

SAINT BENEDICT CENTER
The Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
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Saint Martin of Tours, Confessor and Bishop
November 11, 2021

To Whom It May Concern,

Pax Christi. This letter explains how Catholic teachings can and sometimes do lead individual Catholics to decline certain vaccines and other medical interventions, and that the principles underlying these decisions have direct applicability in the present instance of the COVID-19 “vaccines.”

First, the currently available COVID-19 “vaccines” produced by Moderna, Janssen Research & Development, Inc. (Johnson & Johnson), Pfizer and BioNTech, were all designed and developed, and/or produced, and/or *at least* lab tested using aborted fetal cell lines. Catholics believe that abortion is murder, that is, a direct violation of the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue: “Thou shalt not kill.” To benefit from murder by utilizing medical interventions developed using or tested with aborted fetal cell lines is to participate (even if only remotely) in that grave moral evil. For Catholics, the illicitness of both *abortion* and *participation in abortion via the use of unethically sourced medical interventions* constitute sincerely held religious beliefs. The authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church is that such treatments or vaccines could only be used in circumstances of grave threat to one’s own life and only if no ethically sourced treatment is available (documentation supplied below). Applying this principle to the currently available COVID-19 “vaccines,” while also keeping in mind the actual data pertaining to deaths and injuries from COVID-19 itself and the availability of ethically sourced and effective treatments for COVID-19, a Catholic may and should conclude in good conscience that the use of any of these unethically sourced “vaccines” is gravely immoral and therefore forbidden.

Second, Catholics adhere to the fundamental Natural Law doctrine that the first principle of medical ethics is “do no harm.” For us, this constitutes a sincerely held religious belief. Applying this time-honored and sound principle of medical ethics to the known and easily available data on the cases of death and injury caused by the COVID-19 “vaccines” produce the following results: The COVID-19 “vaccines” are now scientifically documented by the VAERS database to have caused over 17,000 deaths (mostly from strokes, heart attacks and blood clots) and over 800,000 cases of more or less severe injury to their recipients. *Catholics and others exercising their rational faculties may reasonably harbor a prudent concern that these hurriedly developed “vaccines” can and may actually kill or injure them.* Therefore, in good conscience, a Catholic may and should conclude that the use of these “vaccines” is *forbidden* on moral grounds. (See below on “therapeutic proportionality.”)

What follows is documentation *for* and a further elucidation *of* these two arguments.

The Catholic Church teaches that a person may be required to refuse a medical intervention, including a vaccination, if his or her informed conscience comes to this sure judgment. While the Catholic Church does not prohibit the use of vaccines *per se*, the following authoritative Church teachings demonstrate the principled religious basis on which a Catholic may determine that he or she ought to refuse certain vaccines:

- **Vaccination is not morally obligatory in principle and so must be voluntary.** (Cf. “Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines” a document published by the Catholic Church’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith [CDF] on 21 December 2020:
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html)
- **There is a moral duty to refuse the use of medical products, including certain vaccines, that are produced using human cells lines derived from direct abortions.** It is permissible to use such vaccines *only under certain case-specific conditions*, based on a judgment of conscience. Those conditions are not presently met by the COVID-19 “vaccines” and therefore Catholics may and should rightly conclude that they may not take this vaccination. (Cf. CDF instruction of 8 September 2008 “*Dignitas Personae*”:
https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html)
- **A person’s informed judgments about the proportionality of medical interventions are to be respected unless they contradict authoritative Catholic moral teachings.** (cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB] document, “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” Sixth Edition, June, 2018:
<https://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/ethical-and-religious-directives/upload/ethical-religious-directives-catholic-health-service-sixth-edition-2016-06.pdf>)
- **A person is morally required to obey his or her sure conscience.** (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, pars. 1790-1794).

A Catholic may judge it wrong to receive certain vaccines for a variety of reasons consistent with these teachings, and there is no authoritative Church teaching universally obliging Catholics to receive any vaccine. An individual Catholic may invoke Church teaching to refuse a vaccine developed or produced using abortion-derived cell lines. More generally, a Catholic might refuse a vaccine based on the Church’s teachings concerning therapeutic proportionality. Therapeutic proportionality is an assessment of whether the benefits of a medical intervention outweigh the undesirable side-effects and burdens in light of the integral good of the person, including spiritual, psychological, and bodily goods. Therapeutic proportionality can also extend to the good of others and the common good, which likewise entail spiritual and moral dimensions and are not reducible to public health. The judgment of therapeutic proportionality must be made by the person who is the potential recipient of the intervention in the concrete circumstances, not by public health authorities or by other individuals who might judge differently in their own situations (cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB] document, “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” Sixth Edition, June, 2018: <https://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/ethical-and->

religious-directives/upload/ethical-religious-directives-catholic-health-service-sixth-edition-2016-06.pdf).

At the core of the Church's teaching are the first and last points listed above: vaccination is not a universal obligation, and a person must obey the judgment of his or her own informed and certain conscience. In fact, the *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH* (par. 1778) instructs that following one's conscience is following Christ Himself:

In all he says and does, man is obliged to follow faithfully what he knows to be just and right. It is by the judgment of his conscience that man perceives and recognizes the prescriptions of the divine law: "Conscience is a law of the mind; yet [Christians] would not grant that it is nothing more; . . . [Conscience] is a messenger of him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by his representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ."

Therefore, if a Catholic comes to an informed and sure judgment in conscience that he or she should not receive a vaccine, then the Catholic Church requires that the person follow this certain judgment of conscience and refuse the vaccine. The *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH* (PAR. 1782) is clear: "Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. 'He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters.'"

As a professed religious Brother with a Master's Degree in Sacred Theology, I have studied the Catholic Church's moral doctrine, including medical ethics, and specifically the relevant documents of the Holy See pertaining to this question. **I find myself compelled to state categorically, for the above weighty reasons, that for a Catholic to arrive at the decision not to take this vaccine is in perfect agreement with the moral teaching of the Catholic Church.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely in Christ and,

In the Immaculate Heart of Mary,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Br. André Marie". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Brother André Marie, M.I.C.M.
Prior of Saint Benedict Center