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**Statement on the ethical reception of COVID-19 vaccines**

The Diocese of Erie reaffirms its complete commitment to the sanctity of all human life. We are called to honor, protect and nurture all human life from conception to natural death, including that of the most vulnerable, among whom are the unborn, the poor and the sick.

In light of these sacred duties, as various vaccines for COVID-19 are made available to the public, the question of the ethical nature of those vaccines should not be ignored. On December 14, 2020, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a statement in this regard. The following summary is based on that statement.

The bishops have been advocating for the development of a COVID-19 vaccine which has no link to abortion, and which does not employ morally compromised cell lines in any way whatsoever. That being said, however, it must be noted that some vaccines have only a remote connection to abortion while others have a much stronger connection.

Neither the Pfizer nor the Moderna nor the Novavax AB vaccine involved the use of cell lines that originated in fetal tissue from abortions in design or production. Nonetheless, these vaccines do have a remote connection to abortion because all three vaccines at one point made use of a morally compromised cell line using aborted fetal tissue for one of the confirmatory lab tests of their product.

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When considering whether it is ethical to receive the Pfizer, Moderna or Novavax AB vaccines, a number of things must be taken into account:

- the gravity of the current pandemic
- the urgency of protecting the public health
- the current lack of a vaccine completely unconnected to abortion
- the fact that these three vaccines have only a remote connection to morally compromised cell lines.

Given all of this, the reasons to accept the COVID-19 vaccines from Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax AB are sufficiently serious to justify their use.

What about individuals who do not have the opportunity to choose between these and other vaccines? Considering the gravity of the pandemic, and if no other options exist, individuals may choose to receive even other vaccines beyond these three, provided that one does so as an act of charity seeking to limit the spread of the virus and to protect the most vulnerable members of the community.

For more information which underlies and supports this guidance, please see:

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction *Dignitas Personae* on Certain Bioethical Questions," (2008). See nos. 34-35. [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20081208\\_dignitas-personae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20081208_dignitas-personae_en.html)

Pontifical Academy for Life, "Moral Reflections on Vaccines Prepared from Cells Derived from Aborted Human Fetuses," (2005). <https://www.immunize.org/talking-about-vaccines/vaticandocument.htm>

Pontifical Academy for Life, "Note on Italian Vaccine Issue," (2017). <http://www.academyforlife.va/content/pav/en/the-academy/activity-academy/note-vaccini.html>

National Catholic Bioethics Center, statement of December 8, 2020. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5e3ada1a6a2e8d6a131d1dcd/t/5fd3ce39e679895094dd1e49/1607716409962/NCBCVaccineStatementFINAL.pdf>

The complete statement of the USCCB can be found at [www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines](http://www.usccb.org/moral-considerations-covid-vaccines).