



ARCHDIOCESE *of* KINGSTON

Informed Consciences and COVID-19 Vaccines

What follows is offered to Catholics in the Archdiocese of Kingston, as a support as they consider whether to receive the COVID-19 vaccines currently available in Canada.

While the Holy See has encouraged Catholics to be vaccinated against COVID-19, in its *Note on the Morality of Using Some Anti-COVID-19 Vaccines*, from 17 December 2020, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) also stated that, “*practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary*”.

This complements the Church’s teaching on the taking of responsible, informed decisions: a person

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 (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1782).

In making your decision, the Church expects Catholics to have considered that there is generally a moral duty to refuse the use of medical products, including certain vaccines, that are produced using human cells lines derived from direct abortions. While the CDF has determined that,

when ethically irreproachable COVID-19 vaccines are not available ... it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process,

an individual Catholic, having informed their conscience, might still find themselves unable to accept a vaccine developed or produced using abortion-derived cell lines.

Furthermore, your decision should have weighed the benefits to the individual and to the common good against possible undesirable side-effects of vaccination. Responsible decision-making in this matter by an individual cannot be reduced simply to the question of public health. However, the CDF also offers the following reminder that,

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.

It goes on to say that,

Those who... 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.

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