

Considerations about “The Vaccine”

SOME BASIC INFORMATION AND LINKS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A number of parishioners and their family members and friends have been inquiring as to how the coronavirus vaccines should be regarded from a faith perspective. Interest in this question has increased as of late, because, vaccines are becoming more available in our own city and also there is also a lot of information available in the news and online. Some of that information may be conflicting or confusing at times.

What would the Church have to say about the vaccine? Any concerns would be questions about the **ethical** reliability in the **production** of a vaccine and also about the **fair** and **appropriate distribution**. So, as people that want to be **faithful** to the teachings of our Church, we need to do a bit of study as to what the Church is saying about these vaccines and what is the reality/truth about the vaccines

A significant amount of information and *opinion* has been publicized with regard to what the Catholic position *should* be with respect to the Covid-19 vaccines that are now approved by the government for Manitoba. There have been **Vatican statements** and **pastoral letters** by Canadian Bishops.¹ So hopefully these reflections will be of some help as we all will have to discernment what we will do personally and for our dependants. Let's talk about it and explore together...

The Church issued a statement on vaccines some 15 years ago when it became well known that most vaccines and some other widely-used medical treatments were using cell lines from aborted fetuses ® to develop and test the products. This raised concerns that we could not turn a blind eye to the fact that (*cells from*) innocent human babies were being used to create our medicine. Moreover, if we accepted such vaccines would we indirectly be colluding in the evil of abortion and basically saying the end justifies the means. So... the 2005 statement [*Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Fetuses*](#) is not a terribly long read, but it gets somewhat technical in its terminology on bioethics and theology. However, in 2020 with a new Covid-19 vaccine being researched, the Vatican issued a somewhat simplified document to give Catholics some guidance. This 2020 document is entitled, "[*Note of the Morality of Using Some Anti-Covid-19 Vaccines*](#)".

In Brief

The basic Church position may be summarized in three general points...

1. We unequivocally **voice our disapproval** of ethically tainted vaccines and **renew our call** for vaccines that are developed and produced in ways that are morally acceptable.

2. The faithful **may take a vaccine**, even one that is *ethically compromised*, if there are no alternatives and if personal wellbeing clearly suggests that using a vaccine is crucial for them.

3. Individuals for whom ethical or practical apprehensions are a serious concern are **not morally obliged** to take a vaccine. However, they must give due consideration to the consequences of such a decision and they should take every **precaution to ensure** their own wellbeing and that of others.

Additional Comments

Regarding point 1. The Bishops of Canada [appealed to the Government back in May of last year](#) that the latter would do the right thing and support the research and development of a vaccine (or at least an optional vaccine) that would not pose a moral dilemma for those that take their faith seriously and would hesitate or decline to take a vaccine that is connected with the tragedy of abortion. The appeal so far has gone unnecessarily unheeded. The vaccines presently approved for Canada have raised issues that include the ethical nature of research and testing, safety concerns² and even efficient and fair distribution.

The safety and efficacy of the vaccines, will require individuals to do their own due diligence as to whether they feel comfortable with taking a rapidly produced vaccine and one that reportedly may have other issues of an experimental issue. It is a grave problem that reports show that there is *no* covid-19 vaccine available that has not used tissue obtained from intentionally *aborted* human *foetuses* or ultimately *discarded* human *embryos* in its development, including testing.³

Regarding point 2. Recognizing that not everyone needs to take a vaccine and not everyone will *want* to – or will be *able* to - take the vaccine for various reasons, those that would want to take the vaccine have that choice complicated with **issues of conscience**. Alas, we in Canada are presently being forced to make the choice between an ethically tainted vaccine and going **unvaccinated**. [There are a few ethically acceptable vaccines in the works, but it is unknown when/if Canada will approve them, giving Canadians an option.] In the meantime, however, what can be done? The Church has clarified that, for reasons of personal health safety, taking even the ethically tainted vaccine may be an option. How so? Yes, the vaccines are associated with the global tragedy of abortion, but the association **may** be considered *distant*. The actual intentions of persons wanting to use the vaccine and the circumstances that compel them to use it would make any cooperation with abortion “very remote”. Because of this, the Church’s present position is that **if the dangers of the coronavirus are considered grave enough, then those dangers would outweigh any unintended and “remote” cooperation with abortion on the part of the vaccine recipient**. [Some statements from bishops do suggest, however, that this may not apply equally for all vaccines. While all vaccines are “tainted”, [some vaccines are more objectionable than others](#).]

Regarding point 3. All citizens have become concerned over the spread of Covid-19, and we all look forward to a reasonable return to *normal* social life, economic stability and

open public worship where we will have complete access to the “*essential services*” of our Church.⁴ We understand the need to adhere to precautionary health-safety measures. Our parishes and other institutions throughout all our jurisdictions **have adhered to public health orders and other self-imposed directives from the earliest days of the pandemic**. As part of the Archeparchy, our parish collaborated with public authorities in trying to work through this pandemic as safely and efficiently as possible. However, we have never, nor would we, abandon our commitment nor silence our voices with regard to any questions of human rights and freedoms. Our parishioners certainly have the right of faith and worship.⁵ Our parishioners have the right not to be unduly coerced into actions or circumstances that they find morally objectionable or dangerous to their wellbeing – whether physical, emotional or spiritual. Therefore, we all must carefully weigh all the information at our disposal as well as all the possible consequences before making a decision **to take or not take** the vaccine. Any **vaccination, of course, must be voluntary**.

Final Remarks

Any discussion and decision we make about the vaccine must quite simply be based on the concept of **charity** - that selfless and authentic *love* that must be at the very core of those the two greatest commandments of **love of God** and **love of neighbour** (Mt 22:37-40).

Yes, we are all tired of the pandemic. The threat of the coronavirus, the hardships that many have endured - even in our own parish – of illness, loss of loved ones, loss of work, sometimes barred from our own church, etc. have us all weary of the pandemic and hoping that it will end soon. We don't know when or how that will look like. But we want to do whatever we can to support each other, to “keep the Faith” and be stay safe and watchout for the safety of others.

There is a lot we can talk about the vaccine and share and help us decide what to do. Several parishioners have already started discussions and shared information. This little “reflection” became **m u c h l o n g e r** than I wanted, but **Let's talk** and **pray** and **seek truth** together and discern **the direction we need** to take. That's one of the benefits of belonging to a parish ‘family’ - we can bounce things off of each other and support each other. I look forward to hearing your thoughts and sharing mine.

Fr. Michael

¹ [Bishops of Alberta and Northwest Territories Issue Letter on Ethical Considerations Surrounding an Anti-COVID Vaccine - Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops \(ccc.ca\)](#)

² [Canada shouldn't use AstraZeneca COVID vaccine on seniors, national panel advises | National Post](#)

³ For example, see: [COVID-19-Vaccine-Candidates-and-Abortion-Derived-Cell-Lines.pdf \(pcdn.co\)](#)

⁴ cf. Matthew 28:19; John 6:53; Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25; etc.

⁵ Constitution Act (1982), Part 1, 2 Fundamental Freedoms, [Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982 \(justice.gc.ca\)](#)