



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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Church teaching on the MMR vaccine

At The measles outbreak has once again raised the issue of vaccination in general, and the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine in particular.

With regard to the MMR vaccine, some people object to using it because the rubella component was made from a cell line developed from a child aborted in the 1960's. At present, in the United States the only available FDA-approved vaccine for measles is the combined MMR vaccine.

In 2003, some MMR vaccine opponents asked then-Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, to support their claim that using this vaccine is an immoral cooperation in the grave sin of abortion.

Cardinal Ratzinger assigned the study to the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAL). In its 2005 document, the PAL stated that the origin of the MMR vaccine is abhorrent, and that vaccines not tainted by abortion should be used when they are available.

But the PAL went on to say that until an alternative vaccine is available, it is mo ally acceptable to used the tainted MMR vaccine "in order to avoid a serious risk not only for one's own children but also, and perhaps more specifically, for the health conditions of the population as a whole — especially for pregnant women."

The PAL describes public health as the greater good, the proportionate reason for using a tainted MMR vaccine. Any hesitation about using the MMR vaccine should be resolved in favor of the common good of public health: the health of other children, pregnant mothers, and the general population.

The conclusion of the PAL study uses very strong language, stating that if anyone is exposed to measles, mumps, or rubella from children who were not immunized with the MMR vaccine, the negligent parents would be morally responsible for any harm those people suffered.

Some pro-life groups have a different opinion about the morality of using the MMR vaccine. They are to be commended for their deeply felt pro-life stand on issues and abhorrence for abortion, but they do not speak for the Catholic Church, even if their members or audience might be Catholic.

On the matter of the morality of using the MMR vaccine, the Catholic Church, through the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Pontifical Academy for Life, has spoken, and quite clearly.

Michael Jackels

Archbishop of Dubuque