted vaccines: 1) the 2005 study by the Pontifical Academy for Life, "Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Foetuses"; 2) paragraphs nos. 34-35 in the 2008 Instruction on Certain Bioethical Questions (*Dignitatis Personae*) by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; 3) the 2017 Note on Italian Vaccine Issue, by the Pontifical Academy for Life.

These documents all point to the immorality of using tissue taken from an aborted child for creating cell lines. They also make distinctions in terms of the moral responsibility of the various actors involved, from those involved in designing and producing a vaccine to those receiving the vaccine. Most importantly, they all make it clear that, 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.

¹ See the chart provided by the Charlotte Lozier Institute: [COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf](https://www.clon.org/COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf) (pcdn.co).

The Pontifical Academy for Life gives as an example the case of rubella (German measles): "We find, in such a case, a *proportional reason*, in order to accept the use of these vaccines in the presence of the danger of favouring the spread of the pathological agent, due to the lack of vaccination of children. This is particularly true in the case of vaccination against German measles."²

The Pontifical Academy does call for appropriate expressions of protest against the origins of these vaccines as well as for vigorous efforts to promote the creation of alternatives. "There remains a moral duty to continue to fight and to employ every lawful means in order to make life difficult for the pharmaceutical industries which act unscrupulously and unethically." The Pontifical Academy adds, however, that public health must not be sacrificed. "The burden of this important battle cannot and must not fall on innocent children and on the health situation of the population."

² Pontifical Academy for Life, "Moral Reflections on Vaccines," (9 June 2005) in *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 6:3 (2006): 541-49, especially n. 16.