

Church teaching on the MMR vaccine

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



Archbishop Jackels

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 morally acceptable to use 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.

ICC update: Iowa high court to hear 'webcam' abortion case

By Tom Chapman
Iowa Catholic Conference
Executive Director

Start Date for Iowa Public Schools

You may have been hearing some discussion about a "start date" for Iowa's public and non-public schools. Iowa law requires schools to start no earlier than the week that contains the first day of September. However, for many years the state has allowed schools to get a waiver and pick an earlier date to start school.



Tom Chapman

Following objections from the tourism industry and the Iowa State Fair, the governor has decided not to allow any waivers. This poses a problem for many schools, including Catholic schools, that want to set an earlier date, as has been the common practice for years.

There are two bills moving in the legislature to address the issue. Senate File 227 would allow schools to set a date in accord with the "best educational interests" of

the students. House File 13 would create a start date for schools of no earlier than Aug. 23.

Our perspective has been that we support our Catholic schools' ability to set their own start date according to local community and education needs. But as a practical matter, to fix the current problem, the governor would have to agree to sign a bill. Therefore it seems unlikely that schools will retain the ability to set their own start date whenever they wish. Discussions will continue at the statehouse on what the start date might actually be.

Education Celebration

Iowa Catholic Conference staff members, along with the diocesan superintendents of schools, are part of the board membership of the Iowa Alliance for Choice in Education. Part of our board meeting last week was spent preparing for the "Education Celebration" on Tuesday, March 3 at the Iowa State Capitol. You're invited — our goal is 1,000 attendees! Go to www.iowaace.org for more information.

The keynote speaker at a noon rally will be Virginia Walden-Ford. She was one of about 130 black students who were hand-picked to desegregate the Little Rock, Arkansas high schools in the mid-1960s. She became a key leader in organizing parents to support school choice and the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Act "voucher" program. Walden-Ford is a founding member of the Black Alliance for Educational Options.

Before and after the rally, we plan for many parents to visit with legislators about the current School Tuition Organization program and Education Savings Accounts.

Iowa Supreme Court to hear "webcam" abortion case

The Iowa Supreme Court has set a date of March 11 to hear arguments on a lawsuit against the state Board of Medicine's rule essentially prohibiting "webcam" abortion. In 2013 the board approved a rule that would require a physician to be physically present when abortion drugs are being provided, rather than pushing a button following a remote video consultation. A district court upheld the rule, but Planned Parenthood has appealed to the Iowa Supreme Court.

We believe the Board of Medicine has a right to establish a minimum standard of care for such a serious procedure.

Tax Help

From the Diocese of Davenport — Tax time is confusing for many people, and as a result many may not receive important tax credits for which they qualify. Two of these are the Earned Income Credit (EIC) and the Child Tax Credit (CTC). The IRS offers an outreach package for anyone interested in educating others about these important tax credits and the availability of free tax assistance. The toolkit is found at www.eitc outreach.org.

Bishop testifies on immigration

At the federal level, Bishop Gerald Kicanas of Tucson, Arizona, testified on behalf of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) Committee on Migration last week before the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security in opposition to three enforcement-only bills. Collectively, the bills would harm immigrant and refugee children; criminalize undocumented persons and those who provide them with basic needs assistance, including religious and church workers; and permit states and localities to create and enforce their own immigration laws.

"We believe the Board of Medicine has a right to establish a minimum standard for such a serious procedure."

Instead, he urged the subcommittee to pass comprehensive immigration reform legislation, including a path to citizenship for the undocumented.

Please take some time to call Congress on Ash Wednesday, Thursday or Friday this week and leave this message: "Please oppose including language in a DHS funding bill which reverses the President's executive actions on immigration and please pass comprehensive immigration reform." The toll-free number to call Congress is (855) 589-5698.

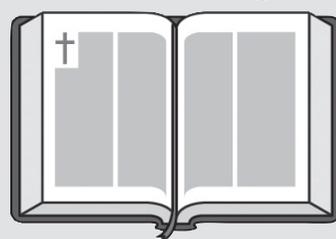


Expect imperfections and limitations from your spouse and yourself. You can be partners in your imperfection. This positions you to work together to solve problems, instead of competing with each other or blaming each other.

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Scripture Readings



Week of Feb. 22-28

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 9:8-15
1 Pt 3:18-22
Mk 1:12-15

MONDAY

Lv 19:1-2, 11-18
Mt 25:31-46

TUESDAY

Is 55:10-11
Mt 6:7-15

WEDNESDAY

Jon 3:1-10
Lk 11:29-32

THURSDAY

Est C: 12, 14-16, 23-25
Mt 7:7-12

FRIDAY

Ez 18:21-28
Mt 5:20-26

SATURDAY

Dt 26:16-19
Mt 5:43-48

Stewardship - A way of life

The waters of Baptism make us part of the new covenant in Christ. But the bishops' pastoral letter on stewardship reminds us that "there is a fundamental obligation arising from the Sacrament of Baptism...that people place their gifts, their resources — their selves — at God's service in and through the Church."