



On COVID vaccination

“...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.”

(Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith:

Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines 21 December 2020)

Brethren,

With the arrival in Australia this week of the first batch of Pfizer vaccines, and a subsequent announcement in the days that followed that the Astra Zeneca vaccine has been approved for Australia (not here yet; just approved), the question of moral acceptability and conscience must be addressed.

I suspect that perhaps all of us are aware that of the two, the Pfizer vaccine is to be preferred, as, unlike the Astra Zeneca vaccine, the Pfizer option does not have any connection with having been developed using cells derived from an aborted unborn child (from 1972 in the Astra Zeneca product).

Archbishop Peter Comensoli, the Chair of the ACBC *Life, Family and Public Engagement* Commission, sent an update to the bishops this week. The Archbishop writes,

“...None of the vaccines are a cure for COVID-19, but indications are that they provide a significant measure of protection from the worst effects of the virus, for the time being.

“For the common good, it is appropriate that our governments work together to roll out a nation-wide process of vaccination for all residents.

“Likewise, for the common good, everyone should respect the decisions of individuals who, for medical, safety or moral reasons, are not ready to receive a vaccination immediately.

“At this early stage in measuring the longer-term effectiveness and safety of each of the COVID-19 vaccines, calls for a ‘No jab, no service’ policy would be unjust.

“The Catholic Bishops have already endorsed efforts to offer a vaccination as soon as possible to all who can safely receive one: <https://mediablog.catholic.org.au/a-letter-to-the-faithful-regarding-development-of-a-covid-19-vaccine/#more-8597>

“However, the Government has indicated that there is likely to be little, if any, choice as to which vaccine will be available to individuals in the shorter term.

“This means that you can receive any one of the three vaccines to be made available, without moral complicity in the processes of its development. On balance, it is a good thing to do.

“For anyone with health and safety concerns, please speak with your family doctor.

“For anyone with ethical questions, please read the statement issued by the Vatican or speak with your Pastor:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html

“I encourage the Australian government to do all it can to make a vaccine choice available to all residents in Australia as soon as possible, and offer the same care to our poorer neighbouring countries.”

Clarifications on a few of the archbishop's comments:

- He mentions *three* vaccines. The third is being developed right here in Australia: University of Queensland/CSL Limited (V451) vaccine project. Like the Pfizer vaccine, this Australian project appears to be “an ethically acceptable option” (from the first link above).
- Even though the current status appears to be “little, if any, choice as to which vaccine” I would recommend that all of our faithful request the Pfizer product (or the Australian V451 if it receives approval). It can only help if many people, in addition to the bishops, continue their appeal to the government to make a vaccine choice available.

In the second link above from the CDF in Rome, we also read, “...when various types of vaccines are distributed in the same country but health authorities do not allow citizens to choose the vaccine with which to be inoculated) *it is morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process* ... 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 behaviour, 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.”

Acknowledging that the faithful are seeking concrete advice, in light of some unresolved questions, and particularly whether vaccination in Australia is going to be declared mandatory, my current advice is that, while no one can be forced to receive a vaccination which they believe to be ethically compromised, we must also exercise discernment as it relates to the common good, which may dictate that we *should* receive vaccination.

Fraternally,



Rev Mgr Carl Reid