



## THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC BIOETHICS CENTER

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### **For Immediate Release**

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## **The NCBC Calls for Respect for the Church’s Teachings on the Common Good, Conscience, and Charity**

**PHILADELPHIA** - The National Catholic Bioethics Center (NCBC) provides education, guidance, and resources to the Church and society to uphold the dignity of the human person in health care and biomedical research. In fulfilling its mission, the NCBC draws on the full range of the teachings of the Church, including its social teachings, which provide guidance on appropriate respect for persons while building up the common good.

The NCBC notes with great sadness the increasingly heated rhetoric and even violence associated with the vaccine mandate debates. Christ and the Church urge us, “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.” (John 13:34) Frustration and anger on all sides must be transformed by charity and understanding for all our brothers and sisters.

The Church has long supported science, medicine, and biomedical research that serves the good of human persons and the use of vaccines for centuries as a crucial means of protecting the health of entire communities. In the present world-wide health crisis, the Church encourages people to receive vaccination for COVID-19, even though the currently available vaccines in the U.S. have a remote connection to abortion through the use of certain cell lines. At the same time, the U.S. bishops have continued to advocate for vaccines that lack even a remote connection to the evil of abortion. [For example](#), Archbishops Joseph Naumann and Paul Coakley, and Bishops Kevin Rhoades and John Doerfler called on the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to ensure that Americans have access to “vaccines that are free from any connection to abortion.”

Emergency Use Authorization by the FDA of a vaccine that did not rely on abortion-derived cell lines for manufacture and/or testing would remove a major obstacle to COVID-19 vaccination for many. The NCBC noted in our [Vaccine Exemption Resource for Individuals](#) that the Church permits people to use any of the currently available COVID-19 vaccines. Discernment with consciences informed by Church teaching is required, as well as all the elements of free and informed consent needed for any medical intervention.

It is extremely important to embrace both respect for the common good and conscience as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) did in December 2020.

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

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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.

The CDF's balanced teaching above is cited in full in [NCBC Statement on COVID-19 Mandates](#).

Our NCBC guidance in our [Points to Consider on COVID-19 Vaccines and Abortion-Derived Cell Lines](#) begins the list of important factors to consider in making a decision with the following.

First and foremost, our belief that “Life and physical health are precious gifts entrusted to us by God [and that] we must take reasonable care of them, taking into account the needs of others and the common good.” *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #2288

Over the past several weeks, many distressed people have sought guidance from the NCBC because of the pressures they face from looming vaccine mandates.

The NCBC fully acknowledges the complex and challenging decisions in conscience that institutions -- including Catholic health care organizations -- need to make not only for the sake of the persons they serve but also for the good of their employees. Respecting the conscientious judgments and religious beliefs of these employees is an indispensable dimension of this. A July 27<sup>th</sup> Joint National Hospital Association [Statement](#) said that mandatory vaccination policies needed appropriate accommodations for medical or religious reasons.

Our NCBC *Vaccine Exemption Resource for Individuals* was created to help Catholics express the religious basis for accommodating their judgments of conscience. The Catholic faith provides many resources to inspire people to care for others, to serve the common good, and to make sound ethical decisions about how best to protect their own life and health. The NCBC shall continue to help people to draw upon the deepest resources of the Catholic faith to address the many challenges posed by COVID-19 with integrity and charity.

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