



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

February 22, 2021

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We are hearing a lot more about ‘COVID fatigue’ these days. It seems that people are becoming tired of being constantly bombarded with information about the pandemic. We have medical experts, and many others, who are constantly sharing facts, figures, and opinions about the coronavirus. The truth is, that what we are being told can be contradictory and misleading at times.

With so many voices, we can feel overwhelmed and confused. This is especially true when we consider what is being said about the coronavirus vaccines. What are we to believe?

As your bishop, I would like to add one more voice that I hope will help to bring some clarity to this situation. Since medical science is not my area of expertise, I will only speak about our Church’s response to the ethical use of these vaccines.

From a moral perspective, there is a significant concern because all of the current vaccines have used abortion-derived cell lines in either testing or in production. Unfortunately, there are no other ethical vaccines available at the present time. It is hoped that in the near future, a vaccine can be produced that has no connection to abortion. We need to be strong advocates, lobbying pharmaceutical companies, if we want this to happen.

At the present moment, many Catholics question whether they can receive this vaccine in good conscience. This is a serious matter, so the Church has offered some guidelines to assist in making that decision.

You will find information concerning the COVID-19 vaccines on our Diocesan Website (www.saintcd.com). The resource is entitled, “Directives Concerning COVID-19 Vaccines.” This brief two-page document summarizes the essential criteria for reflection on this issue, and I hope that you will find it helpful. It also contains links to other Church documents that you should find useful.

One of those resources is from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. I wish to highlight one paragraph from that document that offers some important considerations regarding the COVID-19 vaccination.

“At the same time, practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary. In any case, from the ethical point of view, *the morality of vaccination depends not only on the duty to protect one's own health, but also on the duty to pursue the common good.* In the absence of other means to stop or even prevent the epidemic, the common good may recommend vaccination, especially to protect the weakest and most exposed. Those who, however, for reasons of conscience, refuse vaccines produced with cell lines from aborted fetuses, must do their utmost to avoid, by other prophylactic means and appropriate behavior, becoming vehicles for the transmission of the infectious agent. In particular, they must avoid any risk to the health of those who cannot be vaccinated for medical or other reasons, and who are the most vulnerable” (CDF, Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines, #5, December 17, 2020).

In summary, I wish to state that from a moral perspective, if certain conditions are met, a Catholic can receive this COVID-19 vaccine in good conscience. Our Diocesan Directives Document helps to explain those conditions as clearly as possible.

In her wisdom, the Church has developed moral principles that assist us when faced with challenging personal decisions. They can assist us at this moment as we consider the use of the COVID-19 vaccines.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will grant us wisdom and that Our Blessed Mother will lead us to what is good, true, and beautiful. May she bring us to her Son, Jesus Christ, who will give us peace during these trying times.

With prayerful best wishes, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gerard Bergie". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D.
Bishop of St. Catharines